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FEDERAL SUBSISTENCE BOARD MEETING

TELECONFERENCE - ALASKA

June 8, 2023

MEMBERS PRESENT:

- Anthony Christianson, Chairman
- Rhonda Pitka, Public Member
- Charles Brower, Public Member
- Sara Boario, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Steve Cohn, Bureau of Land Management
- Sarah Creachbaum, National Park Service
- Glenn Chen, Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Greg Risdahl, U.S. Forest Service

Ken Lord, Solicitor's Office

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P R O C E E D I N G S

(Teleconference - 6/8/2023)

(On record)

OPERATOR: Welcome and thank you for standing by. At this time all participants are in a listen only mode until the public comment and testimony session of today's conference. At that time you may press star, one on your phone to provide a comment. I would like to inform all parties that today's conference is being recorded. If anyone has any objections, you may disconnect at this time. I will now turn the conference over to Ms. Sue Detwiler. Thank you. You may begin.

MS. DETWILER: Thank you, Operator. My name is Sue Detwiler, I'm the Assistant Regional Director for the Office of Subsistence Management. And first I wanted to confirm that the Court Reporter has started recording this meeting?

REPORTER: Hi, Sue, this is Tina, and, yes, we're on record.

MS. DETWILER: Great, thank you. And if it's okay with you, Mr. Chair, would you like me to go ahead and do the roll call.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yes, Sue, thank you.

MS. DETWILER: Thank you. We'll start with Bureau of Indian Affairs, Glenn Chen.

MR. CHEN: I am present, Sue.

MS. DETWILER: Thanks, Glenn.

Bureau of Land Management, Steve Cohn.

(No comments)

MS. DETWILER: Fish and Wildlife Service, Sara Boario.

MS. BOARIO: Good afternoon, Sue, I'm present.

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1 MS. DETWILER: Thanks, Sara.

2

3 National Park Service, Sarah
4 Creachbaum.

5

6 MS. CREACHBAUM: Good afternoon, Sue,
7 I'm here.

8

9 MS. DETWILER: Thank you.

10

11 Forest Service, I understand Greg
12 Risdahl is standing in for Board Member Dave Schmid.
13 Greg, are you there.

14

15 MR. RISDAHL: Yes, that's correct, Sue.
16 This is Greg Risdahl, and I'm here.

17

18 MS. DETWILER: Thank you.

19

20 Public Member Rhonda Pitka.

21

22 MS. PITKA: I am here.

23

24 MS. DETWILER: Hi Rhonda.

25

26 Public Member Charlie Brower.

27

28 MR. BROWER: I'm here.

29

30 MS. DETWILER: Thank you.

31

32 Chair Anthony Christianson.

33

34 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: I'm present.

35

36 MS. DETWILER: And I know you're here.

37

38 While we're waiting for Steve Cohn from
39 BLM to join I'll just go through the rest of my list
40 here. Legal.....

41

42 MR. COHN: Sue, this is Steve Cohn from
43 BLM, I'm on the call.

44

45 MS. DETWILER: Oh, great, okay. Thank
46 you. I'll just finish out my list here for the key
47 players here. Legal Counsel, Department of Interior,
48 Ken Lord, Mike Rauthier, are you on.

49

50

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1 MR. LORD: This is Ken Lord. Hi
2 everyone, I'm here.

3
4 MS. DETWILER: Thank you.

5
6 USDA Office of General Counsel, Boykin
7 Lucas.

8
9 MR. LUCAS: Hi, this is Boykin Lucas,
10 I'm on the call.

11
12 MS. DETWILER: Great, thank you.

13
14 Liaisons to the Board, Ben Mulligan and
15 Mark Burch.

16
17 MR. MULLIGAN: Ben Mulligan is online
18 and Mark Burch is listening. Thank you, Sue.

19
20 MS. DETWILER: Okay, thank you, Ben.

21
22 And, Regional Council Chairs, there are
23 four Councils involved in this special action request.
24 I'll start out, just go numerically through them,
25 Region
26 6, Western Interior, Jack Reakoff.

27
28 MR. REAKOFF: Jack Reakoff here, thank
29 you.

30
31 MS. DETWILER: Thank you.

32
33 Region 7, Seward Peninsula, Nissa
34 Bates-Pilcher, Regional Coordinator, are you on.

35
36 MS. BATES-PILCHER: I am on, thank you.

37
38 MS. DETWILER: Thank you. And I
39 understand Brower Franz or another Council member was
40 not able to attend, correct and you're speaking for
41 them.

42
43 MS. BATES-PILCHER: Yes, I'll be
44 speaking for Chairman Louis Green from the RAC.

45
46 MS. DETWILER: Louis Green, okay,
47 sorry.

48
49 Okay, let's see, Region 8, Northwest
50

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1 Arctic, Thomas Baker.

2

3 MS. HUTCHINSON-SCARBROUGH: This is
4 Lisa, the Council Coordinator, Mr. Baker will be
5 joining us here shortly. Thank you.

6

7 MS. DETWILER: Okay, thank you.

8

9 Region 10, North Slope, Steve Oomittuk,
10 I heard you earlier, you're still on.

11

12 MR. OOMITTUK: Okay. I took it off
13 mute, can you hear me okay, yeah, this is Steve
14 Oomittuk, North Slope.

15

16 MS. DETWILER: Great.

17

18 MR. OOMITTUK: North Slope Subsistence
19 Advisory Council Chairman.

20

21 MS. DETWILER: Yep, thank you. Can
22 hear you.....

23

24 MR. OOMITTUK: Thank you.

25

26 MS. DETWILER:loud and clear.
27 And do we have.....

28

29 MR. OOMITTUK: All right.

30

31 MS. DETWILER:any other Regional
32 Advisory Council Chairs on.

33

34 (No comments)

35

36 MS. DETWILER: And, finally, Department
37 of Interior Field Special Assistant for Alaska, Sara
38 Taylor, or anybody else from Department of Interior on.

39

40 (No comments)

41

42 MS. DETWILER: Okay. So, Mr. Chair,
43 you have a full compliment of Board members and a
44 quorum so I'll turn it back over to you.

45

46 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you, Sue.
47 Thank you, Staff. Thank you, everyone for taking the
48 time today to call in for this special action and we
49 have aquorum and so with that we'll go ahead and just --

50

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1 I'm just pulling up my agenda here. So, again, I hope
2 everybody's harvest season is going to go well this
3 summer, I know we have a bunch of challenges before us
4 but I'm always hoping that it goes best.

5

6 So next we're going to move on to
7 review and adopt the agenda.

8

9 MR. BROWER: I so move, Mr. Chair.

10

11 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: A motion's
12 been.....

13

14 MS. PITKA: I'll second that motion,
15 thank you.

16

17 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON:made and
18 seconded to go ahead and adopt the agenda as presented
19 by Staff; is there any comments or questions.

20

21 (No comments)

22

23 REPORTER: So, Tony, unless that's your
24 background noise, if everyone else could mute
25 yourselves it would be appreciated. Thanks.

26

27 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you,
28 Tina. Hearing no opposition we'll approve the agenda.

29

30 MS. DETWILER: Mr. Chair, you're fading
31 out there, we couldn't hear you.

32

33 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Okay. Yeah, my
34 service in Hydaburg has been a little wonky today and
35 so we can go ahead -- I said with no -- sorry, I broke
36 out there again. For the agenda there, we've adopted
37 it and then we're going to move on to the Wildlife
38 Temporary Special Action request.

39

40 MR. BROWER: Mr. Chair.

41

42 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yes.

43

44 MR. BROWER: This is Charlie, I want to
45 say something. I'm at the airport and I can't hear
46 anything. I'm unable to attend this meeting due to
47 unforeseen travel. However, this issue for the Board
48 is important. I'd like to give Board Member Rhonda
49 Pitka as my proxy vote. I attended a briefing by Staff
50

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1 this morning and read the materials. I have briefed
2 Rhonda on my thoughts on this issue. So that's where I
3 am right now, Mr. Chair.

4

5 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you, very
6 much, Charlie. I appreciate you taking the time to
7 call today and you have safe travels and I'm glad that
8 you left your proxy with Rhonda so I appreciate that.
9 Thank you, very much.

10

11 MR. BROWER: Thank you. And also it's
12 pretty hard with all the expenses being spent just to
13 extend my stay here in the hotel and the car and
14 airfare is pretty expensive so sorry about that.

15

16 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: No, we just
17 appreciate your service, Charlie, have safe travels
18 home.

19

20 MR. BROWER: Thank you.

21

22 MR. OOMITTUK: Good to hear you
23 Charlie. Safe travels from Point Hope.

24

25 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: And so at this
26 time, Sue, I'd just go ahead and turn it over to you to
27 direct the Staff to go ahead and provide the summary
28 and the presentation analysis.

29

30 MS. DETWILER: Yes, thank you, Mr.
31 Chair. Tom Plank will be starting the Staff analysis.

32

33 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Were we going
34 to make a statement prior, Sue?

35

36 MS. DETWILER: A statement regarding
37 the proxy that Member Brower just left, that was the
38 only statement I'm aware of.

39

40 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Oh, yeah,
41 that's what we were -- okay.

42

43 MS. DETWILER: Yeah.

44

45 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Okay, yes,
46 thank you. Okay, yes, we'll go ahead and move on with
47 the presentation then on the issue.

48

49 MR. PLANK: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

50

0008

1 Members of the Board. My name is Tom Plank and I'm a
2 wildlife biologist in the Office of Subsistence
3 Management. And I will be presenting a summary of the
4 analysis for Temporary Wildlife Special Action WSA22-05
5 and 06.

6
7 WSA22-05 submitted by the Northwest
8 Arctic Subsistence Regional Advisory Council requests
9 reducing the caribou harvest limit in Unit 23 to four
10 caribou per year, only one which may be a cow for the
11 remainder of the 2022 to '24 regulatory cycle.

12
13 WSA22-06 submitted by the Western
14 Interior Subsistence Regional Advisory Council requests
15 reducing the caribou harvest limit across the range of
16 the Western Arctic Caribou Herd to four caribou per
17 year, only one which may be a cow for the remainder of
18 the 2022 to '24 regulatory cycle.

19
20 Specific areas include, Units 21D
21 remainder, 24A remainder, 24B remainder, 24C, 24D and
22 all caribou hunt areas within Unit 22, 23 and 26A.

23
24 The proponents are requesting a
25 temporary special action to reduce the caribou harvest
26 limit for Western Arctic Caribou Herd from five caribou
27 per day to four caribou per year, only one which may be
28 cow. The Western Arctic Caribou Herd has continued to
29 decline with the most recent estimate being 164,000
30 caribou. The proponents are greatly concerned about
31 the precipitous decline of the Western Arctic Caribou
32 Herd and feel that immediate action is needed to slow
33 the decline and prevent the herd from reaching the
34 point of no return.

35
36 Proposals requesting the same changes
37 as these temporary special actions have also been
38 submitted for the 2024 to '26 wildlife regulatory
39 cycle. The proponents recognize that Federally-
40 qualified subsistence users are already facing food
41 insecurities but this drastic reduction in the caribou
42 harvest limit is a means to help protect the caribou
43 herd, and that the harvest recommendations proposed by
44 the Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group are a
45 starting point for the conservation of the Western
46 Arctic Caribou Herd while still allowing some harvest.
47 Additionally, the Western Interior Council emphasized
48 the importance of protecting cows and feels that
49 restricting all users across the range -- entire range
50

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1 of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd is the most
2 equitable method to reduce harvest and help conserve
3 the herd.

4
5 State and Federal regulation changes in
6 2016 as a result from multiple proposals were the first
7 time that harvest restrictions had been implemented on
8 the Western Arctic Caribou Herd and Teshekpuk Caribou
9 Herd in over 30 years. In 2017 the Board of Game
10 adopted a proposal requiring registration permits for
11 resident hunting of caribou within the Western Arctic
12 and Teshekpuk Herds in Units 21, 23, 24 and 26. This
13 was similar to a proposal passed for Unit 22 in 2016.
14 In 2018 a proposal was adopted to close all Federal
15 public lands within a 10 mile wide corridor along the
16 Noatak River to non-Federally-qualified users. The
17 Board also adopted a proposal requiring State
18 registration permits for caribou in Units 22, 23 and
19 26A. In 2020 the Board of Game adopted proposals to
20 open year-round resident season for caribou bull
21 harvest in Unit 23 and removed calf harvest
22 restrictions in Unit 22, 23 and 26A. The Board also --
23 the Board of Game also adopted a -- I'm sorry -- the
24 Board also adopted a proposal to open a year-round bull
25 season and permit calf harvest for caribou in Units 23.
26 In 2022 the Board approved WSA21-01a with modification
27 to close Noatak National Preserve including the Nigu
28 River portions of the Preserve in Units 26A and BLM
29 managed lands between the Noatak and Kobuk Rivers in
30 Unit 23 to caribou hunting by non-Federally-qualified
31 users from August 1st through September 30th for the
32 2022 to '23 and the 2023-'24 regulatory years.

