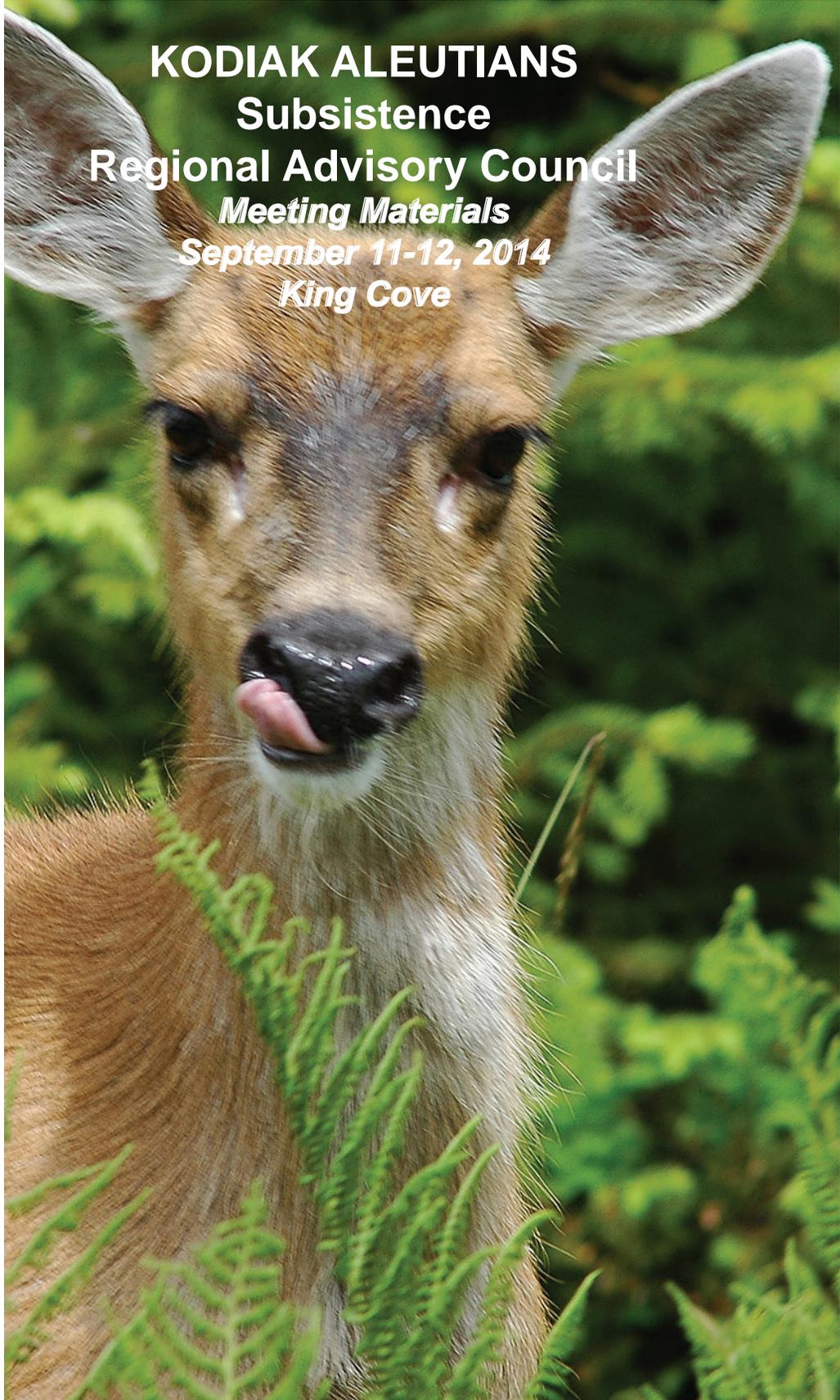


KODIAK ALEUTIANS
Subsistence
Regional Advisory Council
Meeting Materials
September 11-12, 2014
King Cove



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A Sitka black-tailed deer snacks on herbaceous vegetation.

Photo courtesy: USFWS.



KODIAK/ALEUTIANS SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Visitor Center, King Cove
 September 11-12, 2014
 9:00 a.m. daily

PUBLIC COMMENTS: Public comments are welcome for each agenda item and for regional concerns not included on the agenda. The Council appreciates hearing your concerns and knowledge. Please fill out a comment form to be recognized by the Council chair. Time limits may be set to provide opportunity for all to testify and keep the meeting on schedule.

PLEASE NOTE: These are estimated times and the agenda is subject to change. Contact staff for the current schedule. Evening sessions are at the call of the chair.

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Adjourn (*Chair*)

To teleconference into the meeting, call the toll free number: 1-866-560-5984, then when prompted enter the passcode: 12960066

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife is committed to providing access to this meeting for those with a disability who wish to participate. Please direct all requests for accommodation for a disability to the Office of Subsistence Management at least five business days prior to the meeting.

If you have any questions regarding this agenda or need additional information, please contact Carl Johnson, Council Coordination Division Chief at 907-786-3676, carl_johnson@fws.gov, or contact the Office of Subsistence Management at 1-800-478-1456 for general inquiries.

REGION 3—Kodiak/Aleutians Regional Advisory Council

Seat	Yr Apptd <i>Term Expires</i>	Member Name & Address
1	2010 2016	Antone Shelikoff Akutan
2	2001 2016	Patrick B. Holmes Kodiak
3	2008 2016	Richard R. Koso Adak
4	2004 2016	Samuel I. Rohrer Kodiak
5	2011 2014	Thomas L. Schwantes Kodiak
6	2011 2014	Peter M. Squartsoff Port Lions
7	2011 2014	Vincent M. Tutiakoff Sr. Unalaska
8	2009 2015	Della A. Trumble King Cove
9	2000 2015	Speridon M. Simeonoff Sr. Chair Akhiok
10	2012 2015	Melissa M. Berns Old Harbor



KODIAK/ALEUTIANS SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL
Meeting Minutes

March 20, 2014
Kodiak
Best Western Kodiak Inn

The meeting was called to order at 9:02 a.m., Thursday, March 20, 2014.

Roll call to establish quorum – members present: Antone Shelikoff, Patrick Holmes, Mitch Simeonoff, Rick Koso, Melissa Berns, Tom Schwantes (telephonic) and Della Trumble (telephonic). Quorum established.

Adopted agenda with modifications to add Prop 337, 338 discussion prior to election of officers, add a time certain for report on Alaska Maritime NWR unauthorized cattle.

Re: Prop 337. George Pappas gave a presentation to the Council regarding revised Prop 337 language presented at Board of Fisheries. Council voted unanimously in favor.

Re: Prop 338. George Pappas gave a presentation to the Council, discussing points that have been raised and the key provisions of the proposal. Council members did not want to shut down the subsistence fishery for the people of Akhiok; if anything, close down the commercial fishery. Motion to support by Holmes, seconded by Schwantes, motion failed.

Re: Prop 339. George Pappas gave a short presentation on the proposal, which would be to clarify boundaries of management area. Moved by Holmes, seconded by Koso to support. Motion carried.

Welcome and introductions

Present:

Dan Sharp, BLM
Drew Crawford, ADF&G
Glenn Chen, BIA
Jack Lorrigan, OSM
Don Rivard, OSM
George Pappas, OSM
Tom Evans, OSM
Anne Marie LaRosa, USFWS
Stacy Lowe, USFWS
Tyler Polum, ADF&G
McRae Cobb, USFWS
Pam Bumstead, Sun'aq Tribe
Rebecca Skinner, Public

Election of officers:

Chair – Speridon Simeonoff, Sr.

Vice Chair – Vince Tutiakoff

Secretary – Patrick Holmes

One correction to minutes regarding spelling of a name, Melissa Vorten.

Council Reports

Schwantes: Concern over drop in deer population on Kodiak Island. Simeonoff seconded that notion, indicating that he had not had a deer yet this year.

Berns: Deer harvest has been very low on the southeast side, had to go over to Port Lions. One fall bear taken in the community. Many community members have taken advantage of the extended goat hunting season, the late snow has aided in that harvest. Great dietary addition for many families. Continuing year-round harvest of fish and shellfish, halibut has been low.

Koso: A lot of hunters have been coming into the community, harvesting down the caribou population. Thinks we need to do a survey. New plant owner in Adak processing cod. Only 130 locals, not having a problem harvesting subsistence crab, salmon and halibut.

Holmes: Real shortage of deer on the north end of the island. Still concern in the community about geese, particularly Emperor Geese. Worked a lot with local community and Tribes on rural criteria, great turnout for the fall hearing with turnout and testimony. The rural roundtable worked hard to develop consensus. Didn't get much for subsistence fish – his skiff is broken down. Local saw that he wasn't going out to catch fish, so they donated some to him.

Shelikoff: Focus in the area seems to be on jobs, crab has been fished out. With the hovercraft gone, most of the animals are gone, particularly geese. Hunters are able to take more seals because the hovercraft is gone. The hovercraft made a lot of racket, and animals seem to avoid racket. Glad to see the animals returning.

Simeonoff: Deer population is so low, hardly anyone got their deer this year. Winter has been mild, making it difficult to get to animals. Hunters coming in on their boats are taking out a lot of does, sometimes 6-7 different hunters a week. Aside from bad winters, taking just does is hurting the population. Community did not get its subsistence bear this year; no one applied for a permit. Emperor geese right in the bay, filled with geese at low tide. If population threshold was lowed below 80,000, we could see a subsistence hunt for Emperor Geese on Kodiak. Talked about Aluutiq week at community. Halibut have not been as plenty and they have been smaller, and people don't want to fish for halibut when they are small.

Trumble: Winter weather has been interesting. Some people were able to harvest caribou, happy with the permit drawings for 2014. The Tribe has been successful in getting two grants related to



observing focused marine mammal and bird populations. New cultural center completed in King Cove.

Carl Johnson gave a Council Coordinator administrative report. Holmes complimented Coordinator on his work.

Public and Tribal Comment on Non-Agenda Items

Pam Bumstead, Natural Resources Director for Sun'aq Tribe. Requested to have a RAC representative, particularly Patrick Holmes, to attend FSB meeting on rural determination.

Old Business

Customary and Traditional Use Determinations.

Carl Johnson gave an update on the C&T review and answered questions.

Rural Determination Review.

Jack Lorrigan gave an overview of where the process is on the rural determination review. The Council unanimously approved its rural determination comment letter.

FRMP.

Don Rivard provided the Council an overview of the program and noted the Federal Subsistence Board's recent decision regarding funding for FRMP projects for the Southwest region. Rivard then engaged the Council in a discussion of priority information needs. Holmes suggested a comparative escapement analysis for the McLees Lake system. Noted that there is not a need for Chinook escapement research on Kodiak Island; it's very well monitored and that's more a sport fishing issue. Need to continue Buskin sockeye program and on Afognak. Definite need for subsistence salmon surveys for the Alaska Peninsula.

Partner's Program.

Palma Ingles provided an overview of the Partner's program. Next call for proposals will be in November, proposals due May 2015.

New Business

Call for Fisheries Proposals.

Don Rivard provided an overview of the call for proposals for 2015-17. Holmes noted a non-Federal problem regarding grey cod on long halibut lines; suggested he and Schwantes could work on preparing a State proposal for the next meeting to get into the BOF cycle. Don Tracy from Sport Fish Division, ADF&G, answered questions about the next fin fish BOF meeting, and proposal would be due April 10, 2014 for that meeting. Holmes then stated he could work on a proposal with Schwantes prior to adjourning.

Review and Approve FY2013 Annual Report

Council member Holmes made several additions to the draft annual report, which were incorporated and printed out for the Council to review and approve. With a couple additions, the Council voted to approve the draft annual report as modified on the record.

Tribal Consultation Implementation Guidelines and Draft ANCSA Consultation Policy

Jack Lorrigan provided an overview and discussed the timeline for the review process. Pam Bumstead of the Sun'aq Tribe provided comments on the methods and quality of public outreach and the need for specialized staff and increasing training on Title VIII, with an emphasis on the Tribal point of view. It would be good for Federal staff to know the history of the agency's dealings with local communities. The Council voted to support the draft Tribal Consultation Implementation Guidelines.

The Council discussed the draft ANCSA consultation policy. Council member Trumble noted that several other Councils had made some substantive recommendations on the draft language. The Council voted to support the draft policy with the understanding that it will come before the Council again.

John Reft, Vice Chair of Sun'aq Tribe, offered public comment on various matters related to subsistence resource. He testified about the status of the deer population on Kodiak Island, and how the use of aircraft in guided hunting has contributed to population decline. He also provided testimony regarding the Dolly Varden population, that it is necessary to reduce that population in order to reduce predation on salmon. He also provided testimony regarding the large size of the Emperor Geese population and its impacts on other bird species and on habitat.

Nominations

Carl Johnson provided an overview of the nominations process, highlighting the need to conduct more outreach in the region for Council applications. Holmes discussed different people in the region who could contribute to the Council process. Shelikoff suggested that the Council members could place a poster in public places highlighting the application process.

Agency Reports

OSM

Jack Lorrigan provided a budget and staffing overview for the Council.

USFWS

Alaska Maritime NWR – Steve Delahanty. Overview on unauthorized cattle on Chirikof and Wosnesenski Islands, public outreach and issues. Schwantes asked a question about public input heard so far at public meetings. Trumble indicated that people in King Cove utilize the cattle for subsistence, which is important due to the low levels on the caribou population. She also spoke out about the disappointing nature of the NEPA process and the value of public input. Simeonoff had a question about who owned the land on the islands. Schwantes had a question about grazing rights on the islands. Trumble asked about the possibility of entering into land use agreements with the cattle owners, and also whether the cattle existed prior to the establishments of the



refuges. She noted the communities of Sand Point, False Pass and King Cove rely on those cattle for subsistence.

Kodiak NWR. Anne Marie LaRosa provided an overview of staffing at the Refuge. McRae Cobb provided a biological overview and results of recent aerial surveys as noted in the written report provided in the meeting material book. Holmes noted good feedback on Refuge public programs asked for a population survey on the Uyak Bay sea duck population. Robin Corcoran discussed certain aspects of recent surveys. Simeonoff asked a series of questions and raised the issue of Emperor Geese populations. He also asked for a copy of the final guidance on “significantly altered” and sea otters. Shelikoff asked a question about harbor seal surveys.

Izembek NWR. Stacey Lowe provided a biological overview and results of recent surveys, highlighting data covered in the printed report starting on page 107 of the Council meeting book. Koso asked questions about future surveys. Holmes asked why you would do a winter count for caribou, and noted that he is critical of doing winter surveys and encouraged her to look into when other refuges conduct their peak count. Trumble asked questions about the timing of the surveys and how that impacts results – unsuccessful winter surveys. She also noted that she continues to see a large number of wolves. Holmes asked for a copy of the Emperor Goose survey and the sampling design and gave positive feedback on outreach to local schools.

Migratory Birds Management. The Council was provided a two-page written report from Migratory Birds regarding the Council’s Emperor Geese proposal and current status of the population.

The Council discussed a desire to send a Council member to advocate with the AMBCC at its April 10 meeting regarding the Emperor Geese proposal. Koso and Schwantes were identified as candidates. The Council also expressed a desire to have a Council member attend a Southeast RAC meeting, particularly if it is at Sitka or another island community, to discuss common issues on rural determination. Holmes expressed a desire to attend that meeting.

Alaska Department of Fish & Game. Tyler Polum provided an overview of his written report on the Buskin River sockeye project as provided starting page 120 of the meeting material book. Holmes asked a question regarding staffing levels, and Polum indicated that recent funds from the Chinook initiative are going to provide some staff increases to support research in that area. Holmes made suggestions to changing the timing of openings to meet escapement goals. Simeonoff asked about checking nutrients in Buskin and Louise Lakes, and Polum indicated that they do not have any plans for that. Steve Thompson spoke to the Council about research on Afognak and opened up to questions. Simeonoff asked about the Upper Station population crashing and expressed concerns about finding out what is going on with those populations. Thompson suggested that when they do the Upper Station smolt project they could do a cross-sample of smolt at Akulara.

Drew Crawford provided information about statewide fin fish BOF meeting is March 8-12, 2016 in Anchorage, comment deadline February 18, 2016. He also provided dates for statewide shellfish and crab meeting in Anchorage.

Future Meeting Dates

Chair Simeonoff expressed the importance of making a commitment when we select meeting dates, because the work the Council is doing is important for future generations. The absence of certain Council members was discussed. It was discussed that attending a state basketball championship would not be an excuse to be absent.

Fall – September 11-12, 2014 in King Cove/Cold Bay
Winter – March 11-12, 2015 in Old Harbor

The Council expressed a desire to submit a proposal to the Board of Fisheries regarding grey cod on halibut longlines for submission to the statewide finfish meeting in 2016. This should be placed on the agenda for fall 2014.

Closing comments by Holmes, Simeonoff

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

March 20, 2014

Carl Johnson, DFO
USFWS Office of Subsistence Management

Speridon Simeonoff, Chair
Kodiak/Aleutians Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

These minutes will be formally considered by the Kodiak/Aleutians Subsistence Regional Advisory Council at its next meeting, and any corrections or notations will be incorporated in the minutes of that meeting.





FISH and WILDLIFE SERVICE
BUREAU of LAND MANAGEMENT
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
BUREAU of INDIAN AFFAIRS

Federal Subsistence Board

1011 East Tudor Road, MS121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503



FOREST SERVICE

JUL 22 2014

FWS/OSM 14061.CJ

Speridon Simeonoff, Sr., Chair
Kodiak/Aleutians Subsistence
Regional Advisory Council
P.O. Box 5008
Akhiok, Alaska 99615

Dear Mr. Simeonoff:

This letter is to provide a report of the Federal Subsistence Board's consensus and non-consensus agenda action items at its April 15, 2014, meeting regarding proposed changes to subsistence wildlife regulations and customary and traditional use determinations. In total, the Board accepted the recommendations of the Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils, in whole or with modifications, in 48 out of the 52 proposals on the agenda. Details of these actions and the Board's deliberations are contained in the meeting transcripts. Copies of the transcripts may be obtained by calling our toll free number, 1-800-478-1456, and are available online at the Federal Subsistence Management Program website at <http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/index.cfm>.

The Board uses a consensus agenda on those proposals where there is agreement among the affected Subsistence Regional Advisory Council(s), a majority of the Interagency Staff Committee, and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game concerning a proposed regulatory action. These proposals were deemed non-controversial and did not require a separate discussion. There was one statewide proposal on the consensus agenda, WP14-01 (trapping), which the Board rejected consistent with all of the Councils' recommendations. The only consensus agenda items for the Kodiak/Aleutians Region was proposal WP14-20 (Unit 8 brown bear), which the Board adopted consistent with the Council's recommendations. There were no proposals on the non-consensus agenda affecting the Kodiak/Aleutians Region.

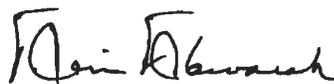
The Federal Subsistence Board appreciates the Kodiak/Aleutians Subsistence Regional Advisory Council's active involvement in and diligence with the regulatory process. The ten Regional Advisory Councils continue to be the foundation of the Federal Subsistence Management Program, and the stewardship shown by the Regional Advisory Council chairs and their representatives at the Board meeting was noteworthy.

Mr. Simeonoff

2

If you have any questions regarding the summary of the Board's actions, please contact Carl Johnson at (907) 786-3676.

