

EASTERN INTERIOR ALASKA SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

DRAFT Meeting Minutes

November 19 - 20, 2013

Wedgewood Lodge

Fairbanks, Alaska

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chair Sue Entsminger at 9:00 AM.

Roll Call

The following Council members were present and a quorum established: Sue Entsminger (Chair), Lester Erhart, William Glanz, Andrew Firmin, Virgil Umphenour, Donald Woodruff. James Roberts was able to participate by phone for most of the meeting and Larry Williams, Sr. was able to call in on the second day. Council members Andy Bassich and Will Koehler excused absence – both prevented from traveling due to snow/ice conditions at the time of the meeting.

Welcome and Introductions

The following persons were present at the start of the meeting and/or on subsequent days:

Government Agency Employees

Eva Patton - Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Subsistence Management, Council Coord. Anchorage
Gene Peltola, Jr. - Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Subsistence Management, Director. Anchorage
David Jenkins - Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Subsistence Management, Policy Coord. Anchorage
Chris McKee - Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Subsistence Management, Biologist. Anchorage
Pippa Kenner - Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Subsistence Management, Anthropologist. Anchorage
Glen Chen – Interagency Staff Committee, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Anchorage
Jerry Berg – Interagency Staff Committee, Fish and Wildlife Service, Anchorage (Telecon)

Fred Bue – Fish and Wildlife Service, Subsistence Fisheries Yukon Area Manager, Fairbanks
Gerald Maschmann - Fish and Wildlife Service, Subsistence Fisheries, Fairbanks
Jeremy Mears - Fish and Wildlife Service, Fairbanks
Randy Brown - Fish and Wildlife Service, Fisheries, Fairbanks

Brian Glaspell, Fish and Wildlife Service, Refuge Manager Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Fairbanks
Hollis Twitchell, Fish and Wildlife Service, Deputy Manager Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Fairbanks
Vince Mathews, Fish and Wildlife Service, Yukon Flats/Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Fairbanks
Joann Bryant, Fish and Wildlife Service, RIT, Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Fairbanks
Mark Bertram - Fish and Wildlife Service, Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge, Fairbanks
Nathan Hawkaluk - Fish and Wildlife Service, Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge, Fairbanks
Mimi Thomas, Fish and Wildlife Service, Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge
Glen Pearson, ?, Yukon Flats
Maribel Langas Miller - Fish and Wildlife Service, On detail for Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge

Barbara Cellarius – National Park Service, Anthropologist Wrangell-St. Elias NP, Copper Center
Marcy Okada – National Park Service, Subsistence Coordinator Yukon Charlie Rivers National Preserve /Gates of the Arctic, Fairbanks

Ruth Gronquist - Bureau of Land Management, Eastern Interior Field Office, Fairbanks

Jeannie Cole - Bureau of Land Management, Eastern Interior Field Office, Fairbanks
Rita St. Louis-Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Planner, Fairbanks
Brittany Retherford - Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Subsistence Division, Fairbanks
John Burr - Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Fisheries, Anchorage
Eric Newland - Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Yukon Fisheries Inseason Manager, Fairbanks
Jeff Estensen - Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Yukon Fisheries Inseason Manager, Fairbanks
Beth Lenart - Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Wildlife biologist, Fairbanks
Jason Caikoski - Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Wildlife biologist, Fairbanks
Jennifer Yuhás – Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Subsistence Liaison, Anchorage

Via Teleconference:

Trent Leibich – Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Subsistence Management, Anchorage
Palma Ingles - Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Subsistence Management, Anchorage

NGO's

Catherine Moncrieff, Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association
Pam Miller, Alaska Environmental Center

Tribal Organizations

Jonathan John, Arctic Village Council
Sarah James, Arctic Village
Victor Lord, Nenana Native Council
Rondell Jimmie, Nenana Native Village
Bryan Maracle, Council of Athabascan Tribal Governments
Brian McKenna, Director of Natural Resources, Tanana Chiefs Conference

Public

Giddeon James, Arctic Village (telecon)
Ed Sam, Arctic Village (telecon)
Joann Bryant testified as public Arctic Village
Mildred Allen, Arctic Village
Darlene Herbert, Fairbanks/Fort Yukon
Fran Mauer, Fairbanks
Joe Matesi
Daniel Hayden, Fairbanks/Big Fish Lake (telecon)
Sandy Jamieson, Ester Alaska
Kirk Sweetsir, Fairbanks
Frank Howard
Dallas, Jr. Native Village of ?