33
34 The Western Arctic Caribou Herd,
35 Teshekpuk Caribou Herd and the Central Arctic Caribou
36 Herd have ranges that overlap in Units 26A and 26B,
37 which you can see on Map 1 on Page 18. The Teshekpuk
38 Herd primarily occupies Unit 26A and the Central Arctic
39 Herd mostly occupies -- occurs in Unit 26B. There can
40 be considerable mixing of the three herds during the
41 fall and winter and since the Central Arctic Caribou
42 Herd mostly occurs in Unit 26B it was not further
43 considered in the analysis.

44
45 For the last 10 years the management
46 objective for the Teshekpuk Herd of 15,000 caribou has
47 been met and in 2022 the minimum count was
48 approximately 51,000 caribou. The Western Arctic
49 Caribou Herd population has fluctuated over time from a
50

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1 low of 75,000 in 1970s to a peak of approximately
2 490,000 in 2003. Between 2003 to 2016 the herd
3 declined an average annual rate of 7.1 percent. In
4 2017 there was an uptick to 259,000 from the previous
5 approximate 200,000 in 2016. This could possibly be
6 attributed to improved photographic technology when
7 ADF&G switched from film to high resolution digital
8 cameras in 2017. Between 2017 and 2019 there was an
9 approximate six percent total decline to 244,000 and
10 then the next photo census in 2021 estimated 188,000
11 caribou and this was an additional decline of about 24
12 percent. The population estimate in 2022 was 164,000
13 representing an additional 12 percent decline.

14

15 And as for the composition data in 2017
16 the bull/cow ratio was the highest since 1998 at 54
17 bulls per 100 cows and then in 2021 the ratio fell
18 slightly to 47 bulls per 100 cows, which still exceeds
19 the critical management level of 30 cows per -- 30
20 bulls per 100 cows. The parturition rate from 2020 to
21 2022 was 66 percent which is below the long-term
22 average of 70 percent. During the same time period the
23 short yearling recruitment has remained average at 17
24 per 100 adults. The adult female survival has been
25 below the long-term average of 81 percent since 2017
26 and although factors contributing to the 2003 to
27 present decline are not known with certainty, increased
28 cow mortality and decreased calf recruitment and
29 survival are likely playing a role.

30

31 From 1999 to 2018 the range-wide
32 average estimate total harvest for the Western Arctic
33 Caribou Herd was about 14,000 caribou per year, ranging
34 from 12 to 16,000 caribou each year. Year specific
35 harvest estimates have not been generated since 2018,
36 in part, because they're not very accurate. Local
37 hunters account for approximately 95 percent of the
38 total Western Arctic Caribou Herd harvest and residents
39 of Unit 23, on average, account for the majority of the
40 total harvest. Household survey data demonstrates that
41 local community harvest parallels Western Arctic
42 Caribou Herd availability rather than population
43 trends. The Western Arctic Caribou Herd voted to place
44 the herd in preservation declining level in 2021 and
45 2022 which prescribed the harvest of six to 10,000
46 caribou. With the 2022 population estimate of 164,000
47 the harvestable surplus is roughly 9,800 caribou. And
48 while all these harvest estimates are above the
49 preservative harvest levels specified in the Western
50

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1 Arctic Caribou Herd management plan and indicates
2 unsustainable harvest levels, actual harvest is unknown
3 and could be much lower due to the caribou being
4 unavailable for harvest near local communities.

5

6 WSA22-05, if adopted, would reduce the
7 harvest limit to four caribou per year, only one which
8 may be a cow for the remainder of the 2022 to '24
9 regulator cycle in Unit 23 only.

10

11 WSA22-06, if adopted, would apply the
12 same harvest limit restrictions across the entire range
13 of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd including Units 22,
14 23, 26A and portions of Unit 21D and 24.

15

16 The decreased harvest limits and more
17 restrictive cow harvest would reduce subsistence
18 hunting opportunities and harvest under Federal
19 regulations, however, all Alaska residents could still
20 harvest five caribou per day under State regulations on
21 most Federal public lands. The reduced Federal harvest
22 limits could also impact sharing networks, which are an
23 important cultural component for subsistence users in
24 the area and contribute to food security for many
25 families and elders who depend on the super households
26 to provide caribou meat.

27

28 WSA22-06, if adopted, may cause
29 unnecessary hardship and restrictions for subsistence
30 users in areas on the edge of the Western Arctic
31 Caribou Herd's range where there's an overlap with
32 other herds or local caribou populations where a
33 reduction may not be necessary.

34

35 The precipitous decline in the Western
36 Arctic Caribou Herd warrants strong measures to add in
37 the recovery and conservation of this population.
38 Current harvest rates, especially the taking of cows,
39 could prolong or worsen the current decline and hamper
40 recovery efforts. Additionally, while causes of the
41 decline are multifaceted and uncertain, reducing human
42 harvest is the most controllable factor. Overwhelming
43 public testimony indicated that the harvest limit
44 reductions proposed in these requests are too drastic,
45 too soon, and that the special action regulatory
46 process did not allow adequate time for local input,
47 consultation and buy-in. Federally-qualified
48 subsistence users are already facing food insecurities.
49 More public input opportunities are needed to develop a
50

0012

1 plan to that will address the conservation needs of the
2 Western Arctic Caribou Herd, while also allowing
3 Federally-qualified subsistence users to meet their
4 subsistence needs. More input is especially needed
5 from the communities on the edge of the Western Arctic
6 Caribou Herd's range and from communities that harvest
7 from multiple herds where a reduction may not be
8 necessary.

9
10 The OSM conclusion is to oppose
11 Temporary Wildlife Special Action WSA22-05 and
12 Temporary Wildlife Special Action WSA22-06.

13
14 Thank you, Mr. Chair. Members of the
15 Board. I'd be happy to answer any questions.

16
17 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: All right,
18 thank you for that Tom. If there's any questions from
19 the Board this is your opportunity to ask them.

20
21 MR. OOMITTUK: Mr. Chair, can you hear
22 me, this is Steve Oomittuk with the North Slope
23 Subsistence Advisory Council.

24
25 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yeah, Steve, go
26 ahead.

27
28 MR. OOMITTUK: Can you hear me okay?

29
30 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yes, I can hear
31 you Steve.

32
33 MR. OOMITTUK: Yeah, thank you. Thank
34 you for that summary and that report. You know there's
35 a drastic decline as you mentioned, you know -- you
36 know we're very fortunate in some of our areas that we
37 have other food source but in Unit 23, you know, where
38 the Western Arctic Caribou Herd has dropped down
39 drastically that, you know, the inland people really
40 rely on that food source of the caribou and dropping it
41 down to -- I'm trying to get the way you worded it, in
42 some ways -- I want to get a better understanding for
43 Federal subsistence users and residents, would -- that
44 would preclude them to four caribou per year, is that
45 what you're stating, or just non-residents and
46 sporthunters that come in during the months of August,
47 September and part of October? You know if -- if the
48 population has dropped so drastically, you know,
49 finding out how, you know, and what's happening, you
50

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1 know, the global warming -- we know that -- you know,
2 the coldest time of the year, it rains in January or
3 February lately and that freezes the ground and the
4 caribou and the calves, you know, they have a hard time
5 getting to their food source. If it's going to come to
6 the residents and the Federal subsistence users or, you
7 know, I -- I think we need to stop all hunting to the
8 non-residents and sporthunters from coming in until we
9 find out exactly what's happened to Unit 23, and
10 especially the Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working
11 Group -- I mean the North Slope -- or it's the
12 Northwest Arctic Borough Subsistence Advisory Council
13 proposal to four caribou per year, I -- can you explain
14 that more? That -- that includes all Federal
15 subsistence users, is that what my understanding is?

16

17 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yes, Steve, so
18 I think you're asking the Staff if this would apply to
19 all Federal users and I believe it would. There's two
20 proposals on it for just Unit 23, so there's actually
21 some other considerations here, but at this time, you
22 know, there's a couple of opportunities here
23 throughout the meeting for Federal interaction so this
24 was, you know, I -- I think to clarify that, if Tom, if
25 you just want to make sure that the intent is for all
26 the users in the.....

27

28 MR. OOMITTUK: Yeah, so my -- my
29 understanding so the non-residents and, you know,
30 within the state of Alaska or out of state, non-
31 residents of Unit 23, or sporthunters that come in can
32 still come in to Unit 23 and get the four caribou per
33 year, also, besides the residents that depend on the
34 caribou, is it -- is that what I'm understanding?

35

36 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Tom.

37

38 MR. PLANK: Hello, Mr. Chair, this is
39 Tom Plank with OSM again. Council Member, Steve, yes,
40 sir, these -- WSA22-05 is for Federal regulations for
41 Federally-qualified users in Unit 23, and WSA22-06 is
42 for Federal regulations for Federally-qualified users
43 in the entire range of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd.

44

45 Does that help answer your question,
46 sir?

47

48 MR. OOMITTUK: You know the Western
49 Arctic Caribou Herd range is -- you know, it's one of

50

0014

1 the largest range, and when you talk about Unit 23 and
2 the Western Arctic Caribou Herd, goes from -- all the
3 way from Barrow and all the way south of Nome and then
4 the population, as stated earlier, was as high as
5 500,000 so and -- and the estimate count right now is
6 at 164, you take, what 10,000 more, or 10,000, you
7 know, that's an estimate of a count. The danger zone I
8 saw on the report was 140. And, you know, we're
9 talking about a lot of people that depend on the
10 Western Arctic Cari -- you know, I -- you know, I don't
11 know much about the other areas, we live way over here
12 in Unit 23 area and I don't know why it's mixed in with
13 the other portions of -- you know, the caribou hunting,
14 and -- and it's just -- trying to understanding the
15 difference when you use the numbers in a portion in
16 what areas, we're not used to hearing, you know, Unit
17 23, the people that live there, but when you mention
18 other units, you know, that's not our country, we're
19 not familiar with those units even though I -- I just
20 want a clear understanding for Unit 23, because that's
21 my country, it's where I live and we're the largest
22 herd on -- in Alaska has been in a steady decline and
23 we can't understand where that's coming from and it's
24 been at a steady pace and -- and it's a very hard time
25 for the people that depend on the caribou, the food
26 source, the high cost of living, the low economy, this
27 is the way of life for thousands of years.

28
29 If anything's going to be cut down in
30 Unit 23 we should not allow non-residents and
31 sporthunters to be hunting on the Western Arctic
32 Caribou Herd until we figure out exactly what is going
33 on with this herd at this steady pace of decline. We
34 don't want them to go to extinction. If something's
35 going to be cut for a year we shouldn't allow non-
36 residents or sporthunters to be getting these caribou.

37
38 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you,
39 Steve. So.....

40
41 MR. OOMITTUK: The Federal.....

42
43 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: I'm going
44 to.....

45
46 MR. OOMITTUK:the Federal
47 Subsistence Board.....

48
49 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON:Steve.....

50

0015

1 MR. OOMITTUK:always overrides us
2 and -- and it's not right, this is our way of life, our
3 land. And, you know, it's our food source. We don't
4 have a connection to the outside world, you know.

5
6 Thank you.

7
8 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you,
9 Steve. I appreciate your comments and in-depth
10 knowledge of the area and getting clarification for
11 yourself on the record so I appreciate that. Is there
12 any other questions from the Board for the Staff
13 analysis.

14
15 MS. DETWILER: Mr. Chair. We also have
16 as part of the Staff analysis, Liz Williams, to give
17 the other portions of the analysis.

18
19 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yes, we'll call
20 on Liz at this time. Thank you.

21
22 MS. WILLIAMS: Good afternoon, Mr.
23 Chair and members of the Board, and all the other
24 participants. This is Liz Williams, cultural
25 anthropologist at the Office of Subsistence Management.
26 And I am going to provide a summary on the two public
27 hearings for public testimony on both proposed wildlife
28 special actions 22-05 and 22-06. And this is just a
29 summary of the public testimony that was received.