Sincerely,



Tim Towarak, Chair
Federal Subsistence Board

cc: Federal Subsistence Board
Kodiak/Aleutians Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Eugene R. Peltola, Jr., Assistant Regional Director, OSM
Chuck Ardizzone, Deputy Assistant Regional Director, OSM
David Jenkins, Policy Coordinator, OSM
Carl Johnson, Council Coordination Division Chief, OSM
Interagency Staff Committee
Administrative Record





FISH and WILDLIFE SERVICE
BUREAU of LAND MANAGEMENT
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
BUREAU of INDIAN AFFAIRS

Federal Subsistence Board

1011 East Tudor Road, MS121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503



FOREST SERVICE

AUG 06 2014

FWS/OSM 14076.CJ

Speridon Simeonoff, Chair
Kodiak/Aleutians Subsistence
Regional Advisory Council
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Office of Subsistence Management
1101 East Tudor Road, MS 121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Dear Chairman Simeonoff:

This letter responds to the Kodiak/Aleutians Subsistence Regional Advisory Council's (Council) fiscal year 2013 Annual Report. The Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture have delegated to the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) the responsibility to respond to these reports. The Board appreciates your effort in developing the Annual Report. Annual Reports allow the Board to become aware of the issues outside of the regulatory process that affect subsistence users in your region. We value this opportunity to review the issues concerning your region.

1. Bureaucratic Responses to Annual Report

The Council would like to express its displeasure at the rather boilerplate, bureaucratic responses provided by the Board to the Council's FY 2012 annual report. In order for this annual report process to be meaningful to the Councils, they must feel that their recommendations or concerns are given weight and carefully considered by the Board. However, when the Board responds with bureaucratic replies that offer no meaningful solutions, it is frustrating to the Council. The Council also takes exception to responses when the Board defers and deflects issues back to this Council to take action. When the Council makes recommendations to the Board, or asks for assistance, it is asking either the Board to take action, or the regional agency director who sits on the Board to take the issue back to his or her agency for action.

Chairman Simeonoff

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Response:

The Board understands the Council's concern and will work harder to better understand what sort of action the Council is seeking and providing meaningful responses. Be mindful, however, that many of the Council's requests fall outside of Board jurisdiction or are contrary to Board policy. As appropriate, however, the Board will endeavor to pass on the Council's concerns to the appropriate agency or department.

2. Impacts of Declining Budget

The Council is very alarmed at how declining budgets are impacting staff support by the Office of Subsistence Management (OSM). During a briefing at our fall 2013 meeting, we were informed that in the last eight years, the staffing at OSM has been reduced approximately 40%. Additionally, we have been told that during that same time, the OSM budget has been cut dramatically, with steep declines in recent years. The Secretary of the Interior is under a legal mandate to provide for rural subsistence opportunities and to ensure that adequate staffing support is provided to the Councils. Not only that, but the Secretaries raised the issue of the subsistence budget as part of the Secretarial Review; the Board needs to be more proactive in responding to that directive. Cutting budgets and staff, with no intention to replace key staff like the Anthropology Division Chief, does not satisfy these mandates. The Council concurs with the position of the North Slope Subsistence Regional Advisory Council in its letter dated December 31, 2013 (enclosure). Cutting budgets and staffing only places at risk the ability of the Councils to make informed decisions and the ability of managers to provide for subsistence opportunity, as required by Title VIII of ANILCA. This trend must be reversed and needs to be brought to the attention of the Secretary of the Interior. If subsistence truly is "broken," it cannot be "fixed" without adequate budget and staffing support.

Response:

The Board recognizes that declining budgets over the last ten years have reduced the capabilities of the Office of Subsistence Management and the U.S. Forest Service to fund all aspects of the Federal Subsistence Management Program at the level desired by the Councils. Overall Federal budgets are declining and it is not likely that they will increase in the foreseeable future.

The Council accurately notes that this issue has been raised in the Secretarial Review, where the Secretaries noted the Board should "review and submit recommendations for Departmental consideration of the annual budget for the Federal subsistence program." The Secretary of the Interior also specifically directed the Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to "modify the budget to include a line item for the Alaska subsistence program," to "seek input from the Federal Subsistence Board (FSB) and other stakeholders on budgetary requirements and priorities for the subsistence program" and "[C]oordinate with [the Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget] an evaluation ... of the subsistence program including budgetary requirements." These matters are still being examined as part of the ongoing Secretarial Review process.



Chairman Simeonoff

3

The Board will continue to discuss these issues at its next available work session and include the Council's budgetary concerns in its next update to the Secretaries on the status of the review. The Board must add, however, that in its August 26, 2011 update to the Secretaries on the status of the review, it noted:

In light of the Secretary's emphasis on the Federal Subsistence Management Program and resultant heightened expectations of rural Alaskans, additional funding is needed for the Federal Subsistence Management Program to implement many of the Secretarial Recommendations. Unfortunately, funding in 2012 and beyond is likely to be flat or reduced; this will affect the ability of both the Board and the Program to deliver on certain of these recommendations.

The Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) is working to fill a number of the positions that have been vacant. For example, OSM is now proposing to fill the Anthropology Division Chief (now called Supervisory Anthropologist) vacancy that you mention above, as well as adding another Subsistence Council Coordinator to help with Council arrangements and business.

3. Meetings in Remote Locations

This Council, as part of performing its advisory duties to the Board, needs to hear from residents of the region when making recommendations. It is hard to do that unless the Council is given the opportunity to go out into the various communities of the region to conduct meetings. This Council has repeatedly requested that it be provided the opportunity to conduct its meetings at more remote locations within its region. And each time, the response from OSM and the Board has been that such meetings cannot be conducted for various reasons: budget, availability of lodging, etc. This goes back to our concern about bureaucratic responses from the Board to our annual reports. Being told that the Federal government cannot accept gifts is an inadequate response to this Council's suggestion that OSM work with Tribal governments or other entities to find solutions to the problem of conducting meetings in remote locations.

It is not helpful for the Council to be told what cannot be done; it wants to hear what can be done. First, budgetary restrictions should not be the reason for not conducting meetings at more remote locations. Providing for public Council meetings to provide a forum on subsistence issues for the region is not a discretionary function, but required by law, and should therefore not be subject to any travel budget caps. Second, in the absence of any formal lodging facilities, efforts should be made to reach out to the community and find alternate lodging, such as schools or host homes. This was accomplished by the Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council for its fall 2012 meeting at Holy Cross. Finally, it is not always necessary that everyone be physically present at the meeting – some staff or even Council members could participate telephonically in order to cut costs and conduct more remote meetings.

Chairman Simeonoff

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Response:

The Board and OSM are capable of doing more to respond to your request to meet in rural communities. Your Subsistence Council Coordinator will work with you to evaluate opportunities to meet in remote villages when Council agenda issues call for it. While we must follow any applicable government requirements (such as those related to use of charter aircraft, for example), OSM will explore options to determine what can be done to accommodate meetings in rural villages to the extent that budget allows. Any assistance that can be offered by Council members and their communities in organizing such meetings would be greatly appreciated.

In last year's annual report reply, the Board noted: "It is not appropriate for other entities (Tribal, Municipal, or Native Corporation) to cover Council meeting costs such as member lodging costs, Council meeting room costs or Council member travel costs. The government cannot accept such gifts." We apologize for what may seem like "bureaucratic responses," but often such activities are governed by rules beyond the Board's control – as was the case in that prior response. Since that reply, it has been clarified that, for U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service employee travel, third parties may be able to pay for travel expenses subject to local ethics approval. If that were to happen, it could potentially provide for more available travel funding. OSM staff are seeking a determination if the same policy, or a similar policy governing volunteers, can be applied toward Council member travel.

4. Importance of Rural Status

Given the significant amount of Federal public lands in this region, the Council wishes to stress the importance of maintaining the rural priority provided for under Title VIII of ANILCA. The Council appreciates the efforts made by the Board to provide a forum for residents of the region to provide testimony at the public hearing held on Kodiak on September 25, 2013. The Council voted to incorporate all public testimony as its own comments, as noted in the Council's letter dated April 1, 2014 (enclosure). The Council incorporates that letter as part of its annual report.

The rural status of Kodiak in particular has been an issue of concern, and is a status that the Council will continue to be vigilant about and fight to protect. This is why, in addition to providing comments on the Board's Rural Determination review, the Council voted to send a letter to the Alaska Board of Fisheries and Board of Game to oppose Joint Board Proposal 40, which sought to rescind the rural status of Kodiak under State subsistence regulations. The State Boards saw the wisdom of maintaining that rural status, and we hope that the same can be said for the Federal Subsistence Board as the Rural Determination review process moves forward.

Response:

In enacting the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), Congress determined that rural residents would be provided a subsistence priority on Federal public lands.



Accordingly, the Federal Subsistence Board takes seriously its responsibilities in determining the rural status of communities and areas across the State. As part of a multi-year review of the rural determination process, the Board recently to make a recommendation to the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture to change the rural determination process. The revised regulatory language would read as follows: "The Board shall determine which areas or communities in Alaska are nonrural. All other communities and areas are therefore rural." If the Secretaries accept this recommendation, then they will publish a proposed rule in the Federal Register seeking comment on that proposal. If implemented, the Board would use this language when making future rural determinations. All of the Councils will be kept informed and have opportunity to provide additional comment as the process moves forward.

5. Emperor Geese

As you may recall, this Council included an item about Emperor Geese in its FY2011 Annual Report and, as a result of the Board's reply, submitted a proposal to the Alaska Migratory Bird Co-Management Council (AMBCC) to initiate a small harvest for each village in our region. There should be a stepped approach for re-opening an Emperor Goose subsistence harvest in our region. The Council would like to express its disappointment that the AMBCC sought to reject the request for a subsistence hunt on Emperor Geese. The Council is perplexed as to how a population threshold of 80,000 was established and is curious as to what it takes in order to establish a subsistence hunt on Emperor Geese. We have requested specific details on the survey design in the past and have not received this information. The Council does not request any action by the Board on this issue, but wanted to inform you of our intention to keep pressing this issue with the AMBCC.

Response:

The Board appreciates the Council's comment and has forwarded it on to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Alaska Region) Division of Migratory Bird Management.

6. Caribou Population Management

The Council wishes to recognize the productive work being done by the Alaska Department of Fish & Game with the Southern Alaska Peninsula Caribou Herd in Unit 9D. It appears that the Department's efforts, including the predator control measures identified in our FY 2012 Annual Report, have made progress in improving the herd's numbers. (We would like to see a similar, scientific evaluative process for the other 60% of the Unit 9 calving grounds that are located on Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge lands.) The Council remains additionally concerned about the status of the caribou in Unit 10, particularly on Unimak Island, which are under Federal control. The Council would like a status update as to what measures are being taken to improve that herd's numbers which, at last report, were down to around 200. Specifically, the Council would like to be briefed on what is being done to improve the cow/calf ratio for the herd.

Chairman Simeonoff

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Response:

The Board recognizes that experimental removal (2008-2010) by the Alaska Department of the Fish and Game (ADF&G) of wolves from the calving grounds in Unit 9D of the Southern Alaska Peninsula Caribou Herd (SAPCH) may have resulted in an increase of the SAPCH. However, expansion of a similar predator control program on the remaining 60% of the Unit's calving grounds is not within the scope of the Federal Subsistence Management Program but a matter for individual land managers to address.

The Board acknowledges that the Councils have raised the issue of revisiting predator control on several prior occasions. At the urging of the State of Alaska, the Board addressed the Predator Management Policy during its June 18, 2013 work session in Anchorage. During that meeting, the Board reaffirmed the position stated in its Predator Management Policy, which is based on regulation (36 CFR 242.10(a) and 50 CFR 100.10(a)), that the Federal Board "administers the subsistence taking of wildlife for the non-wasteful harvest of fish and wildlife by Federally qualified rural residents, consistent with the maintenance of healthy populations of harvested resources." Wildlife management activities other than the subsistence take of fish and wildlife, like predator control and habitat management, are the responsibility of and remain within the authority of the individual management agencies.

The Izembek National Wildlife Refuge and the ADF&G have been working cooperatively on research and management studies on caribou in Unit 10, particularly Unimak Island. Typically, ADF&G conducts spring and fall surveys to collect sex and age composition, productivity and survival rates. The calf/cow ratio which was extremely low at 3% in 2009, increased to 19% in 2013. The bull:cow ratio increased from a low of 5 bulls:100 cows in 2009 to 10 bulls:100 cows in 2013. ADF&G plans to conduct a calf survival study beginning in June 2014. The wolf populations in Units 9 and 10, including Unimak Island, are monitored by ADF&G, and brown bears are monitored yearly by the Refuge staff.

Biologists and staff from Izembek National Wildlife Refuge periodically conduct mid-winter surveys to estimate population size of caribou on Unimak Island. Although a mid-winter population survey was not conducted in 2013 due to lack of snow cover, biologists from the refuge hope to be able to get a population estimate from the post-calving survey scheduled for July 2014. The last population estimate for the population was 400 in 2009 (Riley 2011). Results from additional studies by ADF&G and University of Alaska, Anchorage on the habitat quality (nutrition) and availability are not yet available.

We would be happy to have staff available at your next Council meeting to further discuss the status of these caribou populations.



Chairman Simeonoff

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Literature Cited:

Riley, M.D. 2011. Unit 10 caribou management report. Pages 53-59 in P. Harper. Editor. Caribou management report of survey and inventory activities 1 July 2008-30 June 2010. ADF&G, Juneau, Alaska.

7. Sea Duck Mortality in Uyak Bay

Despite an overall stable sea duck population in the Kodiak Archipelago, particularly Harlequin ducks, the sea duck population in Uyak Bay has been declining. The Council requests that either the AMBCC or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service conduct a mortality study on the Uyak Bay Harlequin duck population. Understanding what is happening with this population will assist land managers in making good decisions regarding this important population.

Response:

The Board forwarded this matter on to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Alaska Region) Division of Migratory Bird Management, which responded as follows.

Thank you for raising the concern about the observed sea duck decline in Uyak Bay, particularly in Harlequin Ducks. Harlequin ducks exhibit high site fidelity to wintering areas (i.e., surviving birds return to the same area year after year). As a result, populations that are continually depleted through harvest, predation, environmental catastrophes (e.g., oil spills or chronic exposure to pollutants), or for other reasons, may be slow to recover. For example, harlequin ducks have taken more than 20 years to recover from the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Prince William Sound.

The fact that harlequin duck populations are declining in Uyak Bay, yet stable in other parts of the Kodiak archipelago, suggests the cause of decline is specific to Uyak Bay. There is apparently considerable sport harvest of harlequin ducks in Uyak Bay, and this may be one reason for observed declines. Concern over local harvest of harlequin ducks has also been expressed in past years by staff at Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge. Unfortunately, data on harvest levels from both subsistence and sport hunting of sea ducks are sparse and it is virtually impossible to tease out estimates of harvest for small areas such as Uyak Bay.

In other areas of Alaska (e.g., Kachemak Bay), similar declines in local sea duck populations have been observed, and proposals brought to the Board of Game have resulted in reduced bag limits for some sea duck species, including harlequin ducks. Consideration of local area restrictions would fall under the jurisdiction of the State of Alaska.

Chairman Simeonoff

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The Council is invited to propose regulatory changes to the Alaska Board of Game in its next cycle addressing this area (2015). Your Subsistence Council Coordinator can assist you in submitting any proposals through the State process.

In closing, I want to thank you and your Council for their continued involvement and diligence in matters regarding the Federal Subsistence Management Program. I would like to specifically thank Samuel Rohrer for his 10 years of service and Della Trumble for her 5 years of service to the Federal Subsistence Management Program as members of this Council. I speak for the entire Board in expressing our appreciation for your efforts and our confidence that the subsistence users of the Kodiak/Aleutians Region are well represented through your work.

Sincerely,



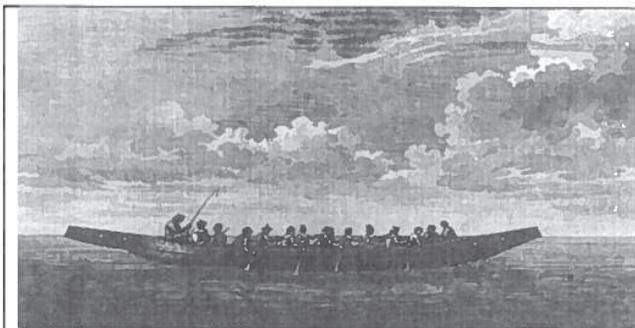
Tim Towarak
Chair

cc: Kodiak/Aleutians Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Federal Subsistence Board
Eugene R. Peltola, Jr., Assistant Regional Director, OSM
Chuck Ardizzone, Deputy Assistant Regional Director, OSM
David Jenkins, Policy Coordinator, OSM
Carl Johnson, Council Coordination Division Chief, OSM
Interagency Staff Committee
Administrative Record



General comparison of the Section 804 and customary and traditional use approaches used in the Federal Subsistence Management Program.

Element	804 analysis	C&T use determination analysis
Function	Used to identify the pool of qualified subsistence users when a population of fish or wildlife in a particular area is not sufficient to allow for all qualified subsistence users to harvest from it	Used to recognize a community or area whose residents generally exhibit characteristics of customary and traditional use of specific fish stocks and wildlife populations for subsistence
Authority	ANILCA Section 804 and 50 CFR 100.17	36 CFR 242.16 and 50 CFR 100.16
Legal language	Except as otherwise provided in this Act and other Federal laws, the taking on public lands of fish and wildlife for nonwasteful subsistence uses shall be accorded priority over the taking on such lands of fish and wildlife for other purposes. Whenever it is necessary to restrict the taking of populations of fish and wildlife on such lands for subsistence uses in order to protect the continued viability of such populations, or to continue such uses, such priority shall be implemented through appropriate limitations based on the application of the following criteria:	(a) The Board shall determine which fish stocks and wildlife populations have been customarily and traditionally used for subsistence. These determinations shall identify the specific community's or area's use of specific fish stocks and wildlife populations. For areas managed by the National Park Service, where subsistence uses are allowed, the determinations may be made on an individual basis. (b) A community or area shall generally exhibit the following factors, which exemplify customary and traditional use. The Board shall make customary and traditional use determinations based on application of the following factors:
Criteria/factors	(1) Customary and direct dependence upon the populations as the mainstay of livelihood; and (2) Local residency; and (3) The availability of alternative resources.	(1) A long-term consistent pattern of use, excluding interruptions beyond the control of the community or area; (2) A pattern of use recurring in specific seasons for many years; (3) A pattern of use consisting of methods and means of harvest which are characterized by efficiency and economy of effort and cost, conditioned by local characteristics; (4) The consistent harvest and use of fish or wildlife as related to past methods and means of taking; near, or reasonably accessible from, the community or area; (5) A means of handling, preparing, preserving, and storing fish or wildlife which has been traditionally used by past generations, including consideration of alteration of past practices due to recent technological advances, where appropriate; (6) A pattern of use which includes the handing down of knowledge of fishing and hunting skills, values, and lore from generation to generation; (7) A pattern of use in which the harvest is shared or distributed within a definable community of persons; and (8) A pattern of use which relates to reliance upon a wide diversity of fish and wildlife resources of the area and which provides substantial cultural, economic, social, and nutritional elements to the community or area.
Frequency	Since 1990, the Board has taken action on about twenty 804 analyses	Since 1990, the Board has made about 300 C&T determinations



***Southwest Alaska
Subsistence Regional
Advisory Council***

**Bertrand Adams Sr., Chairman
P. O. Box 349
Yakutat, Alaska 99689**

RAC SE14012.RL

APR 01 2014

Mr. Tim Towarak, Chair
Federal Subsistence Board
c/o U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Office of Subsistence Management
1011 East Tudor Road, Mail Stop 121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Dear Chairman Towarak:

Thank you for your diligence in providing expanded information on our Council's proposed changes to the customary and traditional use determination process (§ .16) to all of the other Regional Advisory Councils. It is our understanding that there has been quality discussion of this issue at many of those other Council meetings.