Invocation and Honoring Katie John

Chairwomen Sue Entsminger spoke in honor of Katie John and recalled the many special years she spent with Katie and her family. With the permission of Katie's family, Sue shared a video tribute created to celebrate the life of revered elder and subsistence advocate Katie John.

Review and Adoption of Agenda

The Council was requested to defer discussion on Wildlife Proposals 48 and 51 to the second day of the meeting in order to accommodate many people intending to comment on those proposals to be able to attend the funeral potlatch of an elder from Fort Yukon. The Council also had requested specific data

updates and presentations relevant to several wildlife proposals such as WP14-48 and arranged for all pertinent information be provided prior to the Council recommendation. Council Chair reiterated that the Council requested this change from the standard agency reports at the end in order to be fully informed prior to deliberation and action on regulatory proposals. The Council unanimously adopted the agenda as amended above.

Review/Approval of Minutes

The Council unanimously approved the minutes from the previous meeting as written with one correction as follows: Under tribal organizations on Page 6, it says Gerald Nicholas correct spelling is Nicholai. Page 7, the community of Tesla (typo) is spelled Teslin. And the next line “studying the stomach contents of salmon” should read studying the stomach contents of *gulls*.

Council Members’ Reports and Concerns

Some Council members had introductory comments or noted the following issues and concerns:

Donald Woodruff

Is very concerned about the Yukon Chinook declines but expressed that he felt everyone could work together to overcome the salmon declines and work as a cohesive unit as all people along the river to address the disaster.

Bill Glanz

Expressed concerns about caribou over-harvest in the Central area noting that 1200 were harvested when only 600 were supposed to be. Commented on some suggestions through the local AC to hold brief I day hunt openings to assess harvest and re-open only if more harvest could be supported.

Andrew Firmin

Provided update that it has been a mild winter and very little snow so far. While the summer was productive it has overall been a strange year for weather.

Sue Entsminger

Attends a bunch of meetings throughout the year including the Wrangell St. Elias SRC which discussed many proposals that the EIRAC is also covering in this meeting.

Andy Bassich

Was unable to attend the meeting due to unsafe freeze-up conditions on the Yukon River that prevented his travel. Andy provided written statements to the Council Coordinator that were read into the record where applicable.

Larry Williams

Expressed concern about not being able to attend the meeting in person due to emergency medical circumstances but due to the critical importance of the action items before the council he was working hard to represent the subsistence knowledge and concerns for the region. Teleconference was very difficult to hear clearly and Mr. Williams stressed he would like to discuss some critical topics at the next meeting when he could be present in person.

Review of Annual Report Reply

The Council reviewed the reply letter to the Councils Annual Report to the Board. Chair Sue Entsminger noted the many challenges expressed by the Council in the letter. The Council had no further comments or questions.

***Customary & Traditional Use Determinations review**

David Jenkins - Policy Coordinator, Office of Subsistence Management, provided an overview of the C&T review process. In 2009, the Secretary of Interior directed the Federal Subsistence Board to do two tasks. The first was to review with RAC input, Federal subsistence procedural and structural regulations adopted from the State in order to ensure Federal authorities are fully reflected and comply with Title VIII of ANILCA. The second relevant task was to review customary and traditional determination process to provide clear, fair, and effective determinations in accord with Title VIII goals and provisions.

The Southeast Alaska Regional Advisory Council does not believe that this directive from the Secretary of Interior has been met and believes that the current customary and traditional use determination process does not fulfill the goals and directives of ANILCA.

This is informational and the Southeast Council asks all of the Councils to have a very careful review of the customary and traditional use determination process. The eight factors that go into that and whether or not we should continue with this process as is, modify it or eliminate it as the Southeast Council suggests. The Southeast Council urges all Councils to engage in a thorough review of the C&T process at their fall 2013 meetings and asks OSM to prepare an adequate briefing for that review for your fall meetings.