30
31 The first public hearing was held April
32 26th, 2023 and it was to discuss -- to receive public
33 testimony on both 22-05 and 22-06. This one was
34 hybrid, it was teleconference and in-person in Kotzebue
35 and public testimony was taken from about 14 people
36 although there were many more participants on the call.
37 Most people spoke in favor of the need for conservation
38 of caribou but in opposition to the four caribou per
39 year as proposed in the special action request. Almost
40 unanimously speakers stressed that caribou is their
41 dietary staple, their cultural identity. They talked
42 about the fact that this proposed limit would disrupt a
43 basic aspect of the subsistence culture and economy
44 which is harvesting for others and sharing to provide
45 for people who don't, or can't hunt for themselves.
46 People explained during the testimony that caribou are
47 sometimes scarce because of changing migration routes
48 and several reasons for this change were discussed like
49 we just heard, climate change, but local residents
50

0016

1 consider sporthunters and their use of airplanes to be
2 a major cause of the disruption to caribou migration
3 patterns. Some people said that migrations are
4 interrupted when sporthunters don't follow local
5 cultural practices, conservation practices such as
6 letting the caribou leaders pass so the herd will
7 follow. People talked about the fluctuation in caribou
8 populations are definitely part of indigenous and
9 traditional, ecological knowledge. And they explained
10 to us that in these times they need to practice
11 conservation and respect by letting caribou pass in the
12 spring when they are skinny by not hunting cows in
13 times of low numbers and by using all parts of every
14 caribou they harvest.

15
16 Participants in this public hearing
17 expressed extreme concern about the short amount of
18 time between the Northwest Arctic Regional Advisory
19 Council's proposal and the public hearing, especially
20 the lack of outreach to villages. The lack of outreach
21 was a major point of concern because the people who
22 provided public testimony said that the people in the
23 villages are the ones who live directly live off the
24 land and who needed to be consulted. People emphasized
25 the high cost of living in the region and said that
26 they can't just stop harvesting caribou and, of course,
27 it's not just about money, this diet of subsistence
28 food is much better just nutritionally for people.

29
30 Participants from the North Slope said
31 that this proposal is not relevant for them because
32 they harvest from the Teshekpuk Herd and not the
33 Western Arctic Herd. Many speakers said they know they
34 need to conserve the herd but they oppose this specific
35 proposal.

36
37 The Kobuk Valley National Park
38 Subsistence Resource Commission suggested changing the
39 limit to five bulls per day and no cow so that
40 harvesting for others can continue. One speaker, an
41 elder, directly shared his thoughts on how to conserve
42 the herd. He said local hunting patterns have changed
43 over the years because the sporthunters who disrupt the
44 migration routes by focusing on harvesting bulls. He
45 said this led to the need for local hunters to shift to
46 cow harvest. He expressed the extreme concern that the
47 use of semi-automatic rifles has taken the place of
48 bolt action rifles among local hunters. He said he has
49 seen some people shoot into the herd and kill several
50

0017

1 caribou and then they don't harvest all of them. He
2 acknowledged the natural highs and lows in caribou hard
3 numbers and said that local people are going to have to
4 tighten their belts. And like other speakers he said
5 that caribou will stay on their traditional migration
6 routes if fly in hunting is stopped. He made a sincere
7 request that all agencies come to the communities with
8 their data and sit down with community members, listen
9 to their concerns, hear their knowledge and approaches
10 so that together they can work on a way to conserve the
11 Western Arctic Herd.

12

13 And that is a conclusion of the -- the
14 summary of public comments for the first teleconference
15 -- or public hearing.

16

17 The second public hearing was held on
18 May 2nd, 2023 and it was to discuss -- or hear
19 testimony about WSA22-06 only. It was held by
20 teleconference and it was not just Unit 23 but Units
21 21D remainder, Unit 24A remainder, 24B remainder, 24C,
22 24D and caribou hunt areas within Units 22, 23 and 26A.
23 More than 45 people spoke. Most participants were from
24 the North Slope and strongly opposed the request. One
25 person from Ambler supported the request and stressed
26 the importance of protecting cows and the need for
27 conservation now to ensure the herd's preservation for
28 the future.

29

30 The main reason people opposed the
31 request was because the proposed harvest limit
32 reduction would not be enough to provide for people's
33 subsistence uses, which might cause starvation across
34 the North Slope. Many people said that four caribou
35 per year was not enough to feed their families or share
36 with others in their community, including elders,
37 widows, and people unable to hunt for themselves. One
38 man said that his family uses 30 to 50 caribou each
39 year, while another person stated four caribou would
40 only last her family for a month. People were very
41 clear that caribou are vital for their survival. They
42 rely on caribou both nutritionally and culturally.
43 Several testifiers stressed that subsistence users take
44 what they need and their harvest is not the issue.
45 They said they shouldn't be criminalized for feeding
46 their family, sporthunters should be restricted first.
47 And they can't just simply switch to store bought food
48 instead of caribou because it's too expensive and it's
49 not as nutritious.

50

0018

1 People also opposed the request because
2 they said that most caribou harvested in Unit 26A is
3 from the Teshekpuk or Central Arctic Herd, not the
4 Western Arctic Herd and the Teshekpuk and Central Herds
5 are not declining like the Western Arctic Herd. They
6 said this proposed harvest limit would be an
7 unnecessary restriction on subsistence users.

8
9 People said the timing of the public
10 hearing was terrible because many of the region's
11 caribou hunters couldn't participate because they were
12 out whaling. And the point that caribou parts are a
13 central component of whaling boats was made repeatedly
14 to show that caribou is not just food, it's a lot of
15 things, art, and other important implements people use.

16
17
18 Several people requested formal tribal
19 consultation. Some people agreed that conservations
20 are needed but these proposed restrictions are too
21 drastic, too soon and did not allow time or opportunity
22 for input from the subsistence users who would be the
23 most affected by these restrictions. Others expressed
24 frustration at the Western Interior Council for making
25 a proposal for harvest regulations on the North Slope.
26 A representative from the Alaska Department of Fish and
27 Game commented that a proposal about conserving the
28 Western Arctic Caribou Herd will be addressed by the
29 Board of Game in January 2024 and that outlying
30 subunits occupied by other herds such as the Teshekpuk
31 Herd and the Central Arctic Herd should be considered
32 from removal from this request.

33
34 So after the public hearings were over,
35 members of the Western Interior Advisory Council
36 expressed their wish to withdraw their request WSA22-
37 06. And while the Council can't formally withdraw
38 their proposal outside of their public forum, the Chair
39 of the Council, Jack Reakoff, intends to speak to the
40 Board as part of the proceedings today.

41
42 And this is the end of the summary of
43 public testimony from the two public hearings.

44
45 Thank you.

46
47 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you. Is
48 there any questions from the Board for Lisa [sic] on
49 the second portion of this summary.
50

0019

1 (No comments)

2

3

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: I think a key
4 note for me, Lisa, was that the Chairman of that RAC,
5 after consideration of all the public testimony wants
6 to rescind this proposal, so I would just echo that
7 that's the final statement I heard there. If there's
8 any Board questions.

9

10 MR. REAKOFF: Mr. Chairman, this is
11 Jack Reakoff.

12

13 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Jack, you have
14 the floor, thank you.

15

16 MR. REAKOFF: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I
17 take seriously public comment, but I also take
18 seriously the decline of this caribou herd. Western
19 Interior Regional Advisory Council had the Mulchatna
20 Caribou Herd within our region, that herd was 200,000
21 in 1997 and it's now 12,100 with zero hunting. So
22 we're concerned about the Western Arctic Herd. The
23 delineation in the public process didn't show that the
24 Western Interior -- it was my mistake, we didn't
25 delineate where in Unit 26A, but the reality is the
26 caribou had a bad winter, 70 percent of the Western
27 Herd went south of the Kobuk River, they had deep snow,
28 there was 40 inches of snow on the 7th of May in Ambler
29 area, those caribou had rain on snow, we're going to
30 see a continued decline in the Western Arctic Herd.

31

32 I polled the Council, I felt the public
33 comments against the proposal were so strong, that
34 there wasn't enough lead time, and I felt that, yes, we
35 had made a mistake by not having enough lead time for
36 this special action request, and so I polled the
37 Council, by email, and the Council -- the Western
38 Interior Council enabled me to request that the Federal
39 Subsistence Board withdraw the proposal WSA22-06.

40

41 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

42

43 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you for
44 that point for clarification. Is there any questions
45 from the Board for the presenters.

46

47 (No comments)

48

49 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Any other

50

0020

1 discussion or feedback from the Board.

2

3 (No comments)

4

5 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Okay.

6 Then.....

7

8 MR. OOMITTUK: This is Steve with the
9 North Slope Subsistence Advisory Council. Can I make
10 a comment. I got an email, you know, my -- you know
11 this is the first time as Chairman of the North Slope
12 Subsistence Advisory Council and my understanding that
13 the Chairman, Gordon Brower, who was always here before
14 me, sat on the Federal Subsistence Board, so I got an
15 email, and I'm not sure if I'm able to speak during
16 this time unless I'm called upon, or am I part of the
17 Board, or am I just advisory to you on this Federal
18 subsistence special action, and make some comments, the
19 comments that I made, as the North Slope Subsistence
20 Advisory Council Chairman -- if someone could verify
21 that I am actually on this Federal Subsistence as a
22 Board member, I never seen that, and understand -- I
23 just got voted in as the Chairman in January.

24

25 (Pause)

26

27 MS. LAVINE: This is -- so.....

28

29 MS. DETWILER: Mr. Chair, are you still
30 on?

31

32 (No comments)

33

34 MS. DETWILER: I think we may have lost
35 -- Tony may have dropped off here.

36

37 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: I kind of lost
38 him for a second and I could hear Steve talking, sorry,
39 I keep losing service here, about him just becoming a
40 RAC Board Chair and his concerns about the caribou and
41 I would only reassure him that's what this process is
42 for and so we've got to hear everybody today. Just in
43 light of what's going on, I think is to assure him that
44 he is part of the process -- that's kind of where I
45 lost him. Is that where we're at?

46

47 (Pause)

48

49 MS. LAVINE: Mr. Chair, this is Robbin

50

0021

1 Lavine. And people of the Federal Subsistence Board,
2 and this public meeting today, this is Robbin LaVine,
3 Subsistence Policy Coordinator, can you hear me?

4

5 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yes, I can hear
6 you loud and clear, Robbin, I was having a hard time
7 hearing Steve and then like I said I was just trying to
8 get a gist of his conversation just to.....

9

10 MS. LAVINE: Thank you.

11

12 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Okay, yeah,
13 thank you.

14

15 MS. LAVINE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. If
16 -- if you will allow me I could make a comment
17 addressing Steve's concerns.

18

19 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yes, please,
20 because it kind of broke up there and I couldn't
21 understand.....

22

23 MS. LAVINE: Yeah, I -- I understand
24 we're having some technical difficulties with our phone
25 lines so our Chair Christianson has not been able to
26 hear everything. Our Regional Advisory Council Chair
27 of the North Slope, what you have said, Mr. Oomittuk.

28

29 Mr. Oomittuk, this is Robbin LaVine,
30 and you have a very important role here at our Federal
31 Subsistence Board meeting and we understand that you
32 are a new Chair to this process and we are grateful for
33 your service and we're grateful for your knowledge and
34 expertise and all of your contributions and the
35 comments that you share today are tremendously valuable
36 and will go into Board deliberations when we get to
37 that stage in the agenda. So right now we're listening
38 to the analysis, we're listening to a summary of the
39 public hearing. Shortly the Chair of the Federal
40 Subsistence Board may open the floor for members of the
41 public to provide their comments. And then we're going
42 to hear, again, from you, the Council Chairs, and
43 liaisons to the Board, and you'll provide some comments
44 at that time, and then myself, Chair of the ISC, will
45 be able to provide some comments and then there will be
46 an opportunity for the Board to discuss with you, the
47 liaison to the Board, and the other Chairs, who are
48 liaisons to the Board, some of the finer details about
49 these special action requests. And that's an important
50

0022

1 part of our proceedings, and that's where your
2 expertise is relied upon.

3

4 Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you
5 everyone for listening.

6

7 Bye-bye.

8

9 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: This is
10 Anthony. Thank you for that Robbin, I was trying to
11 get to that, that there's still opportunity for
12 everybody to have an open discussion to get us to the
13 end of today and the outcome of the special action.

14

15 With that we're under public -- I mean
16 we were just under the analysis presentation and the
17 subsequent meetings, and now we're on the agenda of if
18 there's no other questions from the Board to the
19 analysis and the summary of public comment we'll move
20 on to open up the floor for public testimony. And,
21 again, if there's -- we would just hope that everyone
22 be mindful of the time constraints of anybody for the
23 day -- we have until 4:00 o'clock today and so I'd just
24 like -- oh, 3:00 o'clock I mean, so I'd just like to go
25 ahead at this time offer public testimony. If there's
26 anybody online, Operator, this would be the opportunity
27 for them to do so.