As a part of our Council's continued effort to review and revise § .16, we authorized a work group to develop preliminary regulatory language. The work group reported to the Council at its March 2014 meeting in Anchorage and the Council adopted the work group's product as our own.

Enclosed is the Council's background paper which includes our recommendation on § .16 regulatory language. Key aspects of our recommendation are that: 1) councils would have the autonomy to recommend customary and traditional use determinations specific to their Region; 2) any restrictions for the taking of fish and wildlife shall be implemented using the criteria established in ANILCA 804 (and repeated in this regulatory language); 3) deference on customary and traditional use determination recommendations would be given to the applicable Regional Advisory Council; and, 4) the current eight factors considered for making customary and traditional use determinations would be eliminated.

We request that Federal staff review our recommendation and provide to us an analysis at our fall 2014 meeting. That analysis should provide staff's best estimate of the effect on both the Southwest Region as well as the other regions of the state. The Council would also



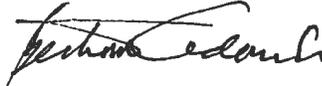
Chairman Towarak

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appreciate a review of the proposed language with possible modifications for regulatory clarity, while maintaining our intent.

Any questions regarding this letter can be addressed directly to me or through Mr. Robert Larson, Council Coordinator, U. S. Forest Service, Box 1328, Petersburg, Alaska 99833, (907) 772-5930, robertlarson@fs.fed.us. Thank you for your attention.

Gunalchéesh,



Bertrand Adams Sr.,
Chair

Enclosure

cc: Beth Pendleton, Regional Forester, USFS
Eugene R. Peltola, Jr., Assistant Regional Director, OSM
David Jenkins, Policy Coordinator, OSM
Jack Lorrigan, Native Liaison, OSM
Carl Johnson, Council Coordination Division Chief, OSM
Robert Larson, Subsistence Council Coordinator, USFS
Chairs, Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils
Administrative Record

Customary and Traditional Use Determination Proposal and Rationale Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

Introduction: During the fall 2013 regular council meeting, the Council tasked the customary and traditional determination (C&T) workgroup with developing a region-specific proposal for amending the current C&T determination regulations. The workgroup members (C. Needham, D. Hernandez, P. Phillips, and M. Bangs) submitted that work to the Council which adopted the recommendation as its own. The Council considers it vitally important that the intent of the proposal be clearly communicated to the Board and other councils.

Problem: The current federal C&T determination regulations, including the eight factor analysis, were adopted from pre-existing State Regulations. The federal program adopted this framework, with some differences, when it was thought that federal subsistence management would be temporary. As a result of the 2009-2010 comprehensive Federal Subsistence Program Review, the Secretary of the Interior issued a letter of direction, with the concurrence of the Secretary of Agriculture, requesting that the Federal Subsistence Board “review [the] customary and traditional determination process to provide clear, fair, and effective determinations in accord with Title VIII goals and provisions (changes would require new regulations)”. It was stated that this be conducted with regional advisory councils input.

Recommended solution: The intent of this proposed regulation change is to provide a statewide framework for making C&T determinations (see subpart a) while providing an option for region specific regulations that match particular characteristic of each region (see subpart b). The proposal will also provide deference to regional councils (see subpart e).

The Council wanted each regional council to be able to develop region specific regulations that suit their own region, and therefore took the approach to change the umbrella statewide regulation in order to do so. Subpart b of the proposed regulation provides an opportunity for region specific process to be incorporated into the regulation.

The Council’s intent for the Southeast Region would be to make very broad customary and traditional use determinations so that seasons on Federal public lands and waters would remain open to all Federally-qualified rural residents until there is a need to reduce the pool of eligible harvesters using the process described in ANILCA 804. In effect, ANILCA 804 would replace the current Federal C&T determination eight factors with a three-criterion method of restriction on who can harvest a resource.



CURRENT LANGUAGE OF §§ .16 and .17:

§242.16 Customary and traditional use determination process.

(a) The Board shall determine which fish stocks and wildlife populations have been customarily and traditionally used for subsistence. These determinations shall identify the specific community's or area's use of specific fish stocks and wildlife populations. For areas managed by the National Park Service, where subsistence uses are allowed, the determinations may be made on an individual basis.

(b) A community or area shall generally exhibit the following factors, which exemplify customary and traditional use. The Board shall make customary and traditional use determinations based on application of the following factors:

- (1) A long-term consistent pattern of use, excluding interruptions beyond the control of the community or area;
- (2) A pattern of use recurring in specific seasons for many years;
- (3) A pattern of use consisting of methods and means of harvest which are characterized by efficiency and economy of effort and cost, conditioned by local characteristics;
- (4) The consistent harvest and use of fish or wildlife as related to past methods and means of taking; near, or reasonably accessible from, the community or area;
- (5) A means of handling, preparing, preserving, and storing fish or wildlife which has been traditionally used by past generations, including consideration of alteration of past practices due to recent technological advances, where appropriate;
- (6) A pattern of use which includes the handing down of knowledge of fishing and hunting skills, values, and lore from generation to generation;
- (7) A pattern of use in which the harvest is shared or distributed within a definable community of persons; and
- (8) A pattern of use which relates to reliance upon a wide diversity of fish and wildlife resources of the area and which provides substantial cultural, economic, social, and nutritional elements to the community or area.

(c) The Board shall take into consideration the reports and recommendations of any appropriate Regional Council regarding customary and traditional uses of subsistence resources.

(d) Current determinations are listed in §242.24.

§242.17 Determining priorities for subsistence uses among rural Alaska residents.

(a) Whenever it is necessary to restrict the subsistence taking of fish and wildlife on public lands in order to protect the continued viability of such populations, or to continue subsistence uses, the Board shall establish a priority among the rural Alaska residents after considering any recommendation submitted by an appropriate Regional Council.

(b) The priority shall be implemented through appropriate limitations based on the application of the following criteria to each area, community, or individual determined to have customary and traditional use, as necessary:

- (1) Customary and direct dependence upon the populations as the mainstay of livelihood;
- (2) Local residency; and
- (3) The availability of alternative resources.

(c) If allocation on an area or community basis is not achievable, then the Board shall allocate subsistence opportunity on an individual basis through application of the criteria in paragraphs (b)(1) through (3) of this section.

(d) In addressing a situation where prioritized allocation becomes necessary, the Board shall solicit recommendations from the Regional Council in the area affected.

Southeast Alaska Council's Proposed Language

(36 CFR §242.16 and 50 CFR §100.16) Customary and traditional use determination process

(a) The Board shall determine which fish and wildlife have been customarily and traditionally used for subsistence within a geographic area. When it is necessary to restrict the taking of fish and wildlife, and other renewable resources to assure continued viability of a fish or wildlife population, a priority for the taking of such population for non-wasteful subsistence uses shall be implemented based on the application of the following criteria; customary and direct dependence upon the populations as the mainstay of livelihood; local residency; and the availability of alternative resources. For areas managed by the National Park Service, where subsistence uses are allowed, the determinations may be made on an individual basis.

(b) Each region shall have the autonomy to recommend customary and traditional use determinations specific to that region.

(c) The Board shall give deference to recommendations of the appropriate Regional Council(s). Councils will make recommendations regarding customary and traditional uses of subsistence resources based on its review and evaluation of all available information, including relevant technical and scientific support data and the traditional knowledge of local residents in the region.

(d) Current determinations are listed in § 100.24

*NOTE: The Council did not change §242.17, which would therefore remain in effect.



Proposal in edited form

(36 CFR §242.16 and 50 CFR §100.16) Customary and traditional use determination process

(a) The Board shall determine which fish stocks and wildlife populations have been customarily and traditionally used for subsistence **within a geographic area**. ~~These determinations shall identify the specific community's or area's use of specific fish stocks and wildlife populations.~~

When it is necessary to restrict the taking of fish and wildlife, and other renewable resources to assurance continued viability of a fish or wildlife population, a priority for the taking of such population for non-wasteful subsistence uses shall be implemented based on the application of the following criteria; customary and direct dependence upon the populations as the mainstay of livelihood; local residency; and the availability of alternative resources. For areas managed by the National Park Service, where subsistence uses are allowed, the determinations may be made on an individual basis.

~~(b) A community or area shall generally exhibit the following factors, which exemplify customary and traditional use. The Board shall make customary and traditional use determinations based on application of the following factors:~~

~~(1) A long term consistent pattern of use, excluding interruptions beyond the control of the community or area;~~

~~(2) A pattern of use recurring in specific seasons for many years;~~

~~(3) A pattern of use consisting of methods and means of harvest which are characterized by efficiency and economy of effort and cost, conditioned by local characteristics;~~

~~(4) The consistent harvest and use of fish or wildlife as related to past methods and means of taking; near, or reasonably accessible from, the community or area;~~

~~(5) A means of handling, preparing, preserving, and storing fish or wildlife which has been traditionally used by past generations, including consideration of alteration of past practices due to recent technological advances, where appropriate;~~

~~(6) A pattern of use which includes the handing down of knowledge of fishing and hunting skills, values, and lore from generation to generation;~~

~~(7) A pattern of use in which the harvest is shared or distributed within a definable community of persons; and~~

~~(8) A pattern of use which relates to reliance upon a wide diversity of fish and wildlife resources of the area and which provides substantial cultural, economic, social, and nutritional elements to the community or area.~~

(b) Each region shall have the autonomy to recommend customary and traditional use determinations specific to that region.

(c) The Board shall take into consideration the reports and recommendations of any appropriate Regional Council regarding customary and traditional uses of subsistence resources. The Board shall give deference to recommendations of the appropriate Regional Council(s). Councils will make recommendations regarding customary and traditional uses of subsistence resources based on its review and evaluation of all available information, including relevant technical and scientific support data and the traditional knowledge of local residents in the region.

(d) Current determinations are listed in § [100.24](#)

Appendix

Southeast Alaska Council, 2011 Annual Report Topics

Issue 1: Customary and traditional determinations

At the March 2011 Council meeting, the Council was asked to review how the current customary and traditional use determination process was working. The Council observed that the Federal customary and traditional use determination process and the eight factor analysis is a carryover from State of Alaska regulation. Now that it appears the Federal program will be permanent; it would be appropriate to develop a Federal process based on ANILCA rather than a process developed to address State regulatory authorities. Unfortunately, the Office of Subsistence Management did not provide sufficient information to the Council regarding how the current customary and traditional use determination process was being applied to allow the Council to make definitive recommendations to the Board. The Council wishes to reiterate the recommendation made to the Board during the March 2011 meeting:

Given that ANILCA does not require the Board make customary and traditional use determinations, the Council recommends the Federal Subsistence Board eliminate the current regulations for customary and traditional use determinations, and task the Office of Subsistence Management with drafting regulations which adhere to provisions contained within Section 804 of ANILCA.

The Council reiterates support for the following specific regulatory change as recommended at the March 2011 meeting:

Modify 50 CFR 100.16 (a). The regulation should read: “The Board shall determine which fish and wildlife have been customarily and traditionally used for subsistence. These determinations shall identify the specific community’s or area’s use of [specific fish stock and wildlife population] **all species of fish and wildlife that have traditionally used, in their (past and present) geographic areas**”.

Southeast Alaska Council, 2012 Annual Report Topics

Issue 1: Customary and Traditional Use Determination Recommendation

The Council believes the current method of restricting access to fish and wildlife resources through a customary and traditional use determination process was not intended by ANILCA. Although SE Council recognizes that there are a number of possible solutions to address this problem, it’s preferred solution is to eliminate the customary and traditional use determination regulations (36 CFR 242.16 and 50 CFR 100.16) and allocate resources as directed in Section 804 of ANILCA. The Council wrote a letter to the other Councils requesting that they reconsider the issue of whether the current customary and traditional use determination process is appropriate and is truly meeting the needs of the residents of their regions. The Council requests the Board provide adequate staff resources to assist the other councils in making an informed decision regarding this complex issue.

Southeast Alaska Council letter to the other Councils, January 11, 2013

The SE Council’s preferred solution is to eliminate the customary and traditional use determination regulations and allocate resources as directed in Section 804 of ANILCA. We would like your Council to consider what would be most beneficial to your region: eliminate customary and traditional use determinations, change the way customary and traditional use determinations are made, or make no change.



RURAL REVIEW BRIEFING FOR THE FEDERAL SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCILS

In October 2009, Secretary of the Interior Salazar announced a review of the Federal subsistence program. The review was intended “to ensure that the program is best serving rural Alaskans and that the letter and spirit of Title VIII [of ANILCA] are being met.” Secretary Salazar, with the concurrence of Secretary of Agriculture Vilsack, requested that the Federal Subsistence Board initiate a number of actions, one of which was to develop recommendations for regulatory changes to the process of making rural/nonrural determinations in Alaska.

Background

At its January 2012 public meeting, the Federal Subsistence Board elected to conduct a global review of the rural/nonrural determination process, starting with public and Subsistence Regional Advisory Council input. Logically, the global review required the Board to stay its 2007 final rule, whose rural provisions would otherwise have gone into effect in May 2012. The Board determined that the 1991 rural/nonrural determinations would remain in place pending the outcome of its review of the rural determination process (77 FR 12477). The conclusion of the review, and the determinations of rural status, must be completed by March 2017.

Two areas of Alaska—the community of Saxman and the Kenai Peninsula—have proven difficult for the Board to categorize under the current rural determination process. The Board has gone back and forth on whether these locations should be rural or non-rural. Based on the Secretaries’ directive and these high-profile back and forth changes in rural status using the current rural determination process, the Board decided to engage in a year-long, public review of the current process. In December 31, 2012, the Board identified five elements in the rural determination process for public review (77 FR 77005): population thresholds; rural characteristics; aggregation of communities; timelines, and information sources. The Board posed eight general questions for public input concerning these five elements, and one question requesting any additional information. The comment period was open to November 1, 2013, which was extended to December 2, 2013 because of the partial federal government shutdown in October.

The Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils were briefed on the Federal Register notice during their winter 2013 meetings. At their fall 2013 meetings, the Councils provided a public forum to hear from residents of their regions, deliberate on the rural determination process, and provide recommendations for changes to the Board.

Testimonies from members of the public were also recorded during separate hearings held to solicit comments on the rural determination process. The Board held hearings in Barrow, Ketchikan, Sitka, Kodiak, Bethel, Anchorage, Fairbanks, Kotzebue, Nome, and Dillingham. Government-to-government consultations on the rural determination process were held between members of the Board and Tribes, and additional consultations were held between members of the Board and Alaska Native corporations formed under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act.

In aggregate, the Board received 475 substantive comments from various sources, including individual citizens, members of regional advisory councils, and other entities or organizations, such as non-profit Alaska Native corporations and borough governments.

Based on Council and public comments, government-to-government and Alaska Native corporation consultations, and briefing materials from the Office of Subsistence Management (see “Review of the Rural Determination Process” briefing following this update), the Board developed a recommendation that simplifies the process of rural/nonrural determinations, as shown below.

Federal Subsistence Board Recommendation

The Board will be recommending to the Secretaries to make the following change in Secretarial regulations:

§100.15 and §242.15. Rural determination process.

- (a) The Board shall determine which areas or communities in Alaska are nonrural.
- (b) All other communities and areas are therefore rural.

The Board also recommended eliminating from Secretarial regulation the specific criteria previously relied upon by the Board in making rural determinations: population thresholds, the population data sources, rural characteristics, community aggregation, and the ten-year review.

Next Steps

If the Secretaries adopt the Board’s recommendation, a series of steps are required in order to meet the March 2017 deadline.

- The Secretaries may decide to propose a rule to change the current rural determination process, based on the Board’s recommendation. The Secretaries would need to act on this recommendation because it affects 36 CFR 242 Subpart B, and 50 CFR 100 Subpart B, which are under Secretarial purview. The public, Regional Advisory Councils, Tribes and Alaska Native corporations would have the opportunity to comment or consult during that rule-making process.
- The Secretaries could then decide to publish a final rule specifying the rural/non rural determination process. The revised process appears in Subpart B of subsistence regulations, under Secretarial authority.
- The Board uses that rule to make rural/nonrural determinations, publishing those determinations in a proposed rule. The public, Regional Advisory Councils, Tribes and Alaska Native corporations would have the opportunity to comment or consult during that rule-making process.
- The Board then publishes a final rule with the revised rural/nonrural determinations. The revised rural/nonrural determinations appear in Subpart C of subsistence regulations, under Board authority.
- If no new rule making is completed by March 1, 2017, specifying rural/nonrural determinations, then the 2007 rule will become enforceable.



Review of the Rural Determination Process

A Briefing for the Federal Subsistence Board

April 15, 2014

Background

The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), Title VIII, Section 802 asserts that “the purpose of this title is to provide the opportunity for rural residents engaged in a subsistence way of life to do so.”

In drafting ANILCA, however, the Congress did not define the term “rural.”

Senate Report No. 96-413, which comments on Title VIII, provides examples of *cities* excluded from rural status—“Ketchikan, Juneau, Anchorage, and Fairbanks”—and examples of *communities* that are rural—“such as Dillingham, Bethel, Nome, Kotzebue, Barrow, and other Native and non-Native villages scattered throughout the State.” The Senate Report further indicates the dynamic nature of rural communities and the inevitability of change: “[T]he Committee does not intend to imply that the rural nature of such communities is a static condition: the direction of the economic development and rural character of such communities may change over time.” Such change is not necessarily from rural to nonrural; it may also be from nonrural to rural.

Secretarial Review

In October 2009, the Secretary of the Interior initiated a Subsistence Program Review; the Secretary of Agriculture later concurred with this course of action. The review concluded, among other things, that the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) should review the process for rural determinations, with input from the Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils (Council). If needed, the Board should then make recommendations to the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture for changes to the process for rural determinations.

Federal Subsistence Board Review

At its January 17-21, 2012 public meeting, the Federal Subsistence Board elected to conduct a global review of the rural/nonrural determination process. The review started with recommendations from the Regional Advisory Councils, comments from the public, and consultations with Tribes and ANCSA Corporations. With the review underway, the Board stayed the 2007 final rule, in which rural determinations would have otherwise come into effect in May 2012. The Board determined that the 1991 rural/nonrural determinations would remain in place pending the outcome of its review of the rural determination process. Adak was the singular exception, whose status changed from nonrural to rural in 2007.

Federal Register Notice

In a Federal Register notice, published December 31, 2012 (77 FR 77005), the Board identified five elements in the rural determination process for public review: Population thresholds; rural characteristics;

aggregation of communities; timelines, and information sources. The Board posed eight general questions for members of the public to consider regarding these five elements and one question requesting any additional information on how to make the process more effective.

Population thresholds. A community or area with a population below 2,500 will be considered rural. A community or area with a population between 2,500 and 7,000 will be considered rural or nonrural, based on community characteristics and criteria used to group communities together. Communities with populations more than 7,000 will be considered nonrural, unless they possess significant rural characteristics. In 2008, the Board recommended to the Secretaries that the upper population threshold be changed to 11,000.

(1) Are these population threshold guidelines useful for determining whether a specific area of Alaska is rural?

(2) If they are not, please provide population size(s) to distinguish between rural and nonrural areas, and the reasons for the population size you believe more accurately reflects rural and nonrural areas in Alaska.

Rural characteristics. Population is not the only indicator of rural or nonrural status. Other characteristics the Board considers include, but are not limited to, the following: Use of fish and wildlife; development and diversity of the economy; community infrastructure; transportation; and educational institutions.

(3) Are these characteristics useful for determining whether a specific area of Alaska is rural?