Chair Susan Entsminger recalled discussions with the EIRAC in the past about the challenge of approaching C&T by species rather than by region. Expressing that people live and hunt in a region, thus C&T by region would be aligned with subsistence activities since if people encounter an animal such as moose, caribou, or sheep they will likely utilize it for food. Chair Entsminger felt it would be easier to group all animals for C&T consideration rather than a long involved species by species process. Chair Entsminger concluded by saying the whole thing is confusing and understanding the impacts of what proposed changes might mean has prevented the Council from taking action at times.

Several Council members discussed the importance of the role C&T has in identifying the local pool of users and preventing local areas of harvest from being stressed from harvest pressure from people able to travel from distant rural communities on the road system. Council members concurred with the Chair that species by species C&T was cumbersome and left out the flexibility to harvest all subsistence species used in an area and often the small animals or occasional opportunistic harvest of species were left out of C&T determination but were no less important to subsistence. Council also discussed the shift of importance from one species to another such as the current Chinook conservation measures on the Yukon causing a shift to higher reliance on subsistence whitefish such as cisco, broad whitefish, and sheefish. Donald Woodruff noted that he would want to submit a proposal for C&T for whitefish at the next Council meeting.

The Council had extensive discussion about how C&T is applied and what it would mean to eliminate C&T to use only ANILCA 804 analyses. Specifically the Council noted concerns about the species by species approach of the current C&T process and need for recognition of the shifting importance of subsistence resources when one species is in decline another becomes more important or shifting species ranges due to environmental change.

**The Council voted in favor of maintaining the current system as it is with no changes. The supporting discussion was to keep things simple and if that process was working to some degree now it would be best not to make any big changes that might have unforeseen challenges.

Motion to maintain C&T determination process as is: 6 support, 1 oppose, 3 absent.

***Rural Determination Process Review**

David Jenkins - Policy Coordinator, Office of Subsistence Management, provided a briefing on the upcoming public comment process for reviewing rural determination criteria. ANILCA mandates that rural Alaskans be given a priority for subsistence uses of fish and wildlife on Federal public lands. Only residents, communities or areas that are found to be rural are eligible for the subsistence priority under ANILCA.

The Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture tasked the Board to review the rural determination process and recommend changes if needed. The Federal Subsistence Board is starting the review with public input. The public comment period will end November 1 of this year and after the fall Regional Advisory Council meetings. The Councils will have the opportunity to provide full feedback at the fall meeting. The Board has specifically asked for input on population thresholds, rural characteristics, aggregation of communities, timelines, and information sources.

Public Comments: The Council heard testimony and recommendations on rural criteria from public and Tribal representative attending the meeting.

Victor Lord, Nenana Native Council spoke at length about the traditional way of life of his tribal community that define who they are and subsistence characteristics of Nenana that make it distinctly rural. Mr. Lord spoke in opposition to aggregation of communities even if situated in close proximity as each village is unique and should be evaluated based on its own characteristics. Mr. Lord also spoke in opposition to roads and road connectivity being a criteria to evaluate rural, stressing that they had no control over the highway being developed next to his community. He emphasized that while the highway now connects the community by road, life in Nenana continued to revolve around a subsistence life of hunting and fishing and travel on the river.

**The Council made recommendations on each of the rural criteria as follows and then voted unanimously to support these recommendations.

Population threshold:

The Council decided by consensus to maintain the current population thresholds

The Council then concurred with the Wrangell St- Elias Subsistence Resource Commission (SRC) to change the population assessment process from every 10 years to just an initial assessment and then any needed further assessment if triggered by an unusual event or extenuating circumstances, such as a long term population trend up or down or spike in population. Further the Council concurred that the population assessment should be measured using a five-year running average to avoid evaluating a community on a temporary population flux such as during pipeline or road development. This would avoid a determination being made on temporary extreme high or low of boom/bust cycle.

Rural characteristics:

The Council agreed by consensus to remove education institutions from the list currently considered under rural characteristics noting that whether it be a local school, boarding school or university satellite campus that the staffing of those educational institutions is usually made up of a largely transient population. The council also agrees that some infrastructure is for temporary use – such as mining development or the example of the DEW line site and should be evaluated carefully as to what it actually brought for long term services to the community.