28

29 Thank you.

30

31 OPERATOR: We will now begin the public
32 comment and testimony session. If you would like to
33 provide a comment or testimony, please press star, one,
34 unmute your phone and record your name clearly. Your
35 name is required to introduce you. If you need to
36 withdraw your comment press star, two. Again, to
37 provide a comment or a testimony please press star,
38 one. It will take a few moments for comments to come
39 through, please standby.

40

41 (Pause)

42

43 OPERATOR: Our.....

44

45 MR. OOMITTUK: Hello, this is Steve
46 Oomittuk from Point Hope of Alaska and I live in Unit
47 23.

48

49 REPORTER: Okay, Steve, could you hold

50

0023

1 up one minute please. So this is Tina, the court
2 reporter, and I'm having a difficult time understanding
3 you. I don't know if you maybe could hold the phone a
4 little bit -- maybe a little further away, you're
5 coming in a little muffled.

6
7 Go ahead.

8
9 MR. OOMITTUK: Okay, Tina, could you
10 hear me a little better now. I'm a little further away
11 from my phone.

12
13 REPORTER: I think -- I think so.
14 Let's try it.

15
16 MR. OOMITTUK: Okay. Just for the
17 record, since we're in a public hearing, my name is
18 Steve Oomittuk. I'm a resident of Point Hope, Alaska
19 and it's in Unit 23A of the Western Arctic Caribou
20 Herd.

21
22 The comments that I made earlier about
23 the steady decline and the concerns we have on the
24 Western Arctic Caribou Herd in the proposals and it
25 needs to be a five caribou per day and, you know, in
26 the comments, you know, like they said earlier, you
27 know, April and May is a busy time of the year for a
28 lot of the coastal villages that are out whaling, you
29 know, they're out on the ice (indiscernible) 24 hours a
30 day and, you know, even though we have other food
31 sources, the Western Arctic Caribou Herd is vital to
32 our way of life too, it feeds us, you know, the animal,
33 what we utilize too, the sinew, you know, everything
34 from the caribou is utilized. It's -- you know we've
35 seen the climate change and the changes in the
36 migration route, you know, we seen observing airplanes
37 coming in within Federal lands, within the North Slope
38 within Unit 23 and a lot of our young observers of the
39 hunters see the planes steering the caribou away to the
40 hunters that are up further north and -- and the
41 practices that we have of letting the first caribou go
42 through so the caribou migration will follow that
43 scent. We were always taught that the first herd
44 should pass through so the rest can follow and that's
45 something that we notice the people that are non-
46 residents and sporthunters don't understand. You know
47 the Western Arctic Caribou Herd migration is changing,
48 they're coming later and later, they're not following
49 their -- when you live a cycle of life you see changes
50

0024

1 when you live a life -- lifestyle so you have to
2 understand the local knowledge, and the elders when
3 they speak, you know, they see it, they watch it, they
4 observe. The subsistence way of life is vital to them.
5 It's food on the table. It's their identity as a
6 people. It's a way of life that have been passed from
7 generation to generation.

8

9 We are a very low income community.
10 Our subsistence lifestyle is very vital to our
11 survival, and our connection with the animal.

12

13 I know I'm on a -- we're on a timeframe
14 here so, you know, when the Advisory Council supports
15 something and it seems like we get cut down by the
16 Federal Subsistence Board and we're the ones that live
17 in the area. You have to understand local knowledge
18 and tradition and culture and the knowledge of the
19 people that actually live here 365 days a year for the
20 last 2,000 years. History has been passed down, local
21 knowledge.

22

23 Thank you.

24

25 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you for
26 taking the time to call today, I appreciate your words
27 and how important it is that we do remember how
28 important traditional, ecological knowledge is here and
29 that in our decisionmaking of deference is given to the
30 RAC when we can best do that as a Board and so I just
31 want to assure you that we'll do our best to weigh in
32 all the information.

33

34 Thank you for calling in.

35

36 Operator, is there anyone else who
37 would like to be recognized at this time.

38

39 OPERATOR: Yes. Next we will recognize
40 Dude Lincoln Carr, your line is open.

41

42 MS. CARR: Thank you, can you all hear
43 me okay?

44

45 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: I hear you
46 real.....

47

48 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: Yes.

49

50

0025

1 MS. CARR: Okay, because it was real
2 hard to hear Steve as high as I turned my phone. I'm
3 Dood Lincoln Carr. I'm a lifetime resident of
4 Kotzebue.

5
6 This caribou decline is a very serious
7 issue and, yes, the people that live off the caribou
8 understand it, if not better than anyone, especially
9 with these new rules and regs that are possibly be
10 putting on. And what we got to stop to remember,
11 whether you're State, whether you're Federal, whether
12 you're Fish and Game, whatever you're -- whatever Board
13 you're on, we all need to remember that we hunted this
14 caribou and the whales and the fish many, many years
15 ago before the Federal came in with 70 percent land
16 owner of Alaska, before the State 29 percent land owner
17 of Alaska, and the Native Corporations own one percent.
18 I really think it's time that the State and Federal
19 need to work with the tribal, the Native people, the --
20 the cultures throughout the state when it comes to
21 their food that we have grown to, not only love and
22 harvesting but in sharing. The people from far up
23 north with the bowhead whale, they share with the
24 people in the Northwest and statewide with their
25 bowhead whale when we share our fish, our sheefish, our
26 salmon. And what we also have to understand is the
27 trawlers, the devastating effect that they're putting
28 on our villages along Alaska. This is the time that
29 these Boards need to stop and think, yes, you have
30 rules and regulations; yes, you have things you need to
31 abide by but you also have people that have lived off
32 the land and the ocean and the sky for years, long
33 before things were put into place.

34
35 So I really hope at this time,
36 especially for our Western Herd, how many -- and if
37 anyone with State or Federal could answer my question,
38 how many residents of the state that have permits to
39 hunt these caribou, versus how many residents of non-
40 state residents hunt the caribou. I think it's time we
41 use these numbers. We find out exactly because that's
42 recorded. If you have to get a permit to hunt caribou,
43 whether you're in Unit 23 or any other unit that isn't
44 hurting by a decline there are still permits that have
45 to be given to folks that don't subsist and, yes, we
46 are very guilty on not recording our subsistence catch,
47 total numbers, at least that's what I've seen on social
48 media, that they're asking us to record the number of
49 caribou that we get. People share, that's the only way
50

0026

1 majority gets the caribou nowadays because of the fuel,
2 because of the cost of the vehicles, the snowmachines,
3 the boats, it's just astronomical, paying \$9 a gallon
4 of gas versus \$14 a gallon of gas in our villages in
5 the Northwest Arctic region.

6
7 We need to start working together. And
8 I think the Federal and State have to really realize
9 that they're there for the animals to continue over the
10 years but they're also there for the continued culture
11 and lives of people that have lived off these lands
12 forever.

13
14 I appreciate your call-in, I appreciate
15 all your meetings that you folks have, you know, and
16 you're trying your best to make things work, but like
17 Steve Oomittuk said, the decline is real in our region,
18 we need to work together, and if we need to stop the
19 non-resident, the hunters that come in, even for one
20 year to two year, how many would that save of the
21 animals. I just -- I just wanted to bring that out
22 there because something has to be done and I think it's
23 possible that everyone can work together.

24
25 The gentleman speaking earlier where he
26 said they wanted to withdraw, and I didn't fully
27 understand him, but, again, that's where I think our
28 serious issue is, can we stop the hunting of the non-
29 residents trophy hunters that come up in our area. And
30 don't get me wrong, I have nothing against that, if
31 they're willing to pay their price and come up and do
32 that, that's fine, but when our food and our caribou is
33 at high risk we have to do something.

34
35 So thank you for this opportunity to
36 all entities that are here on the call-in.

37
38 Thank you.

39
40 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you. And
41 I appreciate you calling in and sharing your point of
42 view and I share a lot of your points of view as the
43 Board Chair. Thank you very much.

44
45 Operator, is there any other persons
46 online at this time?

47
48 OPERATOR: Yes. Next we will hear from
49 Neil DeWitt, your line is open.

50

0027

1 MR. DEWITT: Good afternoon everybody.
2 I am here sitting on -- I'm changing hats because I sit
3 on the Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group. I am
4 the Anchorage AC Chair, or the Anchorage AC person that
5 represents the rest of the state of Alaska, the non-
6 Federally-qualified people, so with that hat on I'm
7 going to say this statement of:

8
9 Before the people started to not allow
10 non-Federally-qualified subsistence users into the
11 area, those people that would go up there hunting, they
12 would also have with them a bear permit, and wolf
13 permits and different things and they helped control
14 your population of the animals that are destroying your
15 caribou calves. Now, with that being said, they would
16 take the meat and they would -- my understanding, a lot
17 of them would just donate it to local people up there
18 because they just wanted the hide or the horns, as you
19 say, maybe a little bit of the meat but not all of it.
20 So they help share with -- by taking the animal. They
21 brought money into our state, they allowed for various
22 different things.

23
24 I've heard about the airplanes for
25 years and years and years because I've sat on the
26 Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group for quite a
27 few years already. Back in 2016, I believe it was, I
28 even made a proposal about some of the stuff that we're
29 talking about today and it still hasn't gone into
30 effect. Nobody is still telling these people with the
31 airplanes not to fly or don't get too close, or where
32 and when they can. It's kind of like a little pamphlet
33 that would have to be made, as we spoke about back
34 then, that says, you know, don't take the first caribou
35 that crosses the river because they lay down the scent
36 trail so the rest can follow. It's -- you know, you
37 don't camp on this side of the river you camp on that
38 side of the river. And there's various different
39 things that can go into that pamphlet and people need
40 to know that before they are allowed to get a license,
41 okay.

42
43 Along with that, closing it down to the
44 other five percent of the people that come up there, we
45 take such a small amount of animals out of that herd,
46 it's unbelievable. I think 250 is a number that I
47 heard and it could go up as much as, in the hay day,
48 back when the herd was almost 500,000, it was up to 800
49 that they took. That's a drop in bucket compared to
50

0028

1 how much the subsistence people take, which I
2 understand and anybody that knows me knows that I
3 realize that you guys don't have a Carrs or a Safeway
4 or a Fred Meyers or whatever, to go to the store and
5 get a pound of hamburger for supper tonight, I realize
6 that you have to take your caribou when the caribou are
7 there and you have to preserve it so you have food to
8 eat.

9
10 So I'm one of the people that actually
11 fight for you folks up there, but at the same time I
12 have to wear various different hats that, you know, I
13 represent this group of people and I have to talk on
14 their behalf.

15
16 With all that being said now, I will
17 say I have not in my viewpoint seen where closing it
18 down to the non-Federally-qualified subsistence user
19 has done any good at all. If anything, there's more
20 animals that are disappearing now because when you
21 first started that you had 205,000 was the count, and
22 we're down to 164,000 now, so, maybe, just think about
23 it, if you opened it back up and let them take some of
24 those bears and the wolves and stuff it might help you
25 out because I know we've, on the State side at the
26 Board of Game, they've allowed more take of bears,
27 there's two in certain areas, or maybe even three I
28 think I heard, so you need to kind of help control the
29 predator population so let the other people back in.

30
31 Lastly, I will say my understanding of
32 the four caribou per year instead of the five a day
33 that we used to have, the four caribou a year is for
34 each member of the household, not just the head of the
35 household. So if you got 5 people in your house you
36 got four caribou for each one of them, that's 20
37 caribou that you're allowed to take.

38
39 And that's where I'll end, thank you,
40 Mr. Chair, for the time and the opportunity to talk.
41 And thank the rest of you for listening.

42
43 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you.
44 Appreciate you taking the time to call in and
45 representing.

46
47 Any further testimony today. Operator,
48 is there anybody else online?

49
50

0029

1 OPERATOR: Yes. Next we will hear from
2 Arnold Brower, your line is open.

3
4 MR. BROWER: Hello. This is Arnold
5 Brower, can you hear me okay.

6
7 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yes, I can hear
8 you good Arnold.

9
10 MR. BROWER: Thank you. I'm here in
11 Utqiagvik, Barrow, Alaska. I'm with the Native Village
12 of Barrow Tribal Council. I'm a longtime resident of
13 Utqiagvik. I have fish camps up the Teshekpuk area and
14 the Ikpikpuk area where I go subsistence hunting.

15
16 And I've been in wildlife management
17 for all my life and when the bowhead population was
18 diminishing we dealt with pretty scientific stuff,
19 biological stuff, equipment needs studies, all that
20 stuff to compile what can be acceptable to sustain the
21 current population and I don't see that -- I have not
22 heard any of that on the item that we're discussing,
23 it's just only the Western Arctic Caribou Herd so
24 that's where I'll make my testimony on. And I have
25 been using a calculator to figure out -- figure things
26 out and five a day is quite a -- quite a good number
27 for us to have to sustain our subsistence way of life
28 without -- this way we're not implicated criminally and
29 in the part of this testimony that I want to focus on
30 is that people not be criminalized for trying to
31 sustain their culture and the subsistence way of life.