(4) If they are not, please provide a list of characteristics that better define or enhance rural and nonrural status.

Aggregation of communities. Communities that are economically, socially, and communally integrated are considered in the aggregate in determining rural and nonrural status. The aggregation criteria are as follows: Do 30 percent or more of the working people commute from one community to another; do they share a common high school attendance area; and are the communities in proximity and road-accessible to one another?

(5) Are these aggregation criteria useful in determining rural and nonrural status?

(6) If they are not, please provide a list of criteria that better specify how communities may be integrated economically, socially, and communally for the purposes of determining rural and nonrural status.

Timelines. The Board reviews rural determinations on a 10-year cycle, and out of cycle in special circumstances.

(7) Should the Board review rural determinations on a 10-year cycle? If so, why; if not, why not?

Information sources. Current regulations state that population data from the most recent census conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, as updated by the Alaska Department of Labor, shall be utilized in the rural determination process. The information collected and the reports generated during the decennial census vary between each census; data used during the Board's rural determination may vary.



(8) These information sources as stated in regulations will continue to be the foundation of data used for rural determinations. Do you have any additional sources you think would be beneficial to use?

(9) In addition to the preceding questions, do you have any additional comments on how to make the rural determination process more effective?

Opportunities to Participate

The public comment period for the review of the rural determination process opened December 31, 2012 and closed on December 2, 2013. The original public notice closed the comment period November 1, 2013; the extension was posted as a result of the partial government shutdown in October 2013.

The Councils were briefed on the public notice during their winter 2013 meetings. At their fall 2013 meetings, the Councils provided a public forum to hear from the residents of their regions, deliberate on rural determination processes, and provide recommendations for changes to the Board.

Testimonies from members of the public were recorded during hearings held to solicit comments on the rural determination process. Hearings occurred in Barrow, Ketchikan, Sitka, Kodiak, Bethel, Anchorage, Fairbanks, Kotzebue, Nome, and Dillingham. A PowerPoint presentation and time for discussion and dialogue on specific questions were provided prior to each hearing.

Government-to-government consultations on the rural determination process were held between members of the Board and Tribes. Formal consultations were held between members of the Board and Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) corporations.

Summary of Recommendations from Regional Advisory Councils

The Councils provided several comments about **population thresholds**. Few Councils made specific recommendations regarding the current population threshold criteria, noting rather that they were generally arbitrary. One Council recommended the presumptive rural threshold be increased to 11,000. One Council suggested the presumptive non-rural threshold should be increased to 20,000. Several noted that rural characteristics should be weighed more heavily than population thresholds. Only one Council expressed support for the current population thresholds.

The Councils provided many comments about **aggregation**. Four Councils suggested eliminating aggregation. Most Councils noted that the current application of aggregation is arbitrary and produces inconsistent results. One Council suggested that communities need to be provided better opportunities to demonstrate whether or not any aggregation factors are applicable. Other Councils noted that any increase of population due to outside development (i.e., mines, military bases) should not be aggregated. Additionally, one Council noted that 30 percent of working people commuting from one community to another was too low of a threshold to aggregate those communities, and communities that show a high reliance on fish and wildlife should not be aggregated.

The Councils provided most of their comments on the **rural characteristics**. The Councils recommended numerous additional criteria to consider for rural characteristics. More than one Council noted the importance of cultural and spiritual factors that should be considered, and that geographic remoteness and isolation should be considered. One Council suggested removing educational institutions

and not including any infrastructure that is constructed for temporary use. One Council noted that gardening and whether a community is a “resident zone community” under National Park Service regulations were indicative of rural characteristics. Two Councils noted that not being connected to the road system should be an automatic qualifier for rural status. Some Councils recommended that the Board give substantially more weight to rural characteristics than to population thresholds, and the use of fish and wildlife should be accorded the most weight among rural characteristics.

The Councils provided several comments about the rural review **timeline**. Most Councils recommended the Board move to completely eliminate the 10-year review. Five Councils specifically suggested that a review should only be conducted if there has been a significant change, for example if a community’s population has substantially increased or decreased since the last determination. One Council suggested that when a review is conducted, it should be made using a 5-year average to avoid temporary population spikes. Several Councils said the 10-year review is stressful on communities and a waste of time, finances, and resources. Only one Council supported maintaining the current 10-year review.

The Councils made few comments about what **sources of information** to use in the process. Most Councils supported the use of the U.S. Census data, but provided additional suggestions for data sources such as Tribal databases, harvest reports, property taxes, and the Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend registry.

Councils provided some recommendations for how the Board could otherwise improve the process, including allowing rural residents to remain Federally-qualified subsistence users if they move to a non-rural area purely for economic reasons (e.g., employment). One Council suggested that verification of the rural nature of such individuals could occur by confirming registration with a local Tribal Council (i.e., IRA). Other Councils noted there needs to be more transparency and clarity in how the Federal Subsistence Board arrives at its rural determinations. The Councils noted that their recommendations on rural status should be given deference by the Board.

Summary of Public Comments

The Board received 475 substantive comments from various sources, including individual citizens, members of regional advisory councils, and other entities or organizations (e.g., non-profit Native corporations, borough governments). This section of the briefing does not include results of Tribal consultations. The comments of members of the regional advisory councils include both recommendations made by motion and vote and recommendations made during the course of discussions among council members.

One analyst reviewed each comment for specific suggestions and recommendations made to the Board. Appendix A contains detailed results of the analysis of public comments.

The Board received 101 comments about population thresholds. Most recommended that the Board move to completely eliminate the use of population thresholds because these are arbitrarily and inconsistently applied by agencies. Many recommended replacing population thresholds with more appropriate community characteristics. Some recommended that the upper population threshold be increased from 7,000 to a number in the range 10,000 to 30,000. Few indicated general support for using population thresholds. Some recommended doing something else regarding population.



The Board received 114 comments about rural characteristics. Most recommended that the Board either add or eliminate characteristics; some recommended a combination of both. Some recommended that the Board give substantially more weight to rural characteristics than to population thresholds. Few indicated support for the current list of rural characteristics. Some recommended doing something else regarding rural characteristics.

The Board received 90 comments about aggregation. Most recommended the Board completely eliminate aggregation. Many recommended the Board change how it does aggregation. Some indicated that aggregation eliminates the subsistence priority for some communities. Some indicated that the concept of aggregation is too confusing to be useful. Few indicated support for the current aggregation criteria. A few recommended doing something else regarding aggregation.

The Board received 66 comments about the rural review timeline. Most recommended the Board move to completely eliminate the 10-year review. Some said the 10-year review is a stressful burden on communities and a waste of time and resources. Some indicated support for doing a 10-year review. Others recommended the timeline for review be increased.

The Board received 42 comments about what sources of information to use in the process. Some recommended the Board use Tribal consultation as a primary source of information. Others recommended giving deference to the regional advisory councils on the rural status of their communities. A few recommended the Board rely more on community feedback. Few indicated support for using the 2010 Census data. Many recommended using other sources of information such as the Wolfe and Fischer report and subsistence harvest surveys.

The Board received 60 comments recommending how it could otherwise improve the process, including eliminating the rural/non-rural label, extending the comment period, deferring to the regional advisory councils, and redefining the process as an issue of food security and health.

Formal Consultations with Tribes and ANCSA Corporations

Three consultations were held telephonically with Tribes and ANCSA corporations on the rural determination process¹.

A total of 20 Tribes, three Tribal or village associations, and 12 ANCSA corporations participated with Federal staff, Board members, and their designees in consultations on the rural determination process. Some of those on the telephone only listened and did not directly discuss the rural determination process. This section includes those who spoke on the record. A Board member or their designee provided a wrap up of each call to validate that the consultation was accurately recorded.

Summary of Tribal Consultation

The Tribes that participated generally recommended that the revised rural process should allow Tribal members living in nonrural areas to return to their villages to gather subsistence foods. Economic factors

¹ There will be an opportunity for face-to-face consultation with Tribes and ANCSA corporations at the April 15 Federal Subsistence Board meeting.

cause them to live in non-rural areas, but they still need to access their traditional foods. Several callers requested a Native preference for subsistence needs.

The Native Village of Kotzebue. The Native Village of Kotzebue pointed out that ANILCA only defines or mentions rural, not non-rural, and wondered why this was part of the dialogue.

The Native Village of Kotzebue said that population thresholds are arbitrary and therefore should not be used to trigger a review of a communities' rural status. Rural characteristics are more important in the process than population thresholds. Instead, the Board should develop a different trigger for initiating rural reviews. For example, the Board could begin rural reviews based on a change in community characteristics or other issues that have become common knowledge to federal or state subsistence managers.

The Kenaitze Tribe. The Kenaitze Tribe's area, with its non-rural status, makes it difficult for Tribal members to subsist. The Kenaitze Tribe is now in a position in which applying for Federal and State grants has become necessary to assist their community. The Tribe expressed concern about the 2,500 population threshold. The Tribe thought that unless a community is connected to a road system it should remain rural. The Kenaitze Tribe requested that population thresholds be eliminated and other characteristics should be used to define rural because the population numbers appear to be an arbitrary means of determination.

The Kenaitze Tribe conducted a needs assessment to help it define subsistence use, schooling, employment, and medical needs, which could be used to help the Board make a recommendation to the Secretaries. Board member Sue Masica was interested in this information, and felt the Board should consider how different the Kenaitze are from the rest of the Kenai population.

The Kenaitze Tribe proposed an exemption to the rural determination process for all Tribal members. It feels that Tribal people have been denied fishing opportunities, which threatens the very heart of who they are. The Tribe stated, "The rural determination process focuses on customary and traditional use as a geographic area. This is flawed logic. Customary and traditional people and their customary and traditional use should be considered, rather than the geographic boundaries."

The Sun'aq Tribe. The Sun'aq Tribe stated that other departments of the Federal government have looked into the definition of rural. A number of provisions have allowed for rural enclaves within an urban area. The caller felt that this concept should be further explored.

The Sun'aq Tribe also had a question about the entire timeline for the rural determination process: At what point will the Federal Subsistence Board decide what they are going to recommend to the Secretaries? What's next?

Native Villages of Napaskiak and Napakiak. The Native Village of Napaskiak requested to be exempt from all rural determinations. The Native Village of Napakiak supported this position.



The Knik Tribe. The Knik Tribe said the discussion should focus on 50 CFR 100.15. It also supported the comments of the Kenaitze Tribe. The Knik Tribe recommended the Board consider the U.S. Census-mapped Alaska Native village areas to be exempt from the rural determination process.

Native Village of St. Mary's. The Native Village of St. Mary's said that subsistence resources are affected by the size of the community relying on them plus those harvesters from outside areas. The Native Village of St. Mary's thought that population thresholds may be useful. It supported a Tribal rights stance. It also said that smaller communities along the river most likely will remain rural, but Bethel could get large enough that it could lose its status if the process is not changed.

Summary of Consultations with ANCSA Corporations

Bethel Native Corporation. The representative from the Bethel Native Corporation (BNC) stated that most local villages that are close to each other do not want to be grouped together in a rural determination scenario. BNC requested that representatives from the Federal Subsistence Program speak to the State on behalf of rural communities and their current rural determinations.

BNC requested that the upper population threshold be changed from 7,000 to 12,000. BNC was in favor of the 10-year review. It recommended using the State of Alaska subsistence food survey and 150 pounds per person per year as a minimum threshold for subsistence food usage necessary to be rural.

Sealaska. The Sealaska Corporation urged the Board to immediately act to reinstate Saxman's rural status and that of other similarly situated communities and review their status as rural or non-rural based on their independent characteristics in the ongoing Secretarial review. Since the Board has already extended a compliance date for the change in status required by the 2007 Final Rule, reinstating Saxman's rural status would have no administrative impact. It would however eliminate the need for Saxman to file a lawsuit challenging the 2007 Final Rule, which it will have to do by July 2014, long before the completion of the ongoing review. This would be a very simple solution and would save both the Federal government and the Native Village of Saxman the costs involved in litigation.

Sealaska recommended that the Board take into consideration the cultural integrity and cultural practices around subsistence that rural communities and native people have and look at the social integration among community members. In Southeast Alaska there is a communal system, a Clan system, a House system that integrates their communities, and this is particularly evident in the community of Saxman.

Sealaska advised the Board to look at the spiritual relationship that Native people have to their wildlife. The State of Alaska and the courts have already recognized that there are religious and spiritual dimension to subsistence hunting and fishing among Native peoples.

Sealaska recommended that the Board look at the distribution systems or the sharing of fish and wildlife that goes on in Native communities. It is anything but an individually-based activity.

Sealaska emphasized that the Federal government is in the position to protect a subsistence way of life and the trust responsibility between the federal government and Alaska Native peoples. It felt the rural characteristics are a crucial definition of a rural community and that the population numbers are an

arbitrary measure of what is or is not rural. Aggregation of communities, commuting, and the sharing of a high school are inappropriate measures of a community's rural status. It felt that the presence of a Federally-recognized Tribe in the community should carry weight in the rural determination process.

Alternatives to the Current Rural Determination Process

The Interagency Staff Committee and Office of Subsistence Management staff developed a list of six alternatives, based on recommendations from the Councils, consultation with Tribes and ANCSA corporations, and comments from the public. The alternatives are as follows (Appendix B).

1. No change to the current process.
2. No change, except eliminate the 10-year review.
3. No change, except eliminate the 10-year review, increase the upper population threshold to 11,000, and add geographic remoteness and isolation to the list of rural characteristics.
4. Define "rural" as communities or areas with a population less than 15,000, using current aggregations.
5. Define "rural" as communities or areas with a population less than 15,000, using current aggregations, with the exception of the Southcentral area, for which current rural determinations will remain in regulation.
6. Identify specific communities and areas as nonrural; all other communities and areas are therefore rural. These determinations will be made by the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture in Subpart B of Subsistence Management Regulations for Public Lands in Alaska.

Next Steps

- The Board may decide to forward to the Secretaries recommendations for improving the rural determination process.
- The Secretaries may decide to propose a rule to change the current rural determination process, based on the Board's recommendations; the public, Councils, Tribes, and ANCSA corporations would have the opportunity to comment or consult during that rule-making process.
- The Secretaries would publish a final rule specifying the rural determination process.
- If the Secretaries did publish a final rule specifying a different process to be used, the Board would use it to make rural determinations (except in the case of Alternative 6), publishing those determinations in a proposed rule; the public, Councils, Tribes, and ANCSA corporations would have the opportunity to comment or consult on that proposed rule.
- The Board could then publish a final rule with the revised determinations as to the rural status of communities or areas; if no new rule making is done by March 1, 2017, the 2007 rule would become enforceable.



Appendix A

Synthesis of Public Comments on the Rural Determination Process

Staff at the Office of Subsistence Management read appropriate public transcripts and letters containing comments about the rural determination process; populated a database with the comments; and placed the comments into the five elements (i.e., categories) described in the Federal Register notice (77 FR 77005) dated December 31, 2012. We added “other” as a category to capture comments that addressed question number nine in the notice and other comments that did not specifically address one of the five elements.

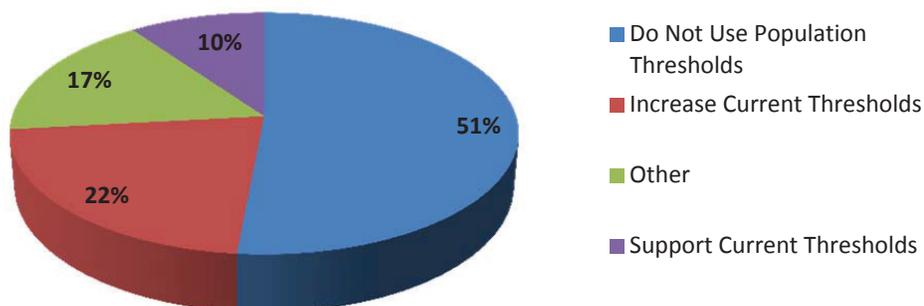
The staff input 496 total public comments into the database; 475 were determined to be substantive. By substantive, we mean comments that meaningfully addressed the rural determination process and made concrete recommendations to the Federal Subsistence Board (Board).

The Board received 278 comments from individual citizens representing the public, 137 comments from members of subsistence regional advisory councils, 37 comments from Alaska Native entities, and 25 comments from other entities (e.g., city and borough governments). Comments from members of the regional advisory councils include both recommendations formally made by motion and vote and recommendations made in the course of discussions and deliberations among council members prior to a formal motion.

This appendix is a synthesis of the public comments. It does not include results from formal consultations with Tribes and ANCSA corporations, which are separate from public comments. A single analyst reviewed all public comments in the database and wrote a brief analysis of each substantive comment. The analyses primarily focused on concise recommendations made to the Board concerning each of the five categories. The analyst grouped each recommendation into subcategories for each category, including the other category.

Population Thresholds

The Board received 101 substantive comments about population thresholds, subdivided into four types of recommendations:



In 52 comments, respondents recommended that the Board move to eliminate the use of population thresholds because these are inadequate in the context of most Alaskan communities, arbitrarily and inconsistently applied by federal agencies, and lack empirical evidence to support their use in making rural determinations. Many of these comments strongly recommended that the Board replace population thresholds with more appropriate rural and/or community characteristics, both qualitative and quantitative. Respondents thought that these would better reflect the nature of communities in Alaska. The characteristics listed include:

- geographical remoteness
- isolation
- annual income
- unemployment rate
- distance to urban markets
- a community's history of subsistence use
- other holistic cultural, political, social, and economic characteristics

In 22 comments, respondents recommended that the current, upper population threshold be raised from 7,000 to a number in the range of 10,000 to 30,000. Specific suggestions included 11,000, 15,000, 20,000, and 25,000.

Seventeen comments recommended the Board do something else regarding population thresholds, including:

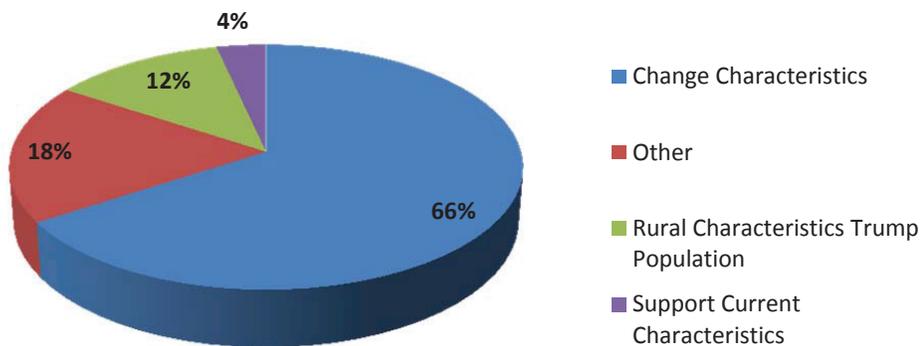


- Adopt and apply the rural development thresholds used by U.S. Department of Agriculture, which range from 2,500 to 50,000.
- Use the Permanent Fund Dividend population numbers.
- Exclude increases in populations due to industrial developments such as mining.
- Enhance monitoring of natural population growth for individual communities.
- Use population densities.

Ten comments indicated general support for using population thresholds in the rural determination process.

Rural Characteristics

The Board received 114 substantive comments about rural characteristics, subdivided into four types of recommendations:



In 75 comments, respondents recommended that the Board change the list of rural characteristics that it applies in the rural determination process. These comments contained requests to add or eliminate rural characteristics from the current list, some requested doing both. For example, some suggested that the Board add “geographical remoteness” and “subsistence use patterns” and eliminate diversity of economy; community infrastructure; transportation; and educational institutions.