The Council agreed by consensus to add subsistence related activities such as gardening, gathering and canning of foods to put away for family and community for the year was indicative of a rural characteristic.

The Council concurred with the SRC that National Park Service resident zone communities should also be added as a rural characteristic, noting that there are 7 National Parks in Alaska that have recognized “resident zone” communities that have access to subsistence activities in the parks.

Aggregation:

The Council agreed by consensus to eliminate aggregation of communities as a criteria for rural status and discussed that each community has its own unique rural characteristics and subsistence patterns and should not be arbitrarily lumped with others simply due to proximity or being located on a road system. The council heard public testimony and stressed the being located on or near a road should not be a criteria for rural determination confirming a road does not define the rural nature and subsistence activities of a community.

Timeline:

The Council agreed by consensus to eliminate the 10 year review cycle and move to a baseline population census and then as needed if triggered by extenuating circumstances as discussed for population thresholds above.

Information sources:

The Council agreed by consensus to include other information sources such as local government data, school attendance numbers, property ownership taxes, permanent fund data, harvest data may all be useful sources of information to determine population and residence.

***Federal Wildlife Regulatory Proposals**

Chris McKee, wildlife biologist, Office of Subsistence Management, provided a brief introduction and overview of the data used and summary of OSM staff analysis provided in the meeting book for each wildlife proposal submitted to the region and relevant cross-over proposals.

Pippa Kenner, Anthropologist, Office of Subsistence Management provided an introduction and overview of all C&T proposals for the region. Mrs. Kenner also answered questions for the council on the process for consideration of Customary and Traditional use determination proposals.

Barbara Cellarius, Anthropologist, Wrangell St. Elias National Park and Preserve provided background information and the latest harvest/hunt effort data for the Chisana caribou permits.

Jason Caikoski – at the council’s request, wildlife biologist for Alaska Department of Fish and Game provided a presentation on the historical and latest State and Federal moose population and composition data used in the OSM analysis for WP14-48.

Hollis Twitchell, deputy director and LE for Arctic Wildlife refuge, provided that Council with an overview of flight and visitor activity for the Red Sheep/ Cane Creek area.

Tribal and Public Testimony: Due to many people wishing to comment in person and via teleconference time was limited to approx.. 5 minutes per person. Please see transcripts for full detail on public testimony.

Nine people signed up to comment on proposal WP14-48 including Tribal representatives, CATG, local area subsistence hunters and community members from Fort Yukon, Arctic Village and Venetie, and commercial guides. Testimony on WP14-48 largely focused on local concerns for subsistence harvest needs, observations of fewer moose, historic trends of a transient population. Local guides commented on local etiquette and observations while flying/guiding in the area.

Eight people signed up to comment on proposal WP14-51 including Tribal representatives, local area subsistence hunters and elders from Arctic Village and Venetie. Comments focused on the unique spiritual and medicinal properties of sheep in the Red Creek area. Many people testified that the sheep were very important source of food and vital for sharing in the community and stressed the difficulty of hunting in the area when sheep were disturbed by hunter or flight activity and pushed further into the mountains.

Jennifer Yuhas, Alaska Department of Fish and Game provided state comments and position on all Federal proposals. Additional detail and information was provided for WP14-51 submitted by the State proposing an ethics and orientation course to alleviate user conflict in the Red Sheep Creek area.

Federal Wildlife Proposals for Eastern Interior Region

Statewide Proposal: WP14-01

DESCRIPTION: WP14-01—Require trap marking, establish a time limit for trap/snare checks, and require harvest report

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION: **Oppose**

Support: 0, Oppose: 7, Abstain: 0, Absent: 3

JUSTIFICATION: Council concurs with OSM recommendation that the proposal is not well thought out and has many safety concerns. The Council stated it is unrealistic to check traps even in dangerous weather conditions. Opposed to a proposal that would make federal regulations more restrictive than state regs.