32
33 We have seen people with -- whether it
34 similar management and walrus where hunters were
35 criminalized and had been in jail for several years and
36 that defeats the purpose of a cooperative agreement to
37 have rural residents have that to go through that,
38 endure that because of these kinds of things and that's
39 why I think numbers have to be -- I do support the
40 conservation of the caribou but it's got to be done in
41 a way that it does not criminalize us and if it does
42 then it should be other way around to the sporthunter
43 as well. If they are serious, if you do that you'll
44 get to keep the population -- or let the population
45 recover, drastic measures has to be done on both sides,
46 whether they're sporthunters or -- this is pretty
47 drastic on us but for the sporthunter, on the Haul Road
48 or air guides, if that's going to be implemented -- if
49 we're criminalized any violation of -- that they do
50

0030

1 themselves has to be criminalized just like us to
2 enforce it. Because we feel the -- I feel that this is
3 a very serious resource for the State of Alaska,
4 especially rural Alaska that -- our culture.

5
6 Many years ago when the bowhead
7 population diminished, we were given an in lieu of
8 portion for the whale and each house was given two
9 pounds apiece, but that could only sustain them for two
10 weeks or maybe a week for families and that did not
11 work. And things have to be -- we have to
12 cooperatively work on this measure. Perhaps something
13 more considerable would be -- I like the guy that was
14 speaking right before me, even if you put two per
15 person, something to that effect so that five per
16 person at 365 days is over 1,800 caribou a year so we
17 want to fix that and reduce it to something more
18 sustainable so that the population can sustain itself.

19
20 So that's what I'm driving at.

21
22 And a lot of my neighbors here at
23 Utqiagvik are still hunting and one of the things that
24 I thought about in the past couple of months since this
25 public hearing that I heard about, to have a no take at
26 all between April -- April 15th until July 1st, for
27 example, calving time for the caribou, and that we
28 don't want to upset the taking of females that are
29 pregnant and things like that. So that can be
30 something that is -- I think that most of us can live
31 with, for example, in that area.

32
33 I want the Federal Subsistence Board to
34 understand you cannot criminalize our way of life and
35 it's got to be a two way street. And that we want to
36 protect our relatives, our families from our
37 communities -- a lot of communities that still sustain
38 their livelihoods with basic subsistence hunting,
39 whether it's fishing or caribou or otherwise.

40
41 So with that I'll close my comments
42 here and I don't know who will be next but thank you
43 for the opportunity.

44
45 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yep, and we
46 thank you too for calling in today. Appreciate you
47 giving us the feel of the landscape.

48
49 Operator, is there -- the next one
50

0031

1 ready.

2

3 OPERATOR: Yes. Next we will hear from
4 Walter Sampson, your line is open.

5

6 MR. SAMPSON: Thank you, very much.
7 Can you folks hear me?

8

9 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Hear you loud
10 and clear.

11

12 MR. SAMPSON: Thank you, very much.

13

14 (In Inupiaq)

15

16 Is there any questions?

17

18 (No comments)

19

20 MR. SAMPSON: First of all.....

21

22 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Well, I love
23 your language but I'm a Xaad Kil (indiscernible)
24 speaker there, brother, this is the Chairman, so if you
25 want to redo that for the record.

26

27 MR. SAMPSON: Thank you. First of all,
28 I use that analogy as a way for you to understand the
29 process that the state of Alaska and Federal system to
30 go through don't get quite out to the villages to
31 understand and it's you and I that's been through these
32 processes to talk about resources that can understand,
33 you and I have that privilege to do that. But for
34 someone who live out in the community, that live off
35 these resources don't have that opportunity to -- to
36 get the message because of the process, because of the
37 technology that is not there for -- for some of the
38 village members to go through to listen to and it's
39 something that we need to understand. The process is
40 not there for those who are impacted by this very
41 process that we're going through to make decisions for
42 them and they don't have that opportunity to do that.
43 And I think it's critical that we understand that and
44 there's got to be a better process in taking this very
45 process out to the villages so they can understand what
46 it is that we're discussing today. They don't have no
47 feedback for you because they don't have that process.

48

49 I think Dood brought out some good

50

0032

1 points in regards to the culture and the tradition that
2 we have in this region and we're right on the migration
3 pattern of that herd. I testified in May in regards to
4 the process.

5
6 And early '19 -- 1993 we saw the herd
7 getting up to the max of 500,000 and we knew at that
8 point in time that they were going to crash, and when
9 they did crash we started getting concerned about the
10 herd and the question was brought to the state of
11 Alaska and the Federal system, we're getting concerned
12 about the -- the decline of the herd, what is being
13 done to -- to address the decline and all we heard was,
14 oh, they're still healthy, we're not concerned about
15 them, and that's not a good answer.

16
17 Now, that from 500,000 we're down to
18 164,000, State of Alaska and Federal system are getting
19 concerned about it and now we're getting to the point
20 of punishing people or criminalize them for taking
21 caribou and I think it's sad that it's a process that
22 has taken us to that. And I think Jack brought out a
23 good point in regards to taking back their
24 recommendation on 06 and I think if we're going to
25 proceed on making a decision on 05 we still have not
26 taken this out to the villages that are being impacted.
27 If we should move to do something, then I think we're
28 getting good public process through this system from
29 other areas, but not a process from the villages who
30 are being impacted by this very process.

31
32 I would suggest that there's got to be
33 a way to get to some of these communities that need
34 that information and I think we all know that the
35 process is -- or has a lack of to bring information out
36 to the communities for them to hear them, about what it
37 is that we're trying to do or what this Federal system
38 is trying to or the State system, and I'm glad that we
39 are in the process of having dialogue without really
40 hearing from those people that are -- will be impacted
41 by this very process.

42
43 And I thank you very much for your
44 time.

45
46 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you for
47 calling in today and I appreciate your point of view
48 and definitely hope we can hear everything that we need
49 to hear and get all these concerns elevated so we can
50

0033

1 make the best decision for the people and the user.
2 I'm all about food security.

3

4 MR. SAMPSON: Thank you.

5

6 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: So thank you.

7

8 Operator, is there another one on the
9 cue that would like to be recognized at this time?

10

11 OPERATOR: Yes. Next we will hear from
12 Nathan Hadley, your line is open.

13

14 MR. HADLEY: Yes, thank you for having
15 this meeting, a very important meeting to have and to
16 listen to the comments of the people. You know I agree
17 with Oomittuk from Point Hope, Steve Oomittuk.

18

19 You know my grandfather would always
20 tell me that our year starts springtime when we start
21 hunting whether it's whale, you know, bowhead whale or
22 beluga whale. In my area we hunt beluga whale, we just
23 worked on putting away sheefish, smelt fish, we're
24 working on trout, you know, to fill our freezers for
25 the winter. And, you know, the birds came. So we're
26 putting a variety of meat away, and food, and the
27 caribou herd is very important to our diet, you know,
28 many people, you know, in a village don't have a boat,
29 a snowmachine, you know, and they rely on their
30 residents to provide for them also so, you know, we'll
31 be hunting bearded seal soon. So that variety is there
32 but, you know, the caribou migration is really
33 important.

34

35 You know I heard a caller earlier
36 saying, you know, about the airplanes, really, you
37 know, I grew up reindeer herding and like I said before
38 that it's a sense of camps or village, animals get used
39 to coming near a village for safety or a road, you
40 know, because they know that they have a better chance
41 of surviving from predators like wolves or bears, you
42 know, and we camp all summer gathering food and, you
43 know, right now the price of five pound hamburger --
44 hamburger meat, \$53 in my village. And, you know, in
45 the past meetings that I attended over the phone
46 hearing, you know, people from the Lower 48 saying that
47 they're up here to see their families also but their
48 cost is well over 10,000 to bring their family up to do
49 a sport hunt. That's not -- you know, that's not our
50

0034

1 way of life. We make use of everything that we can off
2 the land, off the water.

3
4 And, you know, like with this change,
5 it will hurt a lot of people, you know, because we
6 really rely on the caribou migration and, you know, if --
7 you know all hunting to the outsiders stop, you know,
8 our hunts are off the rivers and during the winter,
9 yeah, we use snowmachines but, you know, even that, you
10 know, with -- what you call it, three bulls and a
11 female now, I really believe there needs to be more
12 studies to find out more, you know, with this so, you
13 know, it's really a scent of a man -- you know if
14 there's hunters -- you know they know they're being
15 hunted and, you know, we would like to see more study
16 also happening with the people up here, the Native
17 people have the right to live off the land and not be
18 afraid of running out. You know, we, ourselves, we
19 watch how we hunt too when we know it's getting scarce
20 and do it right, you know, we not only eat the meat of
21 the caribou, you know, we also eat the stomach, the (In
22 Native), you know, we like marrow, bone marrow soup.
23 We use every part of the caribou, you know, it's a
24 delicacy, you know, besides the meat.

25
26 So thank you for hearing me.

27
28 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you for
29 taking the time to call in today and appreciate your
30 testimony.

31
32 Operator, at this time can we move to
33 the next one in the cue, please.

34
35 OPERATOR: Yes. Next we will hear from
36 Vernon Edwardson, your line is open.

37
38 MR. EDWARDSON: (In Inupiaq) Good
39 afternoon everybody. I hear some leadership from the
40 Northwest Arctic Borough and I'm pleased to hear that
41 and also some from across the North Slope.

42
43 I wanted to come and testify to this
44 forum and -- so yesterday we had a North Slope Borough
45 Assembly meeting and I wanted to read into the record
46 on testimony, our resolution, if that's okay with
47 everybody here.

48
49 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: You have the
50

0035

1 floor.

2

3

4 guys?

5

6

7 floor.

8

9

10 this is the North Slope Borough Resolution, Serial
11 Number 28-2023. A resolution opposing the proposed
12 special action by the Federal Subsistence Board
13 drastically reducing the allowable harvest of Western
14 Arctic Caribou Herd caribou from five per day to four
15 per year.

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MR. EDWARDSON: Is that okay with you

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: You have the

MR. EDWARDSON: All right. This is --

Whereas, the Northwest Arctic Alaska
Subsistence Regional Advisory Council submitted
Temporary Wildlife Special Action WSA request, WSA22-05
asking the Federal Subsistence Board to reduce the
caribou harvest limit in Unit 23 from five caribou per
day to four caribou per year, one of which may be a cow
for the remainder of the 2022 to 2024 regulatory cycle;
and

Whereas, the Western Interior Alaska
Subsistence Regional Advisory Council submitted
Temporary Wildlife Special Action WSA22-06 asking the
Board to reduce the caribou harvest limit across the
range of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd from five
caribou per day to four caribou per year, only one of
which may be a cow for the remainder of the 2022 and
through 2024 regulatory cycle, specifically reducing
the harvest in 21D remainder, 24A remainder, 24C, 24D
in all caribou hunts -- all caribou hunt areas within
Units 22, 23, and 26A; and

Whereas, conservation concerns
associated with the recent significant decline in the
Western Arctic Caribou Herd numbers led to these WSA
requests; and

Whereas, subsistence activities
including the pursuit, harvest, processing, sharing,
and consumption of caribou are central to the Inupiat
culture and critical to the nutritional well-being of
the North Slope residents; and

Whereas, adoption of either of these

0036

1 temporary WSA requests would result in immediate and
2 profound food security and actual hunger within all of
3 the affected subsistence communities; and

4
5 Whereas, the proposed harvest limits
6 are not in keeping with traditional, common and
7 essential sharing practices within our communities and
8 would prevent the harvest by proxy for elders and
9 others who cannot harvest needed caribou for
10 themselves; and

11
12 Whereas, no stakeholder group has more
13 to gain from the conservation measures aimed at
14 recovering the numbers of the Western Arctic Caribou
15 Herd and no stakeholder group has more to lose if the
16 Western Arctic Caribou Herd continues to decline than
17 the subsistence hunters and their communities who
18 depend on the animals as a significant and
19 irreplaceable food source; and

20
21 Whereas, the North Slope subsistence
22 hunters and communities has -- have successfully
23 responded to sudden and significant shortages of
24 subsistence resources in the past, including caribou,
25 by invoking customary and traditional conservation and
26 harvest practices and limits; and

27
28 Whereas, the North Slope subsistence
29 hunters and communities have a long history of
30 successful and respected self-management and co-
31 management of harvest undertaken in collaboration with
32 responsible State of Alaska and Federal agencies,
33 including co-management of the harvest of the bowhead
34 whale and other marine mammals; and

35
36 Whereas, the North Slope Borough's
37 Department of Wildlife management employing community
38 based subsistence research specialists has for decades
39 documented the community harvest of and need for a full
40 range of subsistence resources, including caribou; and

41
42 Whereas, while also hunting within the
43 range of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd subsistence
44 hunters within six North Slope communities harvest the
45 majority of their caribou from the Central Arctic and
46 Teshekpuk Herds, which are either stable or increasing;
47 and

48
49 Whereas, enforcement of the proposed
50

0037

1 WSA's would almost certainly result in the citation of
2 North Slope and other subsistence hunters unjustly
3 criminalizing their efforts to feed their families and
4 communities; and

5
6 Whereas, food security and conservation
7 of subsistence resources are top priorities of the
8 North Slope Borough, our communities and our residents;

9
10 Now, therefore be it resolved, that the
11 North Slope Borough strongly opposes the adoption of
12 the Temporary Wildlife Special Action requests WSA22-
13 05, and WSA22-06, that would reduce the harvest limits
14 of caribou across the full range of the Western Arctic
15 Caribou Herd; and

16
17 Be it further resolved, that the North
18 Slope Borough proposes as an alternative to the
19 proposed WSAs that the Federal Subsistence Board adopt
20 a conservation program that employs community based
21 self-regulation of Western Arctic Caribou Herd harvest.