No comments indicated a desire to remove use of fish and wildlife from the list, however some recommended that it be changed to “use of fish and wildlife *for subsistence*.” A written comment from a tribal government told the Board “subsistence use of fish and wildlife is the one essential crux of Title VIII of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) and is

synonymous with the definition of rural in Alaska; use of fish and wildlife as a land use category is essential in any rural determination process used by the Board now and in the future.”

Other additions to the list of rural characteristics included:

- diversity of subsistence resources available
- cost of living and inflation rates
- spiritual, cultural, and ceremonial practices of people who have a subsistence way of life
- community identity
- patterns of boom and bust cycles over time
- access to cell phone and Internet services
- production and use of wild foods
- traditional practices of sharing, bartering, and gift giving
- a community’s customary and traditional uses of resources in its area
- presence of an organized tribal government
- proximity to urban areas and available services such as medical care
- patterns of reciprocity and dependence on one another for survival
- length of time in a place/duration of existence in a place
- gardening

In 14 comments, respondents recommended the Board give substantially greater weight to rural community characteristics than it gives to population thresholds when making rural determinations.

Twenty-one comments recommended that the Board do something else regarding rural characteristics, including:

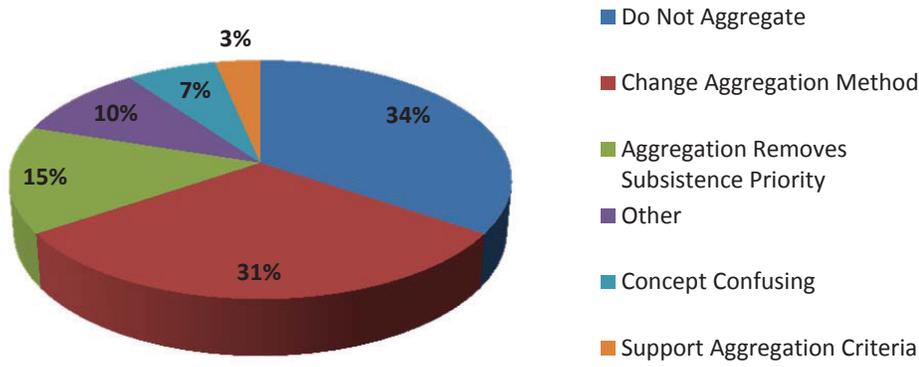
- Weight rural and/or community characteristics as the most important criterion.
- Weight “use of fish and wildlife” as the most important rural characteristic.
- Designate all island communities rural.
- Adapt and use some of the rural characteristics used by the State of Alaska (e.g., extent of sharing of subsistence resources).
- Adopt and apply the rural characteristics outlined in Wolfe and Fischer (2003).
- Do not apply one-size-fits-all criteria across communities.
- Use the three criteria in Section 804 of ANILCA as rural characteristics.

Four comments indicated general support for applying the current list of rural characteristics.



Aggregation of Communities

The Board received 90 substantive comments about aggregation, subdivided into six types of recommendations:



In 36 comments, respondents recommended the Board move to completely eliminate aggregation from the rural determination process. Many indicated that the current method of aggregation is biased and inappropriate. In general, these respondents recommended that the Board evaluate communities based on their unique histories and individual sets of characteristics.

In 28 comments, respondents recommended the Board change how it applies the concept of aggregation. Suggestions included:

- Only apply aggregation where a large urban center is closely connected to smaller communities located beyond its municipal boundaries.
- Determine how population influxes due to mining, oil, and/or military developments affect the current aggregation criteria.
- Do not aggregate communities just because they are connected by road.
- Do not aggregate any community that has its own city council.
- Do not aggregate any community that has a federally-recognized tribe.
- Only aggregate communities that are physically linked to urban centers by highway.
- Eliminate all the criteria used for aggregating communities because these are not useful for demonstrating a community's rural characteristics.
- Increase the percentage of working people commuting from 30 to 50 percent.
- Only eliminate the commuting for work criterion.
- Only eliminate the sharing of a common high school criterion.
- Do not use the current criteria alone; use these in conjunction with communities' histories, demographics, and political divisions.

- Defer to the knowledge and insights of the regional advisory councils when deciding which aggregation criteria to apply.

Thirteen comments indicated that aggregation takes away the subsistence priority of some communities, which is legally protected under ANILCA Title VIII.

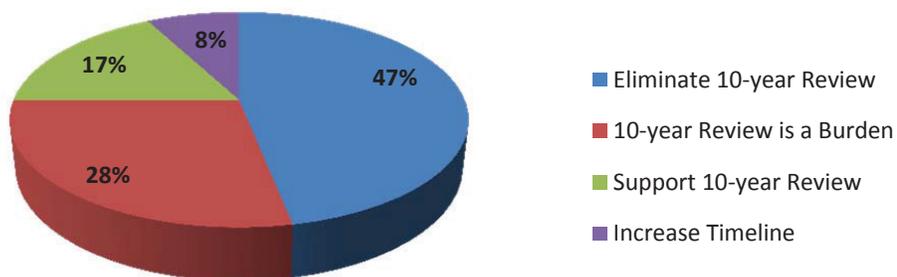
Six comments indicated that some people find the concept of aggregation to be confusing, both in how the concept is applied and the word is defined.

Three comments indicated support for applying the current list of aggregation criteria.

Four comments recommended that the Board do something else regarding aggregation such as carefully consider the impacts of aggregation on subsistence practices such as trading and sharing.

Timelines

The Board received 66 substantive comments about the rural review timeline, subdivided into four types of recommendations:



In 30 comments, respondents recommended the Board completely eliminate the 10-year review of rural status. As reflected by 18 comments, the main rationale for eliminating the 10-year review is because it is viewed as a stressful burden on communities and a waste of time and resources for both communities and federal agencies.

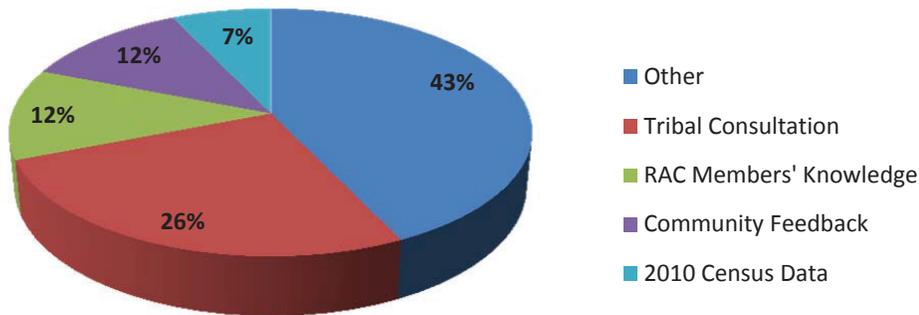
Eleven comments indicated support for doing a 10-year review. In five comments, respondents recommended that the timeline for review be increased (e.g., 15-year intervals, 100-year intervals, review rural determinations only when a community's population exceeds the upper threshold).



Two comments recommended that the Board do something else regarding timelines (i.e., decrease the interval between rural reviews, make rural status permanent unless a substantial change warrants otherwise).

Information Sources

The Board received 42 substantive comments about what sources of information to use in the process, subdivided into five types of recommendations:



In 11 comments, respondents recommended the Board use tribal consultation as a primary source of information for making rural determinations.

Five comments recommended relying on the knowledge of the regional advisory councils by giving them deference concerning the rural status of the communities they represent.

Five respondents recommended using feedback from the affected communities as a primary source of information (e.g., ask community residents what they think makes their community rural and what would have to change before they would consider their community to be non-rural).

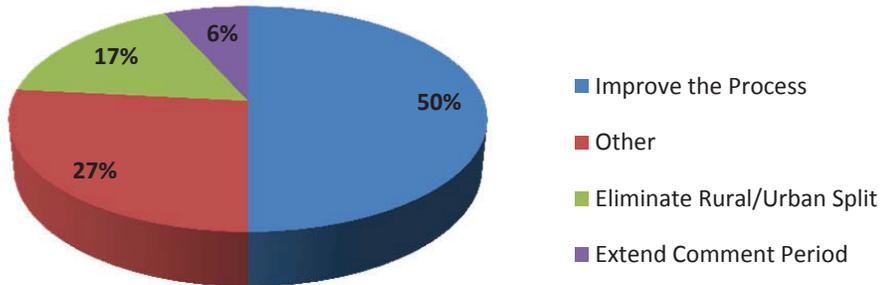
In 18 comments, respondents recommended that the Board use other sources of information such as:

- the intent of ANILCA Title VIII
- Wolfe and Fischer (2003)
- Permanent Fund Dividend database
- State of Alaska regulations
- subsistence harvest surveys conducted in a systematic and scientific manner

Three comments indicated support for using the 2010 Census data.

Other Recommendations

The Board received 60 substantive comments recommending something be done to otherwise improve the process, subdivided into four types of recommendations:



In 30 comments, respondents recommended how the Board should improve the rural determination process. Suggestions included:

- Eliminate the state-wide approach; replace it with a region-by-region approach because the regional advisory councils are only qualified to talk about their regions.
- Provide more time for formal tribal consultation and public participation.
- Improve communication, outreach, and education for the regional advisory councils and the public.
- Apply “rural plus Native” or tribal affiliation for deciding who has subsistence priority.
- Adapt and apply the process used by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the National Marine Fisheries Service for subsistence halibut harvest.
- Consider health and nutrition in the process.
- Host meetings on rural determinations in rural communities outside of hub cities and urban centers.
- Use only one process for making rural determinations; the dual system is too burdensome for subsistence harvesters.
- Apply improved social science data and analyses in the process to account for dynamic cultural identities.
- Abandon the state’s system of Game Management Units on federal public lands because it prevents a fair and accurate rural determination process.
- Remove legal constraints.
- Make the results of tribal consultation available to the regional advisory councils before they are asked to deliberate on the process.



- Apply the Criterion-Referenced Assessment Method outlined by Wolfe and Fischer (2003).
- Consider fish and wildlife populations in the rural determination process.
- Consider various definitions of rural as used by other agencies.

In 10 comments, respondents recommended completely eliminating the rural/non-rural dualistic label because it threatens the subsistence priority of many Alaskan communities and the ways of life of many Alaska Native peoples.

In 16 comments, respondents recommended doing something else, including:

- Give deference to the regional advisory councils.
- Redefine the rural determination process as an issue of food security and health.
- Adopt and use an Alaskan Native priority with international declarations on the rights of indigenous people.
- Use a point system or similar metric to determine rural status.

Four respondents recommended extending the comment period because more time is needed to provide meaningful input and recommendations about the rural determination process used by the Board.

Appendix B. Alternatives for the Rural Determination Process

Alternative*	Short Summary	Relationship to Comments	Pros	Cons
1	No change.	Most comments suggest various changes to the current process; a few comments suggest making no changes to the process.	Maintains continuity with current process. Few results of rural status determinations have been controversial.	Widely perceived as flawed. Has resulted in a few controversial determinations, such as Saxman and the Kenai Peninsula. Requires a periodic review even when there have been no change.
2	No change, except eliminate 10-year review.	Many comments suggest that a review should happen only in the event of substantial change to a community or area. 10-year review is a stressful burden on communities and a waste of government resources.	Eliminating review alleviates anxiety of a 10-year review among communities. Reduces periodically time-consuming and redundant staff work.	Would likely continue to be widely perceived as flawed.
3	No change, except eliminate 10-year review, increase upper population threshold to 11,000, and add geographic remoteness and isolation to the list of rural characteristics.	Comments ranged from not using population numbers to increasing the upper limit to 10,000 or as high as 30,000. 11,000 was most commonly mentioned. New recommended rural characteristics are geographic remoteness and isolation.	11,000 was the population of the smallest community/area mentioned as rural in the Senate report for ANILCA Title VIII. 11,000 had previously been recommended to the Secretaries by the Federal Subsistence Board. The public has supported this threshold change as better reflective of rural. Geographic remoteness and isolation captures rural characteristics that might otherwise not be accounted for using other characteristics.	A threshold of 11,000 does not alleviate the anxiety of communities or areas as they gain population over time. The use of geographic remoteness and isolation adds to the complexity of the evaluation of rural characteristics.
4	Define rural as communities or areas with populations less than 15,000 using current	In general, when population thresholds were discussed, the majority of commenters proposed a number of between 10,000 and 30,000.	Helps provide assurance that growing rural hub-communities will continue to be considered rural. A single threshold simplifies the determination process by using available and relatively accurate	The addition of communities/areas to the pool of Federally-qualified subsistence users may result in increased competition for resources among those hunting, fishing or trapping under Federal subsistence regulations. If affected



Alternative*	Short Summary	Relationship to Comments	Pros	Cons
5	Define rural as communities or areas with populations less than 15,000 using current aggregations. Current rural determinations for Southcentral remain in force.	Comments described a community or area's geographic remoteness and isolation as rural characteristics. Road accessible communities with relatively easy access to urban centers are viewed differently than those similarly sized communities in remote areas.	information. Similarly sized and situated communities, such as Kodiak and Ketchikan, would be categorized the same. Same as #4. Recognizes the determinations made to date in Southcentral Alaska that have undergone considerable review and discussion. Competition for Federal fish and wildlife subsistence resources would be unchanged in Southcentral.	fish/wildlife populations cannot accommodate additional rural users, limitations on subsistence, based upon ANILCA 804 criteria, may become necessary. Same as #4. Uneven application of "rural" across the State.
6	Identify specific communities and areas as non-rural; all other communities and areas are therefore rural. Determinations made by the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture (Subpart B).	Many comments suggested that a review of a community's rural status should happen only if there is substantial change. (No specific comments were received to move the determinations to the Secretaries' responsibility.)	Fits well with the notion of no periodic review, since review of determinations would occur infrequently and only when deemed necessary by the Secretaries.	Reduces flexibility to modify boundaries as communities or areas change. Decisions are made in DC, rather than locally. Could be viewed as a less open and transparent process.

*All alternatives except 1 would have no periodic review; review would be by petition. (See Alternative 2 for pros and cons, which would also apply to Alternatives 3-6).

Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program

The mission of the Monitoring Program is to identify and provide information needed to sustain subsistence fisheries on Federal public lands, for rural Alaskans...

Overview

The Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program (Monitoring Program) is unique to Alaska. It was established in 1999 under Title VIII of ANILCA and is run by the Office of Subsistence Management. The Monitoring Program is a competitive funding source for studies on subsistence fisheries that are intended to expand the understanding of subsistence harvest (Harvest Monitoring), traditional knowledge of subsistence resources (Traditional Ecological Knowledge), and the populations of subsistence fish resources (Stock Status and Trends). Gathering this information improves the ability to manage subsistence fisheries in a way that will ensure the continued opportunity for sustainable subsistence use by rural Alaskans on Federal public lands.

Funding Regions

Funding for the Monitoring Program is separated into six regions: the *Northern Region*, which includes the North Slope, Northwest Arctic, and Seward Peninsula Regional Advisory Councils; the *Yukon Region* includes the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, Western Interior, and Eastern Interior Regional Councils; the *Kuskokwim Region* includes the Western Interior and Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Regional Advisory Councils; the *Southwest Region* includes the Bristol Bay and Kodiak/Aleutians Regional Advisory Councils; the *Southcentral Region* includes the Southcentral Regional Advisory Council; and, the *Southeast Region* includes the Southeast Regional Advisory Council.

Table 1. Regional Advisory Councils represented within each of the six Funding Regions for the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program.

Funding Region	Regional Advisory Councils
1. Northern	North Slope, Northwest Arctic, and Seward Peninsula
2. Yukon	Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, Western Interior, and Eastern Interior
3. Kuskokwim	Western Interior and Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta
4. Southwest	Bristol Bay and Kodiak/Aleutians
5. Southcentral	Southcentral
6. Southeast	Southeast



Subsistence Resource Concerns

For each of the six funding regions Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils and other stakeholders have identified subsistence fishery resource concerns (Priority Information Needs). These are used by the Monitoring Program to request project proposals that will provide managers with the information needed to address those resource concerns.

In the coming year there will be at least two opportunities for Regional Advisory Councils and other stakeholders to discuss subsistence fishery resource concerns for their Monitoring Program funding regions. These discussions will occur at each of the winter and fall 2014 Regional Advisory Councils meetings. Resource concerns identified during these discussions will be used to direct the request for proposals for studies on subsistence fisheries during the 2016 funding cycle.

Funding Cycles

Every two years the Monitoring Program requests proposals for studies on subsistence issues such as subsistence harvest (Harvest Monitoring), traditional knowledge of subsistence resources (Traditional Ecological Knowledge), and the populations of subsistence fish resources (Stock Status and Trends). The most recent funding cycle for the Monitoring Program occurred in 2014. The request for proposals was announced in spring of 2013 and funding decisions were made in winter of 2014. Projects selected to receive funding in 2014 will last from one to four years depending on the duration of the proposed study. The next funding cycle will begin with a request for proposals in fall of 2014 and funding decisions (Monitoring Plan) announced in early 2016.

Funding Recommendations

Project proposals received by the Office of Subsistence Management are summarized by staff biologists and social scientists in preparation for a Technical Review Committee. The Technical Review Committee made up of members of five Federal Agencies and three representatives from Alaska Department of Fish and Game. This committee reviews and then makes recommendations on whether the project is appropriate to receive funding (Fund), needs some modifications in order to be recommended for funding (Fund with Modification), or is not an appropriate proposal to receive funding from the Monitoring Program (Do Not Fund). Funding recommendations made by the Technical Review Committee are based on how well the project would meet Strategic Priorities for the region, whether the project has sound Technical-Scientific Merit, the Ability and Resources of the researchers, and, how well the project would support Partnership-Capacity building for future projects in the region. The Technical Review Committee's funding recommendation is called the Draft Monitoring Plan.

During the fall Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Meetings the Draft Monitoring Plan is reviewed by Regional Advisory Council members and a ranking of projects within the funding region is made for projects proposed within each of the six funding regions.

Following the fall Regional Advisory Council meetings and prior to the Federal Board Meeting, a second ranking of projects for the Draft Monitoring Plan is made by an Interagency Staff Committee consisting of members of each of the five federal agencies involved in subsistence management in Alaska.

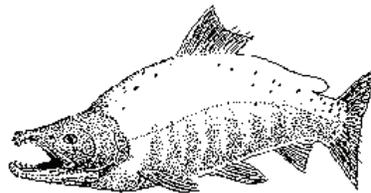
The final funding recommendation is made during the Federal Subsistence Board Meeting when the Board reviews the draft Monitoring Plan and subsequent ranking recommendations made by the Regional Advisory Councils, and Interagency Staff Committee. The funding recommendation made by the Federal Subsistence Board is considered to be the final Monitoring Plan for the funding cycle. This Monitoring Plan is then approved by the Assistant Regional Director of the Office of Subsistence Management and funds are awarded to each of the projects recommended for funding in the final Monitoring Plan.



DRAFT

PRIORITY INFORMATION NEEDS

FEDERAL SUBSISTENCE FISHERIES



2016 Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program

Office of Subsistence Management
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1011 E. Tudor Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199

1-800-478-1456 or 907-786-3888 Voice
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The Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) invites the submission of proposals for fisheries investigation studies to be initiated under the 2016 Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program (Monitoring Program). Taking into account funding commitments for ongoing projects, and contingent upon Congressional funding, we anticipate approximately \$4.0 million available in 2016 to fund new monitoring and research projects that provide information needed to manage subsistence fisheries for rural Alaskans on Federal public lands. Funding may be requested for up to four years duration.