Regional Proposals: WP14-42

DESCRIPTION: WP14-42—Establish a Federal subsistence priority and recognize the customary and traditional use of sheep for residents of Units 20E, 25B, and 25C

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION: **Support** (clarification needed on OSM modification to include other communities in the hunt area)

Support: 7, Oppose: 0, Abstain: 0, Absent: 3

JUSTIFICATION: WP14-42 was submitted by the Eastern Interior Regional Advisory Council. Eagle resident, council member Donald Woodruff notes this is long term use of sheep in the region and oral history in the area supports long distance travel overland with return by skin boat in order to hunt sheep in these areas. Council concurs C&T should be recognized based on the importance of sheep for subsistence and recognition of greater importance during times of Chinook decline.

Proposal: WP14-43

DESCRIPTION: WP14-43—Establish a harvest limit and season for sheep in Units 20E, and 25B, 25C, 25D

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION: **Support**

Support:7 , Oppose:0, Abstain:0 , Absent: 3

JUSTIFICATION: The Council just passed a motion for positive C&T and now needs to establish season and bag limits. The Council discussed that difficult access to this area would prevent any conservation issues or concern for overharvest.

Proposal: WP14-44

DESCRIPTION: WP14-44—Extend fall season for moose in Unit 20F

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION: Support
Support:7 , Oppose:0 , Abstain: 0, Absent: 3

JUSTIFICATION: Proposal was submitted by the Eastern Interior Regional Advisory Council. The Council stressed observed weather changes and temperatures too hot to put up meat safely earlier in September. The council also noted it is easier to see moose when leaves fall and is still early enough before the rut. Warmer temperatures are a problem for meat spoiling before being able to pack it out of the hunt area and get back home to a freezer.

Proposal: WP14-15

DESCRIPTION: WP14-15/45—Revise caribou closure restrictions Unit 1212 to change the pool of Federally qualified users for the Chisana caribou herd.

* The council made a motion to review and vote on proposals 15 and 45 separately

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION: Support WP14-15 as written

Support: 6, Oppose:0 , Abstain:0 , Absent: 4

JUSTIFICATION: The Council submitted proposal 14-45 to ensure residents of the hunt area are included in the Chisana caribou hunt but felt that on close review 14-15 submitted by the Wrangell-St. Elias SRC had more clear and specific that would better ensure all residents of the hunt area were indeed included

Proposal: WP14-45

DESCRIPTION: WP14-15/45—Revise caribou closure restrictions Unit 12 to change the pool of Federally qualified users for the Chisana caribou herd.

* The council made a motion to review and vote on proposals 15 and 45 separately

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION: Take no action on WP14-45 (based on support of WP14-15)

Support: 6, Oppose: 0, Abstain: 0, Absent: 4

JUSTIFICATION: The Council submitted proposal 14-45 to ensure residents of the hunt area are included in the Chisana caribou hunt but felt that on close review 14-15 submitted by the Wrangell- St. Elias SRC had more clear and specific language that would better ensure all residents of the hunt area were indeed included.

Proposal: WP14-46 and WP14-47

DESCRIPTION: WP14-46—Revise customary and traditional use determination for caribou in Unit 25B for residents of Eagle (submitted by Steven Hamilton of Eagle)

WP14-47—Revise customary and traditional use determination for caribou in

Unit 20D, 20E, 25B, 25C (Submitted by the Eastern Interior Regional Advisory Council). Proposal WP14-47 requests the Board to recognize the customary and traditional uses of caribou in Units 20D and 20E by residents of Units 20F and 25, and the communities of Eureka, Livengood, Manley, and Minto. Additionally, the Council requests the Board to recognize the customary and traditional uses of caribou in Units 25B and 25C by residents of Unit 12 north of Wrangell-St. Elias National Preserve, 20D, 20E, 20F, and Eureka, Livengood, Manley, and Minto.

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION: Support
Support: 7, Oppose: 0, Abstain: 0, Absent: 3

JUSTIFICATION: WP14-47 was submitted by the EIRAC. They support this proposal because it would allow all communities in the range of the Fortymile Caribou herd to be able to have recognized C&T to hunt them when they are in the area. Also it will provide a federal subsistence priority to rural hunters on federal lands in these areas so of which are accessible by road system. It will be more inclusive than the current communities with C&T in the region.