22
23 This was signed -- introduced on June
24 6th, adopted on June 7th, signed by myself, the
25 President of the North Slope Borough Assembly, Vernon
26 Edwardson, and signed by Harry K. Brower, Jr., on June
27 7th.

28
29 And I wanted to -- we, as North Slope
30 leadership strongly oppose this -- this action that
31 this forum is trying to do and the whole subsistence
32 communities on the North Slope strongly opposes that,
33 this is going to have a major impact, detrimental
34 impact to already high food prices in the villages, and
35 across the North Slope, along with the Northwest Arctic
36 region, and I wanted to make sure that this was read
37 into the record that you guys have.

38
39 And I thank you for your time, and (In
40 Native) to all those who are having testimonies in this
41 forum.

42
43 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you.
44 Haawa. Thank you for calling in and reading the
45 resolution and getting the important message for the
46 people out there on to the record. I appreciate that.

47
48 I'm going to pause the public testimony
49 at this time as we have a Regional Advisory Council
50

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1 member who has to get off here really soon and so I'm
2 going to go ahead and call on Thomas at this time.

3

4 Thomas, you have the floor.

5

6 MR. BAKER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

7

8 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yes, Mr. Baker.

9

10 MR. BAKER: For the record this is
11 Thomas Baker, Chair of the Northwest Arctic Regional
12 Advisory Council. I'm pulling up my notes here. So on
13 behalf of the Northwest Arctic RAC I just wanted to
14 read our reasoning behind this action request.

15

16 The Northwest Arctic Regional Advisory
17 Council is requesting the temporary special action to
18 reduce the caribou harvest limit in Unit 23 to four
19 caribou, four bulls or three bulls and one cow per
20 year. The Western Arctic Caribou Herd has continued to
21 decline with the most recent estimate being 164,000
22 caribou. The Northwest Arctic RAC is greatly concerned
23 about this precipitous decline of the herd and feel
24 that immediate action is needed to slow the decline and
25 prevent the herd from reaching a point of no return.

26

27 The request for a temporary special
28 action will be followed with a proposal for regulatory
29 change during the 2024 to 2026 wildlife cycle.

30

31 The RAC feels that the harvest
32 recommendation set forth by the Western Arctic Caribou
33 Herd Working Group would be a starting point for the
34 conservation of the herd while still allowing some
35 harvest. The RAC recognizes that Federally-qualified
36 subsistence users are already facing food insecurities
37 but this drastic reduction of caribou harvest is a
38 means to help protect the caribou herd while still
39 allowing some harvest.

40

41 And if I may, Mr. Chair, given the
42 amount of feedback from public hearings, from tribal
43 consultations and just speaking with folks on the
44 ground in the Northwest Arctic part of Alaska, feedback
45 is overwhelmingly negative towards this call for a
46 reduction, which originally coming out of Kotzebue,
47 from the Kotzebue Sound Fish and Game Advisory Council
48 and on to the working group, was an attempt to self
49 limit and show how important it is for our community

50

0039

1 members to understand the herd is declining and that
2 we, ourselves, the people who are really the stewards
3 of this herd need to take actions to make sure that we
4 are doing everything to keep the herd alive,
5 overwhelmingly people are against this reduction just
6 as we've heard today and are going to continue to hear,
7 this will turn criminals into our subsistence
8 providers, in that, families are typically are not able
9 to survive off of what can be harvested by one person
10 if it's only four caribou per year. Internally, the
11 RAC and the Kotzebue Sound Fish and Game Advisory
12 Committee, we're all looking towards what can be done
13 to reduce the amount of caribou being harvested so that
14 it's working with the long-term goals of preserving the
15 herd, but at the same time we can't short ourselves.
16 So we have not had the amount of discussion that the
17 Western Interior RAC has had, but this has come up and
18 that is the position that the RAC has at this time.

19

20 If there's any questions anyone would
21 have for the Northwest Arctic RAC I'm happy to take
22 them.

23

24 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you, Mr.
25 Baker. And I appreciate you taking the time and
26 letting us know you needed to get off and get that
27 presentation on the record for us. Any questions from
28 the Board for Thomas before he has to get off.

29

30 (No comments)

31

32 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: All right,
33 thank you, Mr. Baker, for that insight. And thank you
34 for your work on the Regional Advisory Council.

35

36 Operator, we'll go ahead and go back to
37 the public testimony at this time, if there's anyone
38 else online that'd like to be recognized, this is their
39 opportunity as a public testifier.

40

41 OPERATOR: Thank you. Next we will
42 hear from Brian Pearson [sic], your line is open.

43

44 (No comments)

45

46 OPERATOR: Brian, we're not able to
47 hear you in the conference -- I believe we have you
48 now.

49

50

0040

1 MR. PERSON: Yeah, hi, this is Brian
2 Person. I didn't realize that I actually got in cue.
3 Well, thank you, I think you've heard a lot of
4 testimony from a number of people opposing these
5 special actions. You know, I guess -- I'm a wildlife
6 biologist for the North Slope Borough, Department of
7 Wildlife Management.

8
9 I just want to say that we recognize
10 that there is, and I recognize that there is a
11 conservation concern for the Western Arctic Herd and
12 anything we can do to reduce cow harvest will
13 facilitate that herd's recovery. You know, we've
14 drafted some proposals that we've submitted to the --
15 well, the North Slope Advisory Committee submitted to
16 the Board of Game, we're continuing outreach within the
17 communities to raise awareness of the conservation
18 concern as well as continue to get feedback from
19 communities on what they think will work for them and
20 the best way to help allow the recovery of this herd.

21
22 So I'll just keep it short at that.

23
24 I thank you, everyone, for the
25 testimony and thank you for this opportunity.

26
27 Thanks.

28
29 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you for
30 taking the time to call in today. Operator, is there
31 anyone else in the cue that would like to be recognized
32 at this time.

33
34 OPERATOR: There are no more people in
35 the cue at this time.

36
37 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you,
38 Operator. And that concludes our public testimony on
39 this wildlife action. We'll move on to the next agenda
40 item and I'm just pulling up my agenda, I got to bounce
41 around here -- sorry.

42
43 Tribal Alaska Native Corporation
44 consultation summary, we'll call on you Orville Lind.

45
46 MR. LIND: Yes, good afternoon, Chair
47 and Federal Subsistence Board members. Can everyone
48 hear me okay?

49
50

0041

1 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Loud and clear.

2

3

4 MR. LIND: Thank you. We conducted the
5 consultation on WSA22-05 and 06 on May 15th and I'll
6 just go ahead and get into the rest of this.

7

8 We had the first Inupiat Community of
9 Arctic Slope, the local tribe, tribal council strongly
10 opposes and represent communities along the North
11 Slope. And they stated that four caribou per year will
12 not meet their subsistence needs and also stated that
13 their hunters go out to hunt for all the community and
14 their families and four caribou proposal per year will
15 not be enough for their people. Also the uses of the
16 caribou animal itself, the hides, clothing keep hunters
17 warm, caribou meat is healthier than store bought food
18 and prevents diseases in our people.

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There was also a tribal council member from Anaktuvuk Pass stating that we're in no man's land and he was indecisive and we want to save the caribou but we also want to harvest them. He also stated that if the caribou herd is dwindling so bad we need to take action from the state of Alaska but also outlying communities around, over the years been indicating too much caribou harvest from all the three herds, those indications were not considered and now they are on the brink of no return. I am a caribou hunter and live off caribou, primary diet since time immemorial. The Western Arctic caribou is on the brink of no return which is sad and devastating. History repeats itself, you're going to do these four caribou per year for nomadic people allowed by Federal government to sustain their lifestyle knowing of these changes that North American Indians have to endure -- broken treaties, indications -- we're feeling good from saying those words to make us feel better but some authority and just how do you suppose to do that over the vast area. Harvest in late July and August and come from the west along the northern Brooks Range through the mountains, how are you going to regulate this, pretty much terminal, I could cry. Difficult to enforce these rules. Disruption for people harvesting from different herds. We do not -- we know not to overharvest for a thousand years, and ten thousand years, and now it's all regulated for us. Just difficult to follow your regulations with over a thousand SuperCub planes coming in to harvest the same caribou. Probably will disappear. But happy that you try. But concerned

1 about enforcement, how will it affect us. Probably get
2 fines or having hunting equipment and vehicles taken
3 away, we're in the National Park and they can do that --
4 just difficult to try and regulate 164,000 caribou
5 with so many people and lots of non-local hunters.
6 That ruling is a bit late, hope it works. Pray to God
7 that the Western Arctic Caribou Herd will rebound but
8 don't think it will, just too much of decline from
9 490,000 where it was peaked, what will it be the next
10 few years bring. OSM Staff replied that -- just to
11 clarify as far as harvest regulations go there is no
12 distinction between the different herds of caribou that
13 if people are harvesting Western Arctic Caribou Herd or
14 Central Arctic caribou. From an enforcement standpoint
15 there are no distinctions there, it's just by area and
16 what harvest regulations are. OSM policy coordinator
17 also shared that this is a temporary special action
18 request and that the Board will be meeting June 8th to
19 take action. This is a public meeting and will begin
20 at 1:00 p.m., it will be posted on our website.
21 Anaktuvuk Pass resident asked how soon will this law or
22 this administrative law take effect. Again, OSM Staff
23 replied that this is a temporary regulation special
24 action and that the request to the Federal Board to
25 take action in an emergency situation, when the Board
26 takes action, if they approve it, it will not last
27 longer than a regulatory cycle. Again, a resident from
28 Anaktuvuk Pass again stated that he thinks this would
29 have to last longer than two cycles. OSM Staff replied
30 that this regulation would be the remainder -- for the
31 remainder of 2022 to 2024 regulatory cycle, so the end
32 of June 30th, 2024 cycle.

33
34 There was a question from one of the
35 Federal Subsistence Board members asking if there were
36 any other suggestions. Anaktuvuk Pass resident again
37 shared that the temporary regulation until 2024 and see
38 if there was any improvements in the population, he
39 would support that. Going against myself, he said, but
40 for the sake of the caribou we need to address this
41 issue. I support you guys. I love caribou. Thanks
42 for taking action and thank the Fish and Wildlife --
43 the Federal Subsistence Board for making a temporary
44 setback [sic] for the Western Arctic Caribou Herd.
45 It's a very crucial time for the northern communities,
46 our lifestyles have changed so drastically and we've
47 adjusted to all the regulations, all the rules so that
48 we glad -- we're glad that you're trying to get some
49 sort of hold on this and thanks for taking notice of
50

0043

1 that. We support you to make the Western Arctic
2 Caribou population rebound, it's drastic. Given time
3 he thinks that they can rebound, hopefully we could put
4 this all together.

5

6 During that same time on May 15th we
7 conducted also ANCSA Corporation consultations, we
8 started at 1:00 p.m. in the afternoon. We also had
9 Regional Advisory Council Chairs present also.