Although all proposals addressing subsistence fisheries on Federal public lands will be considered, the 2016 Notice of Funding Availability is focused on priority information needs. The Monitoring Program is administered among six regions: Northern Alaska, Yukon, Kuskokwim, Southwest Alaska, Southcentral Alaska, and Southeast Alaska regions. Strategic plans developed by workgroups of Federal and State fisheries managers, researchers, Regional Advisory Council members and other stakeholders, have been completed for three of the six regions: Southeast, Southcentral (excluding Cook Inlet Area), and Southwest Alaska. These plans identify prioritized information needs for each major subsistence fishery and can be viewed on or downloaded from OSM's website: <http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/monitor/fisheries/index.cfm> . Independent strategic plans were completed for the Yukon and Kuskokwim regions for salmon in 2005, and jointly for whitefish in 2012. For the Northern Region and the Cook Inlet Area, priority information needs were developed with input from Regional Advisory Councils, the Technical Review Committee, Federal and State managers and staff from OSM.

This document summarizes priority information needs for 2016 for all six regions and a multi-regional category that addresses priorities that extend over two or more regions. Investigators preparing proposals for the 2016 Monitoring Program should use this document and relevant strategic plans, and the Notice of Funding Availability, which provides foundational information about the Monitoring Program, to guide proposal development. While Monitoring Program project selections may not be limited to priority information needs identified in this document, proposals addressing other information needs must include compelling justification with respect to strategic importance.

Monitoring Program funding is not intended to duplicate existing programs. Agencies are discouraged from shifting existing projects to the Monitoring Program. Where long-term projects can no longer be funded by agencies, and the project provides direct information for Federal subsistence fisheries management, a request to the Monitoring Program of up to 50% of the project cost may be submitted for consideration. For Monitoring Program projects for which additional years of funding is being requested, investigators should justify continuation by placing the proposed work in context with the ongoing work being accomplished.

Because cumulative effects of climate change are likely to fundamentally affect the availability of subsistence fishery resources, as well as their uses, and how they are managed, investigators are requested to consider examining or discussing climate change



effects as a component of their project. Investigators conducting long-term stock status projects will be required to participate in a standardized air and water temperature monitoring program. Calibrated temperature loggers and associated equipment, analysis and reporting services, and access to a temperature database will be provided. Finally, proposals that focus on the effects of climate change on subsistence fishery resources and uses, and that describe implications for subsistence management, are specifically requested. Such proposals must include a clear description of how the project would measure or assess climate change impacts on subsistence fishery resources, uses, and management.

Projects with an interdisciplinary emphasis are encouraged. The Monitoring Program seeks to combine ethnographic, harvest monitoring, traditional ecological knowledge, and biological data to aid in management. Investigators are encouraged to combine interdisciplinary methods to address information needs, and to consider the cultural context of these information needs.

Collaboration and cooperation with rural communities is encouraged at all stages of research planning and implementation of projects that directly affect those communities. The Notice of Funding Availability describes the collaborative process in community-based research and in building partnerships with rural communities.

The following sections provide specific regional and multi-regional priority information needs for the 2016 Monitoring Program. They are not listed in priority order.

Northern Alaska Region Priority Information Needs

The Northern Alaska Region is divided into three areas which reflect the geographic areas of the three northern Regional Advisory Councils (Seward Peninsula, Northwest Arctic, and North Slope). Together, the three areas comprise most of northern Alaska, and contain substantial Federal public lands. Since 2001, the three northern Regional Advisory Councils have identified important fisheries issues and information needs for their respective areas. For the Northern Alaska Region, the 2016 Notice of Funding Availability is focused on the following priority information needs:

- Understanding differences in cultural knowledge, beliefs, and perceptions of subsistence resources between fishery managers and subsistence users in Northwestern Alaska.
- Local and cultural knowledge about, locations of, perceptions of abundance, and harvest monitoring for coastal lagoon whitefishes.
- Description and analysis of sharing networks and customary trade of salmon in villages in northern Alaska.
- Reliable estimates of Chinook salmon escapement for the Unalakleet River drainage.

- Abundance, location and movement of Arctic grayling in the Point Hope and Wainwright area.
- Abundance, location and movement of whitefish in the Meade River
- Abundance, location and movement of smelt in the Wainwright area.
- Mapping chum distribution in Northern Alaska.
- Documentation of longevity, age of maturity, and the abundance of fish of a given size range or maturity status for lake trout in the upper Anaktuvuk River.
- Arctic cisco population assessment, including distribution, migration, and age structure in northern Alaska.
- Changes in Dolly Varden abundance in relationship to water levels in overwintering pools.
- Changes in fish health associate with climate change in Northern Alaska.
- Identification of overwintering areas for Dolly Varden in northern Alaskan rivers, identification of demographic qualities of overwintering fish, and estimating overwintering fidelity of fish.

Yukon Region Priority Information Needs

Since its inception, the Monitoring Plan for the Yukon Region has been directed at information needs identified by the three Yukon River Regional Advisory Councils (Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, Western Interior, and Eastern Interior) with input from subsistence users, the public, Alaska Native organizations, Federal and State agencies, and partner agencies and organizations. The U.S./Canada Yukon River Salmon Joint Technical Committee Plan has been used to prioritize salmon monitoring projects in the Alaskan portion of the Yukon River drainage. Additionally, a research plan for whitefish has identified priority information needs for whitefish species in the Yukon and Kuskokwim river drainages.

For the Yukon Region, the 2016 Notice of Funding Availability is focused on the following priority information needs:

- Reliable estimates of salmon species escapements (for example, projects using weir, sonar, mark-recapture methods).



- Geographic distribution of salmon and whitefish species in the Nulato River, Salmon Fork of the Black River, Porcupine River and Chandalar River.
- An indexing method for estimating species-specific whitefish harvests on an annual basis for the Yukon drainage. Researchers should explore and evaluate an approach where sub-regional clusters of community harvests can be evaluated for regular surveying, with results being extrapolated to the rest of the cluster, contributing to drainage-wide harvest estimates.
- In-season harvest monitoring for all fish species. Collection of genetic samples from subsistence harvests may prove valuable to managers
- Methods for including “quality of escapement” measures (for example, potential egg deposition, sex and size composition of spawners, spawning habitat utilization) in establishing Chinook salmon spawning goals and determining the reproductive potential and genetic diversity of spawning escapements.
- A review of escapement data collection methods throughout Yukon drainage to ensure that test fisheries are accurately accounting for size distribution and abundance of fishes (e.g. are smaller Chinook being counted accurately).
- Harvest and spawning escapement level changes through time in relation to changes in gillnet construction and use (for example, set versus drift fishing, mesh size changes) for Chinook salmon subsistence harvest in the mainstem Yukon River.
- Bering cisco population assessment and monitoring
- Inseason harvest enumeration and sex and length information for northern pike taken during the winter subsistence fishery from Paimiut Slough to Holy Cross on the Yukon River.
- Burbot population assessments in lakes known to support subsistence fisheries.

Kuskokwim Region Priority Information Needs

Since 2001, the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta and Western Interior Regional Advisory Councils, with guidance provided by the Kuskokwim Fisheries Resource Coalition, have identified a broad category of issues and information needs in the Kuskokwim Region. Additionally, a research plan for salmon and a research plan for whitefish have been used to identify priority information needs for salmon and whitefish.

For the Kuskokwim Region, the 2016 Notice of Funding Availability is focused on the following priority information needs:

- Reliable estimates of Chinook, chum, sockeye, and coho salmon escapement (for example, projects using weir, sonar, mark-recapture methods).
- Methods for including “quality of escapement” measures (for example, potential egg deposition, sex and size composition of spawners, spawning habitat utilization) in establishing Chinook salmon spawning goals and determining the reproductive potential and genetic diversity of spawning escapements.
- Magnitude and sustainability of whitefish harvests, by species
- Estimate the size and growth of the sport fishery over the next 30 years.
- An understanding of the meaning and significance of sharing in the context of the social, cultural, and economic life of people in the lower Kuskokwim Area.
- Impacts of sport fishery on cultural values and social systems.
- Local knowledge of whitefish species to supplement information from previous research in central Kuskokwim River drainage communities. Groups of communities might include Kalskag, Lower Kalskag, Aniak, and Chuathbaluk or Red Devil, Sleetmute, and Stony River.
- Local knowledge of whitefish species to supplement information from previous research in lower Kuskokwim River drainage communities. Groups of communities might include Kwethluk, Akiachak, and Tuluksak or Chefornak, Kipnuk, Kongiganek, and Kwigillingok.
- An indexing method for estimating species-specific whitefish harvests on an annual basis for the Kuskokwim drainage. Researchers should explore and evaluate an approach where sub-regional clusters of community harvests can be evaluated for regular surveying with results being extrapolated to the rest of the cluster, contributing to drainage-wide harvest estimates.



Southwest Alaska Region Priority Information Needs

Separate strategic plans were developed for the Bristol Bay-Chignik and Kodiak-Aleutians areas, corresponding to the geographic areas covered by the Bristol Bay and Kodiak/Aleutians Regional Advisory Councils. These strategic plans were reviewed to ensure that remaining priority information needs were considered.

For the Southwest Alaska Region, the 2016 Notice of Funding Availability is focused on the following priority information needs:

- Reliable estimates of salmon escapements in the Lake Clark watershed (for example, from projects utilizing a weir, sonar, and/or mark-recapture methods).
- Historical salmon escapement to the Lake Clark watershed using isotopic analysis of lake sediment cores.
- Size and age structure of sockeye salmon spawners representative of the diversity among populations with Lake Clark National Park and Preserve
- Rearing habitat capacity for juvenile sockeye salmon in Lake Clark National Park and Preserve
- Comparative ecological evaluation of lake rearing habitats of subsistence sockeye salmon stocks in southwest Kodiak Island, Alaska, including Olga Lakes and Akalura Lake watersheds; assessment of 1) the decline in salmon stocks and associated subsistence harvest opportunities, and 2) the potential effects of climate change on salmon production in these lake systems.
- Distribution and timing of spawning by sockeye salmon in the major watersheds of Katmai National Park and Preserve.
- Harvest of salmon for subsistence use by residents of the communities of Cold Bay, King Cove, and Sand Point, including harvest methods and means by species and distribution practices.
- Description and analysis of the social network underlying the distribution of fish harvested for subsistence by residents of the Bristol Bay Area or Chignik Area.

Southcentral Alaska Region Priority Information Needs

A strategic plan was developed for Prince William Sound-Copper River and an abbreviated strategic planning process was employed for Cook Inlet. These sources were reviewed to ensure that remaining priority information needs were considered.

For the Southcentral Region, the 2016 Notice of Funding Availability is focused on the following priority information needs:

- Obtain reliable estimates of Chinook and sockeye salmon escapement into the Copper River drainage (for example, projects utilizing weir, sonar, mark-recapture methods).
- Abundance, run timing, spawning site fidelity and timing, and age, sex, and length composition for Chinook and coho salmon that stage or spawn in waters of the Kenai River and its tributaries below Skilak Lake under federal subsistence fishery jurisdiction.
- Abundance, run timing, spawning site fidelity and timing, and age, sex, and length composition for Chinook and coho salmon that stage or spawn in waters of the Kasilof River and its tributaries under federal subsistence fishery jurisdiction.
- Harvest amounts/estimates, by fishery (commercial, sport and subsistence), for salmon species spawning in waters within and adjacent to the exterior boundaries of the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge.

Southeast Alaska Region Priority Information Needs

A strategic plan was developed for the Southeast Alaska Region in 2006 and was reviewed to ensure that priority information needs are identified.

For the Southeast Alaska Region, the 2016 Notice of Funding Availability is focused on the following priority information needs:

- Reliable estimates of sockeye salmon escapement. Stocks of interest include: Gut Bay, Red, Kah Sheets, Karta, Salmon Bay, Sarkar and Hoktaheen.
- In-season subsistence harvest of sockeye salmon. Stocks of interest include: Hatchery Creek, Gut Bay, Red, Kah Sheets, Salmon Bay, Sarkar, Kanalku, and Hoktaheen.
- Escapement index for Yakutat Forelands eulachon (continuation)



Multi-Regional Priority Information Needs

The Multi-regional category is for projects that may be applicable in more than one region. For the Multi-Regional category, the 2016 Notice of Funding Availability is focused on the following priority information needs:

- Changes in subsistence fishery resources and uses, in the context of climate change where relevant, including, but not limited to, fishing seasons, species targeted, fishing locations, fish quality, harvest methods and means, and methods of preservation. Include management implications.
- Effects of the Bering Sea and Gulf of Alaska pollock fishery on Federal Chinook and chum subsistence resources throughout Alaska.
- Changes in subsistence fishery resources, in the context of climate change, including but not limited to fish movement and barriers including permafrost slump, water quality and temperature, draining of tundra lakes, changing patterns of precipitation both snow and rain, changing freeze-up and break-up.
- Develop alternative methods for evaluating Chinook and chum salmon escapement measures (for example, potential egg deposition, sex and size composition of spawners, spawning habitat utilization) in establishing spawning goals and determining the reproductive potential and genetic diversity of spawning escapements.

DRAFT STAFF ANALYSIS FP15-01

ISSUES

Proposal FP15-01 submitted by the Southcentral Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (SCRAC) requests that the definition of “hook” be described in regulation as “a hook with or without a barb.”

The proposed language would clarify the type of fishing hook that could be used under Federal subsistence fisheries regulations where hooks are an authorized methods and means to take fish.

DISCUSSION

The proponent requests a change to existing statewide Federal regulatory language to eliminate the potential for adoption of default methods and means restriction of a Federal subsistence fishery to the use of barbless hooks. This proposal was submitted in response to a recent Alaska Board of Fisheries decision (see regulatory history section) to restrict the Kenai River Chinook salmon sport fishery methods and means to the use of barbless hooks under certain conditions. If the Kenai River Chinook salmon sport fishery is restricted to the use of barbless hooks, the Federal subsistence rod and reel fishery might also be restricted to the use of barbless hooks by default.

In many parts of Alaska, stand-alone Federal subsistence fisheries regulations do not exist within § __.25 or .27. Federal subsistence fisheries methods and means regulations are the same for taking of fish under State of Alaska sport fishing regulations (5 AAC 56 and 5 AAC 57), unless specifically modified in Federal regulation. In those areas where Federal subsistence fisheries regulations are absent, § __.14(a) indicates State fisheries regulations apply to public lands and are adopted as Federal subsistence fisheries regulations to the extent they are not inconsistent with, or superseded by, Federal subsistence regulations. In other words, if the State of Alaska adopts fisheries regulations, such as requiring barbless hooks in a fishery where Federal subsistence fisheries regulations do not exist or do not address what type of hook is allowed, Federal subsistence regulations would default to State regulations resulting in Federal subsistence users being restricted to barbless hooks.

Existing Federal Regulations

§ __ 100.14 and § __ 242.14 Relationship to State procedures and regulations

(a) State fish and game regulations apply to public lands and such laws are hereby adopted and made a part of the regulations in this part to the extent they are not inconsistent with, or superseded by, the regulations in this part.

Currently there is no Federal definition of “hook”; thus, the State of Alaska definition for the Kenai River applies.



Proposed Federal Subsistence Regulations

§__.25 (a) *Definitions*. The following definitions apply to all regulations contained in this part:

Hook means a single shanked fish hook with a single eye constructed with 1 or more points with or without barbs.

Existing State Regulation

5 AAC 57.121. Special provisions for the seasons, bag, possession, and size limits, and methods and means for the Lower Section of the Kenai River Drainage Area

(1)(J) during times when the retention of king salmon is prohibited under 5 AAC 57.160(d) (2)(A) or 5 AAC 21.359(e)(1), only one unbaited, barbless, single-hook, artificial lure may be used when sport fishing for king salmon; in this subparagraph, "barbless" means the hook is manufactured without a barb or the barb has been completely removed or compressed so the barb is in complete contact with the shaft of the hook;

5AAC 21.359. Kenai River Late-Run King Salmon Management Plan

(e) From July 1 through July 31, if the projected inriver run of late-run king salmon is less than 22,500 fish, in order to achieve the sustainable escapement goal and provide reasonable harvest opportunity, the commissioner may, by emergency order, establish fishing seasons as follows:

(1) in the Kenai River sport fishery,

(A) the use of bait is prohibited; or

(B) the use of bait and retention of king salmon are prohibited, and only one unbaited, barbless, single-hook, artificial lure, as described in 5 AAC57.121(1)(J), may be used when sport fishing for king salmon;

Extent of Federal Public Waters

For purposes of this discussion, the phrase "Federal public waters" is defined as those waters described under 36 CFR 242.3 and 50 CFR 100.3. FP15-01 was submitted to address Federal subsistence fisheries in all Federal public waters of Alaska.

Regulatory History

Over the years, numerous proposals requesting restriction of sport fisheries methods and means to barbless hooks have been submitted to the Alaska Board of Fisheries. At the January 29 – February 11, 2014 Upper Cook Inlet meeting, the Alaska Board of Fisheries deliberated Proposals 47, 48, 49, and 224 which requested restricting various Cook Inlet spot fisheries to the use of barbless hooks (ADF&G 2013 A, pages 280-286, ADF&G 2013 B, page 144). The Alaska Department of Fish and Game opposed these proposals because restricting anglers to the use of barbless hooks would have a negative effect on sport fishery opportunity without a measureable biological benefit. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game

also indicated use of barbless hooks reduces angler efficiency by 9-24%, according to one study, resulting in anglers fishing longer in order to achieve their bag limits, or reducing their harvest.

The Alaska Board of Fisheries adopted an amended Proposal 48 for the Kenai River Chinook salmon sport fishery requiring barbless hooks as a conservation measure when the fishery is restricted to catch and release only. The discussions during the Alaska Board of Fisheries deliberations focused on reducing Chinook salmon handling mortality in the sport fishery when restricted to catch and release status. The regulatory language defining “barbless hooks” within *5 AAC 57.121(1)(J)* is *the hook is manufactured without a barb or the barb has been completely removed or compressed so the barb is in complete contact with the shaft of the hook.*

The Kenai River Chinook salmon sport fishery is the first fishery in Alaska with a barbless hook regulation. At their March 12, 2014 meeting, the SCRAC was made aware of the new State sport fishery regulation and how it could, by default, impact the Federal subsistence Chinook salmon rod and reel fishery in the Kenai River. In response to the Alaska Board of Fisheries action, the SCRAC submitted this proposal. The State of Alaska regulatory definition of a “barbless hook” was not available at the SCRAC meeting and the SCRAC was not presented with the language contained in the Proposed Federal Regulatory Language section above.

Biological Background

The previously referenced Alaska Department of Fish and Game staff comments to the Alaska Board of Fishery state the use of barbless hooks does not reduce mortality of released fish by a measurable amount. These staff comments generally indicate the vast body of research conducted on catch and release mortality of fish largely suggest there is no significant difference in mortality rates between using barbed and barbless hooks (ADF&G 2013 A page 281), though some studies support the use of barbless hooks for specific species in some fisheries.

Current Events

Many Federal subsistence fisheries in Alaska allow the use of fishing hooks as a legal means of harvesting fish. Current Federal subsistence fisheries regulations reference allowing the use of a hook with a handline, jigging gear, long line, mechanical jigging gear, troll gear, hook and line attached to a rod or pole, and rod and reel. Though the use of fishing hooks is authorized, Federal subsistence regulations do not define a fishing hook and do not clearly indicate whether or not fishing hooks require a barb or not.

The SCRAC indicated adoption of this proposal, if submitted as a statewide proposal, could benefit Federally-qualified subsistence users throughout Alaska. Allowing the continued use of barbed hooks in all Federal subsistence fisheries, where use of hooks is authorized, will benefit subsistence users by reducing the chance of losing a fish hooked on a barbless hook as subsistence fishing is characterized by efficiency of harvest. Additionally, the SCRAC transcripts state the purpose of this proposal is to legally maintain Federal subsistence fishermen’s choice if they want to use a barbed or a barbless hook (SCRAC 2014).