Proposal: WP14-48

DESCRIPTION: WP14-48—Revise harvest limit; require a Federal permit; close Federal land to nonqualified users for moose in Unit 25A

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION: Oppose
Support: 1, Oppose: 5 , Abstain:1 , Absent: 3

JUSTIFICATION: The council heard extensive public testimony from communities in the hunt area and tribal comments as well as population updates and information on the herd from ADFG and tribal biologists as well as the briefing from OSM. The council discussed the data and public comments and did not see a need to restrict all non-federally qualified hunters at this time. The Council thought other less restrictive conservation actions could be attempted first before closing the area. The Council noted they had submitted a proposal to the Board of Game that was an attempt to address some of the conservation concerns in a less restrictive way. Overall the Council felt closure to all non-qualified users was not warranted at this time.

Proposal: WP14-49

DESCRIPTION: WP14-49—Revise season dates for fall season and establish a winter season for Chisana caribou in Unit 12

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION: Tabled
Support: 7, Oppose:0 , Abstain:0 , Absent: 3

JUSTIFICATION: The Council discussed the proposal and heard a full briefing form OSM and NPS staff but felt since the Council member Will Koehler from this region was not present to speak to it the Council could wait until the next meeting for recommendation. FSB will meet mid-April for Wildlife proposals and the Council will meet for its winter meeting in February/March. There was a lot of discussion about the meat on the bone requirement.

Proposal: WP14-50

DESCRIPTION: WP14-50—Allow use of bait for brown bear in Unit 25D

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION: **Support WP14-50 as written**

Support: 7, Oppose: 0, Abstain: 0, Absent: 3

JUSTIFICATION: WP14-50 was submitted by the EIRAC. The Council discussed interest in additional harvest opportunity for bear. Council member Andrew Firmin noted that CATG collects harvest information and there does not appear to be a conservation concern with current harvest levels. Council discussed eating brown bear meat and noted many consider it good food and are very intelligent and difficult to hunt. Council would opportunity to harvest a brown bear over black bear bait if it does come to it.

Proposal: WP14-51

DESCRIPTION: WP14-51—Rescind closure in portions of Arctic Village Sheep Management Area Unit 25A

COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION: **Oppose**

Support: 1, Oppose: 4 , Abstain: 1, Absent: 4

JUSTIFICATION: The Council heard extensive testimony from tribal and community members form Arctic Village and Venetie expressing the importance of sheep in this are to their culture and community. The public testimony also noted that air traffic disturbance and hunter activity was pushing the sheep further away and higher. The council also heard updates form ANWR staff on surveys of hunter and flight activity in this area. Overall the Council expressed cultural importance of the sheep and the area to Arctic village and other residents for this hunt area to be an overriding concern. In response to the state proposal to create an educational requirement Council member pointed out that the State regulations book did not have the correct closure information and was concerned how detailed hunter education would be communicated. Council encouraged harvest reporting and better documentation of use and noted that this issue has come before the Council several times before

***State Wildlife Proposals submitted to Board of Game**

Board of Game Interior Region proposals 79 and 80 were submitted by the Eastern Interior Council as companion proposals to their Federal proposals. The Council voted unanimously to support their own BOG proposals.

The Council then voted unanimously to support the local AC’s in addressing State proposals for their area since each AC has its own local knowledge and input.

***Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program:**

Trent Leibich, fisheries biologist OSM provided the Council with an overview of the Fisheries Resource Monitoring program and research proposals submitted for the Yukon Region.

*Motion to fund 14-205 over 14-252
Support: 6, Oppose: 0 Abstain: 0, Absent 4

Council discussion: Donald Woodruff of Eagle noted that whitefish including Bering cisco which travel up the Yukon all the way past Eagle is very important to subsistence. The Council expressed concern that with Chinook conservation concerns, whitefish have become more important or the only subsistence fish caught in some communities. The Council requested a motion to recognize the significant value of all whitefish species for subsistence and ensure it is included in the priority information needs for the Eastern Interior region. Due to concerns about the Lower Yukon River cisco commercial fishery, the Council stressed the importance of whitefish research in order to obtain basic population data to prevent overharvest and ensure subsistence priority is met. The Council was very interested in funding 14-205 "Yukon River Bering Cisco spawning using DIDSON Sonar" and suggested (contrary to TRC recommendation) that the State has no incentive to invest any funds in this research since they have been allowed to prosecute this commercial fishery for many years without any population or stock data. 14-205 Principal Investigator, Randy Brown, attended the EIRAC meeting and was available to answer questions from the Council about his research proposal.