10

11 The NANA Corporation member expressed
12 gratitude towards the Northwest Arctic RAC on their
13 work in a difficult situation. Don't have official
14 stance on this but would like to share concerns from
15 shareholders. The Western Arctic Caribou Herd that
16 feeds families across multiple regions and would like
17 to open dialogue on concerns on how quickly this
18 process is moving. Shareholders not given enough time
19 to provide input on this, does not give people time to
20 prepare for different types of food that they will need
21 to adjust to. Moose are also in decline and have large
22 die-offs of fish in the rivers. A few years back the
23 timing of public hearings is concerning, recommend
24 taking into consideration the subsistence harvesting
25 seasons, we talked to shareholders, users of the
26 caribou, rely on subsistence, overwhelming sense of
27 worry and concern about how to meet their dietary
28 needs. Not just the meat, also bones, organs, sinew,
29 antlers for artwork for cash income, also data gaps
30 need to be addressed and done in a culturally sensitive
31 way. A cultural sensitive way. Also would like to
32 know -- like to know some clarification on proxy
33 hunters for widows, for elders, also put out that proxy
34 hunters are a big part of our subsistence harvest, not
35 sure how it will play out if law enforcement officers
36 come across someone proxy hunting for two elders at the
37 same time. OSM Staff replied to proxy hunting. Our
38 Federal subsistence uses the term designated hunters on
39 Federal public lands, anyone can be a designated hunter
40 for another Federal qualified user on Federal public
41 lands. There's a different term in the State system,
42 they use the term proxy hunter. You have to be 65 or
43 disabled in order to have someone hunt for you on State
44 public lands.

45

46 Another question from a Council member
47 asking if they have several hunters in the boat with
48 permits to hunt for elders, for example, gas is very
49 expensive so hunters gather together on one boat to go
50

1 hunting for weeks at a time, can all of them be called
2 proxy hunters or designated hunters and have the same
3 amount of food as permitted by regulation was the
4 question. OSM Staff replied as permitted by State or
5 Federal regulations that is permissible. Western
6 Interior shared that those questions about the reasons
7 for the proposal was because of biological reasons, the
8 herd was in decline, drastically, has been in decline
9 drastically and the survival of adult cows has gone
10 from 80 percent to 70 percent, so need to preserve the
11 cow caribou. This, combined with the late spring and --
12 will affect the caribou south of the Kobuk River, the
13 Western Interior RAC is very concerned about the herd's
14 population trajectory but did not delineate the western
15 portion of the Unit 26A, this problem will not
16 go away. In the 1970s it went from one to two bull
17 harvest and -- and you don't want to go there. And the
18 data that supported this is how they came to this
19 agreement -- let me back up, I'm sorry. Back to the
20 Western Interior RAC. They're very concerned about the
21 herd's population trajectory but did not delineate the
22 western portion of Unit 26A. This problem will not go
23 away. In 1970s they went from one to two bull harvest
24 and don't want to go there, that's the reason for
25 submitting the proposal.

26
27 The NANA Corporation member shared that
28 he does not have a position on this special action but
29 gathering information to share with shareholders and
30 advocate on their behalf. Going to be reaching out to
31 shareholders with all the info we can gather and ask
32 that the data that supported this, how they came to
33 this agreement. OSM Staff replied that this conclusion
34 came from the Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working
35 Group.

36
37 And at that point we had closing
38 comments from both the Federal Subsistence Board
39 members and the folks that called online.

40
41 Mr. Chair. Board members. That
42 concludes the consultation summary on May 15th on that
43 proposal.

44
45 Thank you.

46
47 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you,
48 Orville. Any questions from the Board for Orville on
49 the consultation process or its presentation.
50

0045

1 (No comments)

2

3 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: All right,
4 hearing.....

5

6 MS. PITKA: Orville, this is Rhonda.
7 So during the testimony, was there -- I guess was there
8 support or opposition. I think I was trying to get at
9 that a little bit like what was their pretty much, I
10 guess, stance on this -- on the special action.

11

12 MR. LIND: Yeah. Well, mostly was in
13 opposition, however, there were two members that were
14 undecided but they were still concerned about the
15 caribou situation, however, they were undecided.

16

17 MS. PITKA: Thank you, Orville.

18

19 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Okay, thank
20 you, Rhonda. Any other Board questions for Orville.

21

22 (No comments)

23

24 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you,
25 Orville, for that presentation.

26

27 MR. LIND: You're welcome.

28

29 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Okay, at this
30 time we'll call on the liaisons to the Board, the
31 Regional Advisory Council Chairs. First up we'll call
32 on Thomas, he took off, he's already done on it so
33 we'll go ahead and give Steve a chance at this time.

34

35 North Slope.

36

37 MR. OOMITTUK: Are you calling Steve
38 Oomittuk here?

39

40 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yeah, Steve, I
41 could barely hear you, if you want to speak up a little
42 bit, you have the floor.

43

44 MR. OOMITTUK: Thank you. Thank you,
45 and I appreciate this time and opportunity to give
46 public testimony.

47

48 You know like everybody said, our.....

49

50

0046

1 MS. PITKA: I'm sorry, I can't hear.

2

3 MR. OOMITTUK: Yeah, can you hear
4 something in the background or something?

5

6 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: You just sound
7 muffled there, Steve, but I can hear you a louder.

8

9 MR. OOMITTUK: Okay. I think my
10 dryer's on, I'm going to turn it off. How about now,
11 is this a little better?

12

13 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yes, thank you.

14

15 MR. OOMITTUK: Okay. You know just
16 like what everybody said, you know, we have been
17 subsistence hunters, our way of life, hunting the
18 animals that fed us, cloth us, sheltered us, you know,
19 since time immemorial, and the spirituality, our bond,
20 our connection with all animals, whether they're from
21 the land, sea, or sky. You know our identity as a
22 people. And we want to ensure the safety of the
23 population and the migration of -- you know, we don't
24 want to be criminalized for hunting and, you know, I --
25 I understand that some of us feel that we can do our
26 own regulations, we can take care of ourselves and, you
27 know, set them, you know, we're always overridden by
28 the Federal Subsistence Board. You know when we,
29 ourselves, have ability and relationship with -- as
30 Federally-recognized tribes. You know, if the Western
31 Arctic Caribou Herd is in decline we are concerned, we
32 want to find a way, we want to work together, you know,
33 whether it's with the State or the Federal agencies,
34 but we do want to put food on our table.

35

36 But, you know, it's -- we want to get
37 an accurate number, 164,000 and that's an estimated
38 number but that is a low number. We want to find out
39 why the decline is declining in a rapid, you know, but
40 like you said earlier if that number is going to be put
41 in place, you know, I heard that, you know, the sport --
42 do they have an actual number of non-residents within
43 Unit 23 or the actual numbers, how many permits, we
44 don't see that, how many permits are given to non-
45 residents and out of state hunters, you don't have that
46 number. Can we get an actual number from the Federal
47 and State agencies to see exactly what is being taken
48 out of our area, they don't give us that, you know,
49 people trying to (indiscernible) the number of people
50

0047

1 coming in to Kotzebue, and it's a lot. But, you know,
2 these studies need to be done, you know, we need some
3 actual numbers of how many non-residents and whether
4 they're trophy hunters or sporthunters and the actual
5 meat that is taken out of the -- out of our lands that
6 they caught. You know, who regulates that, you only
7 have a few game warden or State people flying in the
8 area, maybe only one on the North Slope, how do you
9 regulate 90,000 square miles, the migration of all
10 these caribou herds to get that actual number of non-
11 residents and sporthunters and we want -- we want
12 numbers, we want to know. And if anything is going to
13 be -- if we are going to be const -- we are the
14 priority people to harvest the animals. If something's
15 going to drastically going to happen it should be the
16 non-residents and sportshunters that should not be
17 allowed to get these permits to hunt until we figure
18 out what's going on with the herd.

19

20 Thank you.

21

22 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you,
23 Steve. Appreciate your point of view. We'll call on
24 the next -- we'll call on the next Regional Advisory
25 Council to present their position.

26

27 MS. BATES-PILCHER: Hello, this is
28 Nissa Pilcher, Council Coordinator for the Seward
29 Peninsula Subsistence Regional Advisory Council. I
30 will be speaking on behalf of them today.

31

32 The Seward Peninsula Regional Advisory
33 Council voted to support WSA22-05. The Council members
34 noted that the expected Federal proposal submission
35 from the Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group to
36 reduce all harvest of Western Arctic Caribou to four
37 caribou per year for the 2024-2026 cycle. The Council
38 supported the Northwest Arctic Regional Advisory
39 Council's approach to preemptively limit harvest for
40 this time of year to conserve as much of the population
41 as possible.

42

43 The Seward Peninsula Regional Advisory
44 Council met prior to the Western Interior and,
45 therefore, did not offer any comment on WSA22-06.

46

47 And that concludes justification for
48 the Seward Peninsula.

49

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1 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you,
2 Nissa. And, last, we'll call on Jack.

3
4 MR. REAKOFF: Thank you, Mr. Chair. As
5 I stated before, in reconsidering the proposal WSA22-06
6 we would request that the Federal Subsistence Board
7 withdraw our support and -- but with the recognition
8 that the Western Arctic Caribou Herd is going to need a
9 lot of deliberation and discussion to bring consensus
10 with all of the user groups to arrest this steep
11 decline. And so I'm not sure if we're going to get a
12 census this year, cold, rainy summer, the caribou don't
13 aggregate so we don't get a good census, but we are --
14 there was deep snow and there was rain on snow in the
15 areas that the caribou went into this last winter. So
16 70 percent of the herd was put in a hard spot.

17
18 So we're going to -- I think it
19 highlighted this issue for the public and the Board and
20 the Council members. We're all going to have to work
21 together to address this issue this coming regulatory
22 cycle.

23
24 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

25
26 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you,
27 Jack. That concludes the Regional Advisory Council
28 recommendations. We'll call on the Alaska Department
29 of Fish and Game comments. Ben Mulligan, you have the
30 floor.

31
32 MR. MULLIGAN: Thank you, sir. For the
33 record this is Ben Mulligan from the Alaska Department
34 of Fish and Game.

35
36 The Department has took no official
37 position on these two special actions but we'll leave
38 you with these comments, in that:

39
40 We know that through our Board of Game
41 process we will be also deliberating this issue. That
42 meeting, as was stated previously, will occur January
43 26th through 29th in Kotzebue, you know, and that's in
44 2024, but between now and then our proposal books will
45 come out, our Advisory Committees for the region, both
46 directly in the herd's range and it's peripheral, will
47 meet and most -- I would say pretty much 100 percent of
48 the time when they meet on these proposals we have
49 Staff that sit in on those ACs, either telephonically
50

0049

1 or in person and answer questions and have a discussion
2 with those ACs so they can develop their positions and
3 then, you know, we do have AC representatives that do
4 get -- travel in for that Board of Game meeting and so
5 hopefully we'll see a lot more discussion which will
6 then give folks time to see what has been proposed. I
7 know -- I think the Kotzebue AC was talking about
8 submitting their own proposal to the Board of Game
9 process so we'll see what that one looks like and we
10 can go from there, but I think the State's process and
11 the timeline in which we have left in that gives folks
12 plenty of time to engage locally with their AC, with
13 the Department, the RACs will also be able to see that
14 and give comments and so will the Federal agencies.

15

16 And so, with that, I will leave it.

17

18 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

19

20 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you, Ben.
21 Appreciate the comments. Any questions from the Board.

22

23 (No comments)

24

25 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Hearing none
26 we'll call on the ISC recommendation.

27

28 MS. LAVINE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. My
29 (indiscernible - cuts out) on Page 46 of your analysis.

30

31 REPORTER: So, Robbin, I can't hear
32 you.

33

34 MS. LAVINE: Oh, okay, is this better?

35

36 REPORTER: Yes.

37

38 MS. LAVINE: Okay. The InterAgency
39 Staff Committee acknowledges the concerns expressed by
40 the Northwest Arctic and Western Interior Councils
41 about the decline of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd
42 and commends the proactive measures recommen --
43 recommended by these Councils. Suggested measures aim
44 to protect the long-term survival of the herd and
45 assure the continuation of subsistence uses.

46

47 Through public comments rural residents
48 voiced their concerns for future harvest opportunities
49 and long-term food security. Based on long-term
50

0050

1 monitoring of the herd it is clear the Western Arctic
2 Caribou Herd is in serious decline.

3

4

5 Due to the winter meeting schedule only
6 two of the four Councils with a C&T for the Western
7 Arctic Caribou Herd were able to act on one of the two
8 temporary special action requests. The Seward
9 Peninsula and Western Interior Councils supported
10 WSA22-05. While the Councils recommendations may be
11 supported by substantial evidence they could also be
12 detrimental to the satisfaction of subsistence needs.

12

13

14 A few topics the Board may want to
15 consider when deliberating on these special actions
16 include:

16

17

18 If approved, Federal harvest
19 regulations would be more restrictive than State
20 regulations.

20

21

22 Not all Federally-qualified subsistence
23 users would be able to hunt under the more liberal
24 State regulations as Unit 23 remains closed to caribou
25 hunting by non-Federally-qualified users through 2023
26 due to WSA22-01 currently in place.