Other Alternates Considered

The State of Alaska has adopted a Kenai River Chinook salmon sport fishery relate regulations which define a “barbless hook” under 5 AAC 57.121(1)(J)... *"barbless" means the hook is manufactured without a barb or the barb has been completely removed or compressed so the barb is in complete contact with the shaft of the hook;*. Regulatory language defining a “barbless hook” was not available for evaluation at the SCRAC meeting when FP15-01 was submitted. An alternative to consider for Proposal FP15-01 is to support the proposal with modification by incorporating the regulatory language offered in this proposal with the regulatory language adopted by the State of Alaska. Supporting Proposal FP15-01 with the modification of mirroring the State of Alaska’s statewide definition of a barbless hook will reduce regulatory complexity and enforcement concerns. The following is alternative proposed regulatory language reflecting the above suggested modification.

§__25 (a) *Definitions.* The following definitions apply to all regulations contained in this part:

Hook means a single shanked fish hook with a single eye constructed with 1 or more points with or without barbs. A hook without a “barb” means the hook is manufactured without a barb or the barb has been completely removed or compressed so the barb is in complete contact with the shaft of the hook

Effects of the Proposal

If this proposal is adopted, it would maintain Federally-qualified subsistence users’ ability to select the type of fishing hooks, with or without barbs, they want to use. Once a definition of hook is in Federal regulation, Federally-qualified subsistence users will not have to be concerned if the State of Alaska changes the definition of a hook or restricts other fisheries to the use of barbless hooks. Adoption of this proposal is not expected to have any effect on Federally-qualified subsistence users, practices, fisheries, or fish stocks targeted. Adoption of this proposal will not change the impacts Federal subsistence users have on Alaska’s fishery resources because Federal subsistence users most likely utilize barbed hooks where hooks are authorized to increase harvest efficiency because subsistence fishing is characterized by efficiency of harvest.

If this proposal is adopted, Federal and State regulations will be divergent in fisheries restricted to use of barbless hooks under State regulations. Adoption of FP15-01 will establish a Federal subsistence regulatory definition of hook to include both barbed and barbless hooks which will supersede both current and future State barbless hooks regulations.

If this proposal is not adopted, Federally-qualified users will be restricted to use the type of hook specified and defined by the State of Alaska, since there is no Federal definition of hook. The first, and currently only, Federal subsistence fishery which could be impacted by not adopting FP15-01 is the Kenai River Chinook salmon fishery, where rod and reel is an authorized methods and means. Additionally, if this proposal is not adopted, potential barbless hooks restrictions in other future Federal subsistence fisheries would unnecessarily decrease harvest efficiency of Federally-qualified subsistence users.

George Pappas(907) 786-3822
Team Field Review

May 30, 2014

OSM PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

Support Proposal FP15-01

Justification

The proposal would add a definition of “hook” in Federal regulations. Currently subsistence users must comply with the State’s method and means when fishing with one or more hooks, even if the regulation is for barbless hooks, which reduces harvest efficiency. Restricting subsistence users from harvesting fish with barbed hooks would be an unnecessary restriction to existing fishing practices statewide.

Adoption of this proposal would protect Federal subsistence fishermen’s choice to use barbed or barbless hooks. Adoption of this proposal would not result in impacts to Alaska’s fisheries resources by Federal subsistence fishermen.

LITERATURE CITED

SCRAC, 2014. Transcripts of the Southcentral Regional Advisory Council proceedings pages 68-72, March 12, 2014 in Anchorage, Alaska. Office of Subsistence Management, FWS. Anchorage, AK.

ADF&G, 2013 A. Alaska Department of Fish and Game staff comments on commercial, personal use, sport, guided sport, and subsistence finfish regulatory proposals, committee of the whole-groups 1-6 for the Upper Cook Inlet Management Area, Alaska Board of Fisheries meeting Anchorage, Alaska, January 31-February 12, 2014. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Regional Information Report No. 2A13-04, Anchorage.

ADF&G, 2013 B. Alaska Department of Fish and Game staff comments on commercial, personal use, sport, guided sport, and subsistence finfish regulatory proposals, Committees D, E, F, G for the Upper Cook Inlet Management Area, Alaska Board of Fisheries meeting Anchorage, Alaska, January 31-February 12, 2014. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Regional Information Report No. 2A13-05, Anchorage.



The Partners for Fisheries Monitoring

Call for Funding 2016-2019

The Office of Subsistence Management (OSM), Partners for Fisheries Monitoring Program invites proposals from eligible applicants for funding to support fishery anthropologist, biologist, and educator positions in their organization. Proposals from all geographic areas throughout Alaska will be considered. Organizations that have the necessary technical and administrative abilities and resources to ensure successful completion of programs may submit proposals. Eligible applicants include: Regional Native Non-Profit Organizations, Federally recognized Tribal Governments and Native Corporations, and other non-profit organizations.

OSM will develop cooperative agreements to support these positions. Proposals may focus exclusively on supporting a fishery anthropologist, biologist, or educator position as principal and/ or co-investigators, or a combination of all or any of them. Positions may be full or part-time within a calendar year. Requests for funding for fishery biologist, anthropologist, or educator positions may be up to four years. \$150,000 was the maximum yearly award for the last call for proposals.

The Partner anthropologist, biologist, or educator hired will live in the community where the funded organization has their base. Partners work to ensure that the highest priority Federal subsistence information needs are addressed by developing and implementing projects in the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program (Monitoring Program) and/ or implementing rural student education and internship programs for these projects. They work directly with constituent communities to disseminate information regarding fisheries research and to answer questions regarding subsistence fisheries resources. They communicate project results to various audiences such as regional organizations and their members, the Federal Subsistence Board, Regional Advisory Councils, and government agencies.

We are currently writing the strategic plan for the Partners Program. A draft vision document will be presented to the RACs for the 2014 fall meeting.

Timeline:

The next call for proposals: February 2015 (exact date to be announced).

Proposal due date to OSM: May 2015 (exact date to be announced).

For more information contact Dr. Palma Ingles, Partners Program Coordinator, 907-786-3870. Email: PalmaIngles@fws.gov

ANNUAL REPORTS

Background

ANILCA established the Annual Reports as the way to bring regional subsistence uses and needs to the Secretaries' attention. The Secretaries delegated this responsibility to the Board. Section 805(c) deference includes matters brought forward in the Annual Report.

The Annual Report provides the Councils an opportunity to address the directors of each of the four Department of Interior agencies and the Department of Agriculture Forest Service in their capacity as members of the Federal Subsistence Board. The Board is required to discuss and reply to each issue in every Annual Report and to take action when within the Board's authority. In many cases, if the issue is outside of the Board's authority, the Board will provide information to the Council on how to contact personnel at the correct agency. As agency directors, the Board members have authority to implement most of the actions which would effect the changes recommended by the Councils, even those not covered in Section 805(c). The Councils are strongly encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity.

Report Content

Both Title VIII Section 805 and 50 CFR §100.11 (Subpart B of the regulations) describe what may be contained in an Annual Report from the councils to the Board. This description includes issues that are not generally addressed by the normal regulatory process:

- an identification of current and anticipated subsistence uses of fish and wildlife populations within the region;
- an evaluation of current and anticipated subsistence needs for fish and wildlife populations from the public lands within the region;
- a recommended strategy for the management of fish and wildlife populations within the region to accommodate such subsistence uses and needs related to the public lands; and
- recommendations concerning policies, standards, guidelines, and regulations to implement the strategy.

Please avoid filler or fluff language that does not specifically raise an issue of concern or information to the Board.

Report Clarity

In order for the Board to adequately respond to each Council's annual report, it is important for the annual report itself to state issues clearly.

- If addressing an existing Board policy, Councils should please state whether there is something unclear about the policy, if there is uncertainty about the reason for the policy, or if the Council needs information on how the policy is applied.
- Council members should discuss in detail at Council meetings the issues for the annual report and assist the Council Coordinator in understanding and stating the issues clearly.



- Council Coordinators and OSM staff should assist the Council members during the meeting in ensuring that the issue is stated clearly.

Thus, if the Councils can be clear about their issues of concern and ensure that the Council Coordinator is relaying them sufficiently, then the Board and OSM staff will endeavor to provide as concise and responsive of a reply as is possible.

Report Format

While no particular format is necessary for the Annual Reports, the report must clearly state the following for each item the Council wants the Board to address:

1. Numbering of the issues,
2. A description of each issue,
3. Whether the Council seeks Board action on the matter and, if so, what action the Council recommends, and
4. As much evidence or explanation as necessary to support the Council's request or statements relating to the item of interest.

CHALLENGES WITH AND RECOMMENDED CHANGES TO NOMINATIONS/APPOINTMENTS PROCESS FOR REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL MEMBERS

A briefing for the Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils
June 27, 2014

As the Councils know, and have noted in some of their annual reports and correspondence to the Federal Subsistence Board, the process for appointing Council members has often been delayed in recent years. In the last two appointment cycles, the Secretary did not appoint or reappoint Council members by the expiration of their terms on December 2. In 2013 (for the 2012 appointments), most of the Council members were appointed by January 4, 2013, but were not completed until May 3. In 2014 (for the 2013 appointments), only two regions were appointed by mid-January, and the process was not completed until May 22. This has created problems in coordinating travel for new or reappointed Council members and left some Councils with less than a full complement of members.

Additionally, there are other aspects of the current nominations/appointment process that, while not as problematic as the appointment delays, create difficulties for the program, the Councils, and the public. These additional issues are:

- Under the current system, the application period opens in the fall, with appointments from the prior appointment cycle being announced in December. The overlap between appointment periods has led to individuals applying again before hearing the results from the prior cycle, not knowing whether or not they have been selected for appointment.
- Under the current appointment process, alternates are identified and vetted in D.C., but not appointed. They are also not notified that they have been identified as an alternate. This leads to delays in having alternates appointed to fill vacancies. With recent examples, the most rapid appointment of an alternate to replace an unexpected vacancy has been two months.
- The number of applicants for the open seats on the Councils has been decreasing. In the first ten years of the program, there was an average of 104 applications per year; in the last ten years, that annual average has dropped to 70 – a 33% reduction in applicants.

Recommendations

The Office of Subsistence Management, in consultation with the Interagency Staff Committee and Federal Subsistence Board, has considered these issues and identified some potential solutions. The Board is seeking input from the Councils on these recommended changes.

Change Terms and Possibly Appointment Cycle

The first recommended change involves changing from a 3-year term to a 4-year term for Council appointments, with consideration of modifying the appointment cycle from an annual process to a biennial (two-year) process. For 4-year terms on an annual cycle, 25% of seats



would be open for appointment each cycle; for 4-year terms on a biennial cycle, 50% of seats would be open for appointment each cycle. At least one Council has requested longer terms in a recent annual report.

The following summary outlines the advantages and disadvantages for each approach:

4-year annual cycle

Advantages

- Fewer open seats per annual cycle, to match increasingly fewer applicants
- Fewer names submitted to D.C. for approval could speed-up approval and appointments
- Keeps Council applications in the public's attention

Disadvantages

- No cost savings for annual cost of display ads for public outreach on applications
- Requires work of nominations panels, and ISC and FSB meetings every year for nominations (but keeps each engaged)

4-year biennial cycle

Advantages

- Reduce burden on OSM, agency staff and FSB by conducting nomination panel reviews every two years
- Reduce public outreach costs by 50% over two year period
- Eliminates overlap of appointment cycles and related confusion

Disadvantages

- May increase burden on panel, ISC, OSM, FSB and D.C. by submitting more names in a given year for approval and appointment
- May take the Council appointment process out of public eye and make outreach more difficult

Changing the terms of Council members from 3 to 4 years would require both a charter amendment and a change to Secretarial regulations (50 C.F.R. §100.11(b)(2) and 36 C.F.R. §242.11(b)(2)).

Formally Appoint Alternates to the Council

Another recommendation is to formally appoint alternates to the Council. In this case, the alternate would receive a letter stating that they are appointed as an alternate and would assume a seat as a member of the Council in the event of an unexpected vacancy. The alternate would then complete the remaining term of the vacated seat.

Advantages

- Immediate filling of unexpected vacancies on the Council
- Applicant is aware that they are an alternate, and retains interest

Disadvantages

- Could lead to potential ill feelings or questions about why one person was selected as an alternate compared to one who was appointed or the need to explain the placement order of alternates
- Could seem to be wasted time for an alternate if never seated

This change would involve an amendment to the Council charter. Currently, the charter states “A vacancy on the Council will be filled in the same manner in which the appointment is made.” That would be revised to state, “A vacancy on the Council will be filled by an alternate duly appointed by the Secretary or, if no alternate is available, filled in the same manner in which the appointment is made.”

At this time, the recommendation of formal alternate appointments does not contemplate that the alternates would play a greater role, such as attending a meeting in the event that a quorum might not be established. The Councils are invited to provide feedback or suggestions on an enhanced role for alternates.

Carry-Over Terms

The Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council has recommended that the charters be amended to provide for carryover terms; that is, that if terms expire, and no appointment letters are issued in a timely manner, that the Council members whose terms expired remain seated until a new appointment or reappointment letter is issued. The Western Interior Council points to the charters for the National Park Service’s Subsistence Resource Commissions as an example. Those charters provide the following: “If no successor is appointed on or prior to the expiration of a member’s term, then the incumbent members will continue to serve until the new appointment is made.”

Advantages

- If appointments are delayed in the future, Councils can still conduct business with a more complete Council
- Sitting Council members who are awaiting reappointment can plan ahead with certainty

Disadvantages

The key disadvantage relates to timing of when the late appointment is made. If a sitting Council member is awaiting reappointment and plans to attend a meeting, and someone else is appointed to that seat instead, it creates a couple of problems. First, it disrupts the plans of the sitting Council member who had intended to attend the meeting. Second, if the new member is appointed with insufficient time to arrange for travel, it may now affect the ability of the Council to establish quorum.

This would require a change to the Council charter. If the Councils request this change, and the Secretaries approve the change, it could be implemented by December 2, 2014. However, this change would only be an amendment to the charter. The charter would still require renewal in 2015 as currently scheduled.



Youth Involvement in Councils

Several Councils have expressed the desire to enhance youth involvement in the Council process, and several ideas have been suggested. One idea is to develop relationships between local schools and the Council process. This is highly encouraged and can be facilitated through the Subsistence Council Coordinator. No approval, charter amendments or regulatory changes would be required. Councils are encouraged to do this as desired and as opportunities exist on a regional basis.

Another suggestion that some Councils have made is to have a youth mentorship program or even a “Youth Seat” on the Council. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service guidance on Federal Advisory Committees (based on its authority under the Federal Advisory Committee Act), only provides for four types of memberships: Representatives (standard Council members), Special Government Employees, Regular Government Employees, and Ex Officio Members (appointed by virtue of holding another office) (107 FW 4.6). The concept of a “Youth Seat” would not fit under any of these categories, so a youth could not be a member of the Council or designated in the charter.

However, that does not mean there is not another way to pursue this option. One possibility would be to have a local Tribal Council select a youth to serve as a “Youth Liaison” to the Council, and sponsor that youth to attend the Council meeting. If the meeting is in the community, it would not create any extra costs. The Councils are asked to indicate if they wish OSM to assist them in exploring the establishment of a “Youth Seat” or some sort of youth mentorship program. However implemented, it would have to be clear that the Federal Subsistence Management Program would not be responsible for any youth under 18 who would travel.

Nominations under Annual Cycle
4-Year Glimpse

Jan-01	Feb-01	Mar-01	Apr-01	May-01	Jun-01	Jul-01	Aug-01	Sept-01	Oct-01	Nov-01	Dec-01	
		Nominations/Appointments Process - Year 0										NR Appts - Year 0
							Application Period - Year 1					
Jan-02	Feb-02	Mar-02	Apr-02	May-02	Jun-02	July-02	Aug-02	Sept-02	Oct-02	Nov-02	Dec-02	
	Year 1 - App. cont.						Nominations/Appointments Process - Year 1				NR Appts - Year 1	
							Application Period - Year 2					
Jan-03	Feb-03	Mar-03	Apr-03	May-03	Jun-03	Jul-03	Aug-03	Sep-03	Oct-03	Nov-03	Dec-03	
	Year 2 - App. Cont.				Nominations/Appointments - Year 2							NR Appts - Year 2
							Application Period - Year 3					
Jan-04	Feb-04	Mar-04	Apr-04	May-04	Jun-04	Jul-04	Aug-04	Sep-04	Oct-04	Nov-04	Dec-04	
	Year 3 - App. Cont.				Nominations/Appointments - Year 3							NR Appts - Year 3
							Application Period - Year 4					

Two-Year Bottom Line

- 88 open seats
- 130 applications
- 62 agency staff in panels
- \$40,000 for PR outreach

Schedule

- Panel Reports due - end of April
- ISC meeting - mid-June
- FSB meeting - mid-July
- Surnaming packet and concurrence - August
- Packet to Secretary - September



Nominations under Proposed Biennial Cycle

4-Year Glimpse

Jan-01	Feb-01	Mar-01	Apr-01	May-01	Jun-01	Jul-01	Aug-01	Sept-01	Oct-01	Nov-01	Dec-01	
							Application Period - First Cycle					
Jan-02	Feb-02	Mar-02	Apr-02	May-02	Jun-02	July-02	Aug-02	Sept-02	Oct-02	Nov-02	Dec-02	
	App. cont.	Nominations/Appointment Process - First Cycle									NR Appts - Year 1	
Jan-03	Feb-03	Mar-03	Apr-03	May-03	Jun-03	Jul-03	Aug-03	Sep-03	Oct-03	Nov-03	Dec-03	
							Application Period - Second Cycle					
Jan-04	Feb-04	Mar-04	Apr-04	May-04	Jun-04	Jul-04	Aug-04	Sep-04	Oct-04	Nov-04	Dec-04	
	App. Cont.	Nominations/Appointment Process - Second Cycle										NR Appts - Year 2

Two-Year Bottom Line

- 55 open seats
- 90 applications
- 31 agency staff in panels
- \$20,000 for PR outreach

Schedule

- Panel Reports due - end of April
- ISC meeting - late May, early June
- FSB meeting - late June, early July
- Surnaming packet and concurrence - late July
- Packet to Secretary - late July

Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

**c/o U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
1011 East Tudor Road MS 121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503
Phone: (907) 787-3888, Fax: (907) 786-3898
Toll Free: 1-800-478-1456**

RAC WI14032.MH

MAY 28 2014

Mr. Tim Towarak, Chair
Federal Subsistence Board
c/o U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Office of Subsistence Management
1011 East Tudor Road MS 121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Dear Mr. Towarak:

In recent meetings, the Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council has been very active in discussions regarding the late Secretarial appointments to the Councils, which have become a recurring theme in our annual reports and correspondence. This year's appointment cycle was completed nearly six months late.

I recently attended the Federal Subsistence Board meeting in Anchorage April 15-17, 2014 and was very encouraged by the discussion and dialogue and some of the great suggestions that were presented to improve the process. I understand that many of the modifications will take a substantial amount of time to implement.

We appreciate the hard work of Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) staff and Pat Pourchot, Special Assistant to the Secretary for Alaska Affairs, who have been continuing to pursue solutions to this problem. The Council looks forward to reviewing the suggested changes to timelines and processes at the fall meeting cycle. No official announcements can be made regarding who has been appointed until all vetting has been completed for all ten Councils. Frustrations and negative impacts to our Councils and processes were exacerbated tremendously in the most recent round of meetings. We feel this is unacceptable and encourage action to ensure this does not happen again.