The Council stressed they felt the order of priority should be assessing the cisco spawning population as proposed in 14-205 over a harvest monitoring assessment at this time because lack of population data prevented sound management. The Council is very concerned about the potential detrimental impact of the cisco commercial fishery and request action being taken now to prevent overharvest of this important subsistence resource.

Agency Reports

OSM Briefings: Gene Peltola, Jr. introduced himself as the new Area Regional Director for the Office of Subsistence Management provided brief updates on OSM staffing changes, current budget outlook, Regional Advisory Council application/nomination process, upcoming Rural Determination review process, and Tribal consultation policy.

Tanana Chiefs Conference Fisheries program

Brian McKenna of TCC gave an update on their fisheries monitoring program projects conducted this past Summer. Brian also introduced himself as the new Partners for Fisheries Monitoring Program biologist for TCC and provided updates on ongoing FRMP projects.

Yukon Fisheries Update:

Jeremy Mears, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Eric Newland Alaska Department of Fish and Game provided a postseason salmon update for 2013. The council discussed conservation concerns, management actions and escapement outcomes and potential strategies for the future. State and Federal fisheries regulatory updates were also provided.

Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association

Catherine Moncrieff of YRDFFA provided a handout and discussed the Yukon River salmon management and village networking initiatives from 2013. She also provided an update on new staffing changes at YRDFFA and plans for the upcoming year.

Wrangell – St. Elias National Park and Preserve update:

Barbara Cellarius, anthropologist, Wrangell St. Elias, provided an update for the Park Subsistence programs and reported on action and recommendations from the recent Wrangell St. Elias Subsistence Resource Commission.

Ms. Cellarius described the the permit process for the Chisana caribou hunt and an update on the effort and harvest for that hunt.

Yukon-Charley Rivers National Preserve.

Marcy Okada, subsistence coordinator, noted the written updates in the meeting book and provided a brief verbal summary for the Council.

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge:

Brian Glaspell introduced himself as the new refuge manager for Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and provided a brief staffing updates and overview of management plans. A final version of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan was completed and selection of big game guide use areas was completed.

Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge:

Vince Mathews, Subsistence Refuge Coordinator, Arctic, Kanuti, and Yukon Flats National Wildlife Refuge, provided brief updates and requested feedback on written summaries provided to the Council.

Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge:

Nate Berg, wildlife biologist for Tetlin NWR provide the Council with staffing changes and a brief overview of their wildlife monitoring programs and noted that the caribou hunt is currently open until spring. Mr. Berg noted odd winter weather and impacts to songbirds in particular and also noted Nelchina caribou herd calved in the refuge this year which is unusual since they normally calve in the Denali Highway.

Bureau of Land Management Eastern Interior Field Office

Jeanie Cole, Bureau of Land Management, planning and environmental coordinator in the Fairbanks District Office provided the Council with a brief update on BLM projects in the Eastern Interior area and an overview of the Central Yukon Management Plan.

Annual Report topics

The Council briefly discussed annual report topics and would like to follow up with more details via email and phone after the meeting since several members were absent. Several topics of interest/concern expressed were:

*Subsistence/Non-subsistence understanding and communication – hunter ethics course to build better understanding and avoid conflict.

*Chinook conservation and pulse protection.

*Concern for the moose population as discussed in the meeting and public comments on wolf predation.

Future Meeting Dates

*The Council rescheduled its winter meeting for **March 6-7, 2014 in Fairbanks.**

*The Council chose **October 21-23 for the Fall 2014** meeting to be held in Fairbanks and requested first week of October as an alternate option.

**Council members provided closing remarks.
The meeting adjourned by unanimous consent.**

I certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the foregoing minutes are accurate and complete.

Eva Patton, Designated Federal Officer
USFWS Office of Subsistence Management

Sue Entsminger, Chair
Eastern Interior Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

*These minutes will be formally considered by the Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council at its Winter 2014 public meeting. Any corrections or notations will be incorporated in the minutes of that meeting.