26

27

28 The proposed harvest reduction in
29 WSA22-06 does not distinguish between herds, some of
30 which are at healthy population levels like the
31 Teshekpuk and Central Arctic Caribou Herds.

31

32

33 The Board may want to consider harvest
34 reductions through the regulatory proposal process
35 rather than through special actions. This would allow
36 for public and Council review of an analysis and formal
37 recommendation by all the affected Councils. This
38 would also allow for discussion of possible
39 alternatives to harvest reductions proposed in WSA22-05
40 and 06.

40

41

42 The ISC acknowledges the need to take
43 strong conservation measures as soon as possible to
44 conserve the Western Arctic Caribou Herd and protect
45 the long-term continuation of subsistence uses.
46 Limiting cow harvest is the primary strategy identified
47 to achieve conservation goals and sustainability of the
48 herd. Meaningful alternative to the requested special
49 actions might be a higher annual harvest limit while
50 reducing cow harvest for the 2023 hunting season and

50

0051

1 then reevaluate additional measures through the full
2 regulatory process and Board action during the April
3 2024 wildlife regulatory meeting.

4

5 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

6

7 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you,
8 Robbin. Any questions from the Board for ISC.

9

10 (No comments)

11

12 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Hearing none,
13 we'll go ahead and open up the floor for discussions
14 and questions if they have any of the -- to our
15 liaisons.

16

17 (No comments)

18

19 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Hearing no
20 questions to liaisons, we'll go ahead and open up the
21 floor for Board action.

22

23 MR. OOMITTUK: Yeah, I just have a.....

24

25 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Oh, go ahead.

26

27 MR. OOMITTUK:question to the
28 different agency like -- so, you know, what kind of
29 action is being done -- will be done this year 2023 on
30 the Western Arctic Caribou Herd, are they going to do
31 more studies in the Unit 23 area, up north, or
32 migration routes, and see the actual -- what kind of
33 study. You know I know they do aerial photos in the
34 last few years, you know, trying to get an accurate
35 number on aerial photos due to weather, haven't been
36 getting an actual -- you know a lot of the population
37 counts in the last few years, you know, (indiscernible -
38 background noise) and get an actual photo -- I believe
39 last year's population count was (indiscernible -
40 background noise) for a year, we -- we need to find
41 another way to getting that actual number of population
42 and -- and have been thought of, you know, future of
43 transplanting caribou from the other herds to the
44 Western Arctic Caribou Herd, you know, if you
45 transplant the cows to the region (indiscernible -
46 background) help bring the population back up, is there
47 talking about that, you know, somebody at the State
48 agency -- we know the numbers are climbing in the
49 Teshekpuk Herd and the Porcupine Herd and the other
50

0052

1 herds that are -- are in steady, you know, the
2 population's thriving and, you know, the Western Arctic
3 Caribou Herd is declining.

4
5 So, thank you.

6
7 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you for
8 your insight Steve. And at this time, if there's no
9 more from the liaisons I'm going to open up the floor
10 for Board action. At this time I'm going to open the
11 floor for a motion from the Board.

12
13 MR. COHN: Mr. Chair, this is Steve
14 Cohn with BLM.

15
16 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: You have the
17 floor, Steve.

18
19 MR. COHN: Mr. Chair, I move to approve
20 WSA22-05, 06 to reduce the caribou harvest limit on
21 Federal public lands in Units 21D, remainder, 24A
22 remainder, 24B remainder, 24C, 24D and all caribou hunt
23 areas within Units 22, 23, and 26A. If I get a second
24 I'll explain why I intend to vote in opposition to my
25 motion.

26
27 MS. PITKA: This is Rhonda Pitka, I'll
28 second.

29
30 MR. COHN: BLM supports the need for
31 measures to conserve the Western Arctic Caribou Herd to
32 protect its long-term survival and to allow for the
33 continuation of subsistence uses of the caribou
34 resource as well. However, based on feedback from the
35 two public hearings held for these special actions, it
36 is clear that rural subsistence users believe that the
37 harvest reductions proposed are too drastic, that the
38 process for the Board taking action is too hurried and
39 that it has not allowed for enough public input and
40 buy-in from Federally-qualified subsistence users who
41 could be subject to real hardship should the Board
42 approve these special actions at a time when many
43 communities are suffering from food insecurity.

44
45 These special actions would also result
46 in Federal subsistence regulations being more
47 restrictive than State regulations as well as an uneven
48 distribution of harvest option available to Federally-
49 qualified subsistence users depending on where they
50

0053

1 live, with some rural residents being able to harvest
2 under the more liberal State regulations and others
3 being subject to the more restrictive Federal harvest
4 limits.

5

6 It should also be noted that WSA22-06
7 would limit harvest of not just the Western Arctic
8 Caribou Herd but also any other caribou herd that might
9 utilize the units subject to this special action. And
10 some of those herds such as the Teshekpuk and Central
11 Arctic are healthy and are not experiencing any
12 conservation concerns.

13

14 While the recommendations of the Seward
15 Peninsula and Western Interior Alaska Subsistence
16 Regional Advisory Councils may be supported by
17 substantial evidence, it is clear from both public
18 testimony and tribal consultation that such drastic
19 harvest reductions would be detrimental to the
20 satisfaction of subsistence needs and, therefore, BLM
21 cannot support the proposed Federal harvest reductions
22 at this time. BLM believes that the Federal regulatory
23 proposal process is the more appropriate avenue for
24 dealing with any regulations that might result in
25 harvest reductions for caribou from the Western Arctic
26 Caribou Herd on Federal public lands. Such a process
27 would allow for an analysis to be written, that could
28 then be reviewed by the public and all the affected
29 Councils in the range of the Western Arctic Caribou
30 Herd, would result in a formal recommendation from
31 those Councils and would allow for a robust discussion
32 of potential alternatives to the harvest reductions
33 being proposed in WSA22-05, 05.

34

35 BLM looks forward to working with
36 Federally-qualified subsistence users, the Regional
37 Advisory Councils, and our Federal and State agency
38 partners to come up with solutions that protect the
39 long-term conservation of the herd and are responsive
40 to the needs of rural residents and that take into
41 account the traditional ecological knowledge and
42 cultural practices of those that rely on the herd for
43 their well-being.

44

45 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

46

47 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you,
48 Steve. The floor is open for discussion or further
49 deliberation for the Board here, if not, we'll call for
50

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1 question.

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MR. OOMITTUK: Steve, for the record, under discussion.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: The floor -- hey, hey, Steve, currently we're on a Board action so currently the discussion will just be between the Board here so I appreciate your time. Yeah, is there any other Board at this time that would like to discuss the action on the floor, motion has been made and seconded, any other Board discussion.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Hearing none, I'll call for the question.

MS. PITKA: Question.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Question's been called. Sue, can you do roll call please.

MS. DETWILER: Yes. The motion is to approve WSA22-05 and 06.

Starting with Bureau of Land Management, Steve Cohn.

MR. COHN: BLM opposes the special action.

MS. DETWILER: Thank you.

Fish and Wildlife Service, Sara Boario.

MS. BOARIO: The Fish and Wildlife Service opposes WSA22-05, 06, for the comprehensive and thoughtful reasons stated by the Bureau of Land Management.

I'd like to echo the BLM in expressing our considerable concern about the declines in the Western Arctic Caribou Herd and recognize that people across the affected communities and region also concern based on the public comment and tribal consultation to date. As BLM and subsistence users have also noted, what is proposed is too hurried and too drastic and would negatively impact the continuation of cultural

0055

1 practices and subsistence uses and is detrimental to
2 the satisfaction of subsistence needs. Because of this
3 one of the original proponents wishes to withdraw their
4 request.

5
6 I agree, the regulatory proposal
7 process is the forum for this and will allow for
8 extended consultation, outreach to villages and greater
9 public participation by those impacted by this as we
10 have heard called for today.

11
12 Thank you.

13
14 MS. DETWILER: Thank you.

15
16 National Park Service, Sarah
17 Creachbaum.

18
19 MS. CREACHBAUM: Mr. Chair. The
20 National Park Service votes to oppose Wildlife Special
21 Action 22-05 and 06 for the reasons stated by the BLM.

22
23 It is clear based on the public
24 feedback that making an immediate reduction in harvest
25 to only four caribou per year at this time would be
26 detrimental to the satisfaction of subsistence needs.
27 At the same time we recognize the efforts of the
28 Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils to address
29 conservation of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd
30 ensuring the continuation of subsistence caribou
31 harvest for future generations.

32
33 We acknowledge that reduction in
34 harvest will be necessary and reducing harvest of cows
35 could -- should be a key conservation tool. We want to
36 encourage those who can to voluntarily reduce harvest
37 and focus on the conservation of cow caribou.

38
39 Taking the time to further engage with
40 rural communities, Park Subsistence Resource
41 Commissions and Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils
42 across the range of the herd through the full
43 regulatory process will help to develop conservation
44 measures. It is necessary to protect the long-term
45 health of the herd while being responsive to the
46 subsistence way of life, traditional cultural practices
47 and food security concerns. In the long run the most
48 effective conservation measures will be actions
49 informed by local and indigenous knowledge and
50

0056

1 supported by subsistence communities.

2

3

4 The National Park Service highly values
5 its collaboration with subsistence communities, Park
6 Subsistence Resource Commissions and Subsistence
7 Regional Advisory Councils and our agency partners. We
8 are committed to this vitally important work for the
9 conservation of the caribou and the well-being of the
10 people that depend on them.

10

11

Thank you.

12

13

MS. DETWILER: Thank you, Sarah.

14

15

U.S. Forest Service, Greg Risdahl.

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MS. PITKA: Hi, this is Public Member
Rhonda Pitka. I'm going to vote to oppose WSA22-05 and
06.

After listening to extensive public
testimony and tribal consultation testimony, I'm
convinced that the people in the region will be --
their subsistence harvest will be restricted to an

0057

1 unsustainable level, and also I concur with the BLM
2 justification.

3

4 Thank you.

5

6 MS. DETWILER: Great, thank you.

7

8 And I'm just checking to see if Public
9 Member Charlie Brower is on and if not then he has
10 given Member Rhonda Pitka his proxy.

11

12 Charlie, are you on by any chance.

13

14 (No comments)

15

16 MS. DETWILER: It sounds like not, so
17 Rhonda Pitka, go ahead.

18

19 MS. PITKA: This is Public Member
20 Rhonda Pitka. Public Member Charlie Brower gave me his
21 proxy earlier today because of his unavoidable travel
22 schedule.

23

24 So he said that he would vote to oppose
25 WSA22-05. 06. He attended the briefing by Staff this
26 morning and reviewed all of the material and he briefed
27 me on the issue.

28

29 He opposes because he attended nearly
30 five hours of public hearing and he was convinced by
31 the overwhelming testimony by the people of his region
32 against the proposed special action and his concern for
33 hunters who need to feed their families.

34

35 And then he also stated that if there
36 was significant information offered during the meeting
37 that indicates a different vote is appropriate then I
38 was to contact him. I didn't hear anything that would
39 change his vote, so thank you, that's his vote.

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41 MS. DETWILER: Thank you, Rhonda.

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43 And, finally, Chair Anthony
44 Christianson.

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46 CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: I oppose based
47 on all of the testimony provided today and the ISC
48 recommendation.

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MS. DETWILER: Okay. Well, that makes it unanimous, Mr. Chair, all members voted to oppose the motion to approve the special action.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you, Sue. And thank you to the Staff and thank you to everybody who called in today, I appreciate the time it takes to go through these. And, again, I know there's concern about moving forward so hopefully we'll start to generate all of the wheels it takes to get working groups and everybody worked up to get proposals in for the next cycle and get all eyes on the declining and emerging issues we have up there in the Arctic.

So thank you guys for your time today and I hope everybody has a wonderful harvest season and may the Creator bless you.

Motion to adjourn.

MR. COHN: I'll second that motion

MS. PITKA: This is Rhonda I'll make that motion.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: There's been a motion made and seconded, without any opposition -- hearing no opposition, again, everybody have a good few weeks and we'll talk to you guys at the summer work session.

(Off record)

(END OF PROCEEDINGS)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA)
) ss.
STATE OF ALASKA)

I, Salena A. Hile, Notary Public in and for the state of Alaska and reporter of Computer Matrix Court Reporters, LLC, do hereby certify:

THAT the foregoing, contain a full, true and correct Transcript of the FEDERAL SUBSISTENCE BOARD MEETING taken electronically by our firm on the 8th day of June 2023;

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 Anchorage, Alaska, this 10th day of June 2023.

Salena A. Hile
Notary Public, State of Alaska
My Commission Expires: 09/16/26