As discussed at the Board meeting, all Council charters should be amended as soon as possible to allow for individuals to continue serving beyond the expiration date of their terms, until replaced or reappointed (similar to the National Park Service Subsistence Resource Commissions).

Mr. Towarak

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Amending the Council charters will prevent some of the challenges and issues these late appointments have created. We encourage OSM and the Board to take whatever action necessary to begin this process immediately.

Thank you for the opportunity to assist the Federal Subsistence Management Program to meet its charge of protecting subsistence resources and uses of these resources on Federal public lands and waters. We look forward to continuing discussions about the issues and concerns of subsistence users of the Western Interior Region. If you have questions about this letter, please contact me via Melinda Burke, Regional Council Coordinator, with the Office of Subsistence Management at 1-800-478-1456 or (907) 786-3885.

Sincerely,



Jack Reakoff, Chair

cc: Federal Subsistence Board
Pat Pourchot, Special Assistant for Alaska Affairs, DOI
Eugene Peltola Jr., Assistant Regional Director, OSM
Chuck Ardizzone, Deputy Assistant Regional Director, OSM
David Jenkins, Policy Coordinator, OSM
Carl Johnson, Council Coordination Division Chief, OSM
Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Chairs, Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils
Interagency Staff Committee
Administrative Record

Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
c/o U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1011 East Tudor Road, MS 121
Anchorage, AK 99503
Phone: (907) 786-3888, Fax (907) 786-3898
Toll Free: 1-800-478-1456

RAC WI14003.MH

FEB 12 2014

Honorable Sally Jewell
Secretary of the Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
Office of the Secretary
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Jewell:

The Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council) is one of the ten Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils formed under Title VIII of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) and chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). Section 805 of ANILCA and the Council's charter establish its authority to initiate, review, and evaluate regulations, policies, management plans, and other matters related to subsistence on Federal public lands and waters within the Western Interior Alaska region. The Council provides a regional forum for discussion and recommendations for subsistence related issues on public lands.

All of the Councils are dealing with an extremely late completion of the annual Secretarial Appointment process to fill Council seats. The delay also happened last year, and this Council sent a letter to you expressing concerns about the problem (see enclosure). This year's delay is even worse than last year, making each year progressively later in completing official appointments. Terms expired on December 2, 2013 for three seats on our Council. It is now February 11, less than 3 weeks before our winter meeting—we only just received word on February 6, 2014 on appointments for two seats and the question remains as to who will be appointed to fill the third seat.

The delay in appointments has had a negative effect on the planning and execution of important and extensive work which must be completed in a timely manner prior to our meetings. Further, these delays have discouraged applicants and future applicants from serving on the Council. This is a disastrous consequence given the steady decrease in the number of applications in recent years. Our Council wishes to re-emphasize that steps must be taken to ensure delays in



Secretary Jewell

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appointments do not continue. We suggest our Council charters be amended to allow for a member to continue serving until official Secretarial Appointments are made.

It is an important role for this Council, and others, to assist the Federal Subsistence Program in meeting its charge of protecting subsistence resources and uses of these resources on public lands and waters in Alaska. We cannot fulfill our role when timely appointments to fill vacant seats are not given a priority. If you have questions about this letter, please contact me via Melinda Burke, Subsistence Council Coordinator, with the Office of Subsistence Management at 1-800-478-1456 or (907) 786-3885.

Sincerely,



Jack Reakoff, Chair

Enclosure

cc: Tom Vilsack, Secretary of Agriculture, USDA
Laura Marquez, White House Liaison
Pat Pourchot, Special Assistant for Alaska Affairs, DOI
Geoff Haskett, Regional Director, USFWS Region 7
Eugene R. Peltola Jr., Assistant Regional Director, OSM
Karen Hyer, Acting Deputy Assistant Regional Director, OSM
David Jenkins, Policy Coordinator, OSM
Carl Johnson, Council Coordination Division Chief, OSM
Federal Subsistence Board
Interagency Staff Committee
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**Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
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Anchorage, AK 99503
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RAC WI13014.MH

MAY 06 2013

Honorable Sally Jewel
Secretary of Interior
U.S. Department of the Interior
Office of the Secretary
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Secretary Jewel:

The Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Advisory Council (Council) is one of the ten regional councils formed under Title VIII of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) and chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA). Section 805 of ANILCA and the Council's charter establish its authority to initiate, review, and evaluate regulations, policies, management plans, and other matters related to subsistence on Federal public lands and waters within the Western Interior Alaska region. The Council provides a forum for discussion and recommendations for subsistence fish and wildlife management in the region.

The Council met in Galena, Alaska, on March 5-6, 2013, and conducted a public meeting regarding subsistence issues. Among the topics discussed at this meeting were the very late Secretarial appointments to the Regional Subsistence Advisory Councils as well as the currently vacant Assistant Regional Director position since the departure of Peter J. Probasco at the Office of Subsistence Management (OSM).

Our way of life and the extreme weather common to our region are just two of the factors that make it necessary for the Council to plan well in advance for travel (personal and Council) as well as seasonal food gathering activities. The extremely late appointments create tremendous difficulties for individuals to plan in advance for travel and Council commitments. Further, our support staff needs sufficient time to plan for the very complicated logistical arrangements necessary for travel to and from rural Alaska communities. This year's delay was significantly longer than we have experienced in the past. Two of our incumbent council members did not hear about their appointment status until less than two weeks before our most recent scheduled gathering. Shockingly, it is my understanding that there remains at least one Council that has not

Secretary Jewell

received word of a member's reappointment, amounting to a nearly four-month delay. Such delays are unacceptable to our statutory "meaningful role" in Federal subsistence management of fish and wildlife. Steps need to be taken as soon as possible so that delays in these very important and critical appointments do not happen again.

In the future, this Council would appreciate correspondence from the Office of Subsistence Management if these delays persist. Incumbent applicants must be informed of the status of appointments if they are expected to prepare for coming meetings and allow time in their schedules for travel. Old appointments expire in early December, which is when the announcement for appointments to those vacant seats is anticipated. New applicants may assume they have not been appointed if no official notice is sent about the delay. This could affect their ability to travel to their meetings, as lead time is necessary for the proper authorizations as well as clearing their personal calendars for Council duties.

The recent high number of retirements, budget issues, sequestration, and hiring freeze has caused great concern among the Council regarding the leadership and workload of OSM. The permanent hiring of a new Assistant Regional Director is a critical action which this Council feels needs to happen as soon as possible. This Council would be willing to correspond and provide any supporting language to make this happen soon, despite the current hiring freeze.

Thank you for the opportunity for this Council to assist the Federal Subsistence Management Program to meet its charge of protecting subsistence resources and uses of our resources on Federal public lands and waters. We look forward to continuing discussions about the issues and concerns of subsistence users of the Western Interior Region. If you have questions about this correspondence, please contact me via Melinda Hernandez, Subsistence Council Coordinator with OSM, at (907) 786-3885.

Sincerely,



Jack Reakoff, Chair
Western Interior Alaska Subsistence
Regional Advisory Council

cc: Kathleen M. O'Reilly-Doyle, Acting Assistant Regional Director, OSM
David Jenkins, Acting Deputy Assistant Regional Director, OSM
Carl Johnson, Council Coordination Division Chief, OSM
Melinda Hernandez, Council Coordinator, OSM
Pat Pourchot, Special Assistant for Alaska Affairs, DOI
Federal Subsistence Board
Western Interior Regional Advisory Council
Administrative Record



United States Department of the Interior



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Izembek National Wildlife Refuge
P.O. Box 127
Cold Bay, Alaska 99571

Izembek National Wildlife Refuge Report for the
Kodiak/Aleutians Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Fall Meeting – September 2014
(Compiled in July 2014)



INVENTORY AND MONITORING STUDIES

Caribou

Unit 9D (Southern Alaska Peninsula)

The 2013-2014 Federal Subsistence hunt closed on March 31, 2014 and resulted in only 1 out of 20 permits being filled. The 1 bull was harvested by a Cold Bay resident. In 2014 the State and Federal subsistence hunts were opened for Unit 9D with a total harvest goal of 40 caribou. For the Federal subsistence hunt, 20 permits were allocated to five communities (4 permits each; Cold Bay, King Cove, Sand Point, False Pass, and Nelson Lagoon). The Federal hunt is a split season open from August 10 to September 20, 2014 and November 15, 2014 to March 31, 2015.

Unit 10 (Unimak Island)

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game conducted a caribou calf mortality research project in June 2014. Eighteen radio collars were deployed on newborn calves to estimate cause specific mortality rates.

Brown bear

The index of brown bear population size and productivity is estimated annually in the fall from aerial surveys flown along salmon streams on Izembek Refuge and Unimak Island. The survey is planned to be conducted during the last two weeks in August.

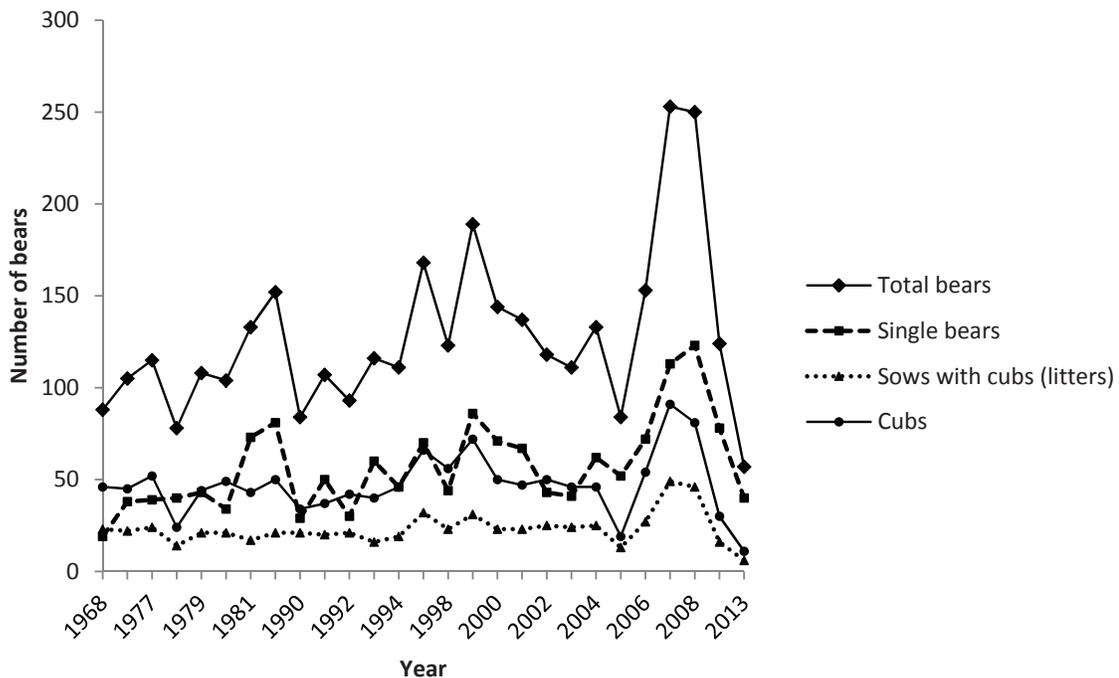


Figure 1. Results of population and productivity index surveys of brown bears conducted on Izembek National Wildlife Refuge from 1968 to 2013. Only years where the entire unit was surveyed are included. Survey data from 2014 is not included in this graph.

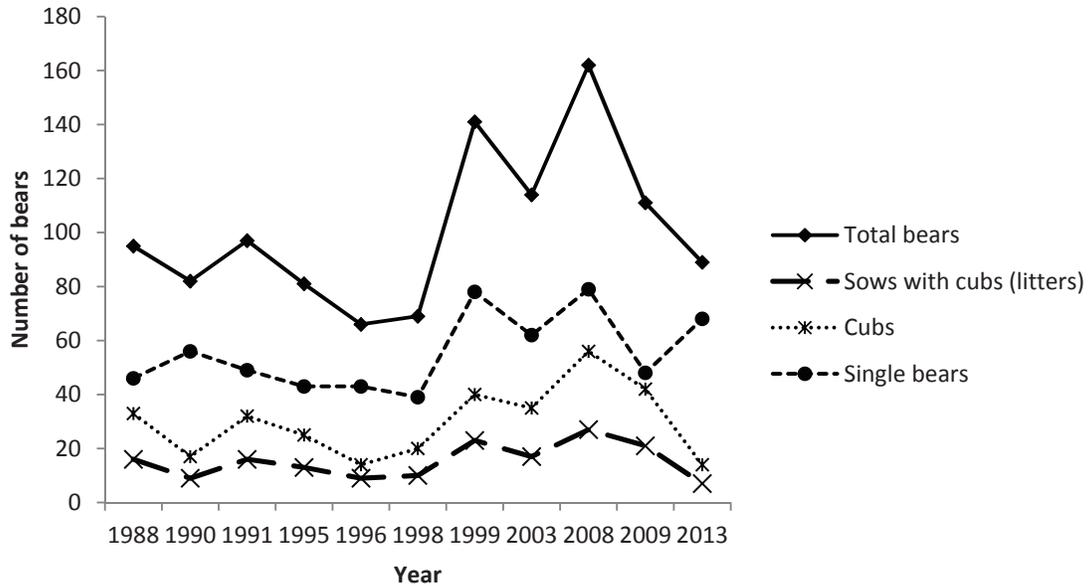


Figure 2. Results of population and productivity index surveys of brown bears conducted on Unimak Island from 1988 to 2013. Only survey years where the entire island (both north and south side) was surveyed are included. Survey data from 2014 is not included in this graph.

WATERFOWL

Pacific brant

The fall aerial Pacific brant survey will be conducted in October in Izembek Lagoon and adjacent estuaries (conducted by Migratory Bird Management Office) as part of the entire Pacific flyway fall survey.

An index of productivity for the entire Pacific population of brant is generated from ground-based counts conducted in Izembek Lagoon and adjacent areas each fall when the birds are staging for migration. Brant productivity data have been collected at Izembek National Wildlife Refuge for 50 consecutive years. Brant production counts will be conducted this fall between 10 September and 5 November 2014 at observation points throughout Izembek Lagoon including: Grant’s Point, Round Island/Outer Marker, Operl Island mud flats, and the areas between Neuman Island and Blaine Point. Counts were also conducted in southwestern areas of Izembek Lagoon inside Norma Bay, from the south shoreline of Norma Bay, and from the shoreline in the south central area of the lagoon between Norma Bay and Applegate Cove.

Emperor goose

The 2014 emperor goose spring count (79,883; Figure 3) was 18.2% above the 2012 estimate of 67,588 and 22.0% above the long term average of 65,487 (1981-2012). The current management index (i.e., 3-year average, 2011-12 and 2014) of 73,879 birds is 7.4% above the previous average of 68,772 (2010-2012).



The 2014 fall population index of emperor geese will be conducted by the Migratory Bird Management Office in October 2014. In addition, fall productivity counts will be conducted by Izembek Refuge in September and October 2014.

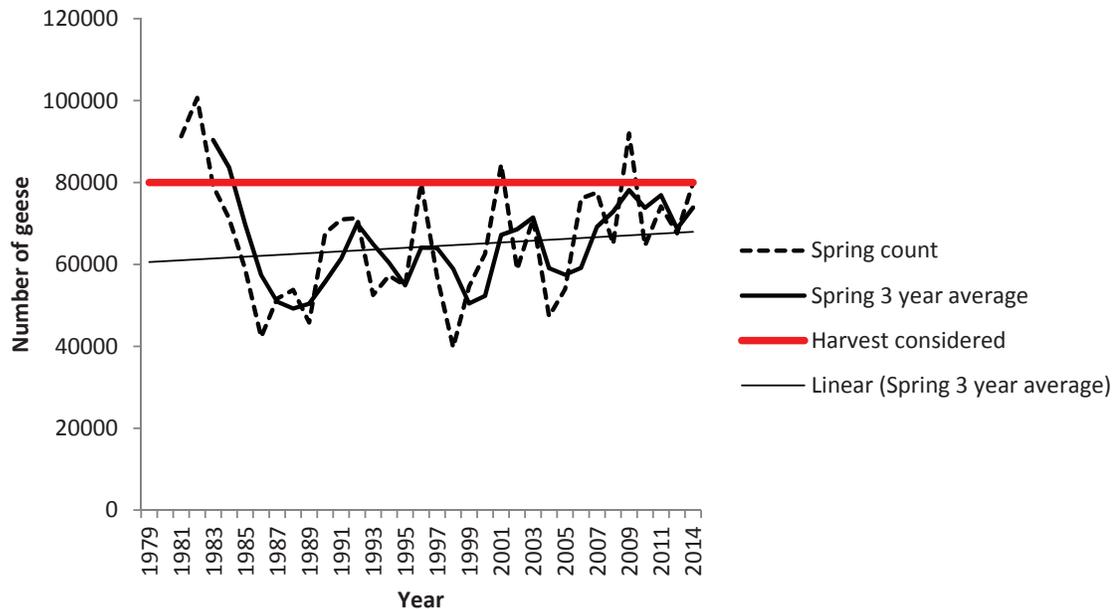


Figure 3. Spring Emperor goose population counts and 3-year running average from 1979-2014, in southwest Alaska. The thin solid black line represents the linear regression trend line for the Spring 3-year average.

Tundra Swan

The annual Tundra Swan survey was conducted on the Izembek Unit and Pavlof Unit from 10-12 May 2014. We observed a total of 445 swans and 92 nests in both units combined. In the Izembek Unit we observed a total of 85 swans and 25 nests. There were 17 single swans, 6 single swans with nests, 5 pairs, 19 pairs with nests, and 14 in flocks. The density of swans in the Izembek Unit, 0.21 swans/mi², was slightly lower than the long term average of 0.31 swans/mi² (± 0.03 SE, 1998-2009). The number of breeding pairs observed on the Izembek Unit, 0.09 swans/mi², was also slightly below the long term average of 0.10 swans/mi² (± 0.01 SE, 1998-2009). In the Pavlof Unit we observed a total of 360 swans and 67 nests (Figure 4). The total was composed of 42 single swans, 17 single swans with nests, 38 pairs, 50 pairs with nests, and 125 in flocks. The density of swans in the Pavlof Unit, 0.51 swans/mi², was slightly lower than the long term average of 0.57 swans/mi² (± 0.03 SE, 1998-2009). The number of breeding pairs observed on the Pavlof Unit, 0.18 swans/mi², was also lower than the long term average of 0.23 swans/mi² (± 0.01 SE, 1998-2009).

Avian Influenza and Avian Blood Parasites

Izembek NWR will continue working in cooperation with the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) to collect Avian Influenza and blood parasite samples from hunter-harvested waterfowl in September and October 2014.

Eelgrass monitoring

In collaboration with USGS scientists, we are continuing to conduct surveys on the eelgrass located in Izembek Lagoon. The Izembek Lagoon has one of the largest eelgrass beds in the world and is a critical resource for many species. Monthly surveys are conducted from April through October at Grant's Point in Izembek Lagoon to provide information on seasonal changes in eelgrass productivity and abundance, and information on trends relative to environmental factors such as sea level rise, water temperature, light levels, salinity, and turbidity. In addition, this information will be utilized to examine regional trends and develop a monitoring plan for eelgrass in four refuges within southwest Alaska.

Steller's sea lion population monitoring

During summer 2013 we initiated a population monitoring effort for the Steller's sea lions that utilize haul out areas on Unimak Island. The Steller's sea lion populations in Alaska are listed under a threatened status. We constructed and deployed 4 remote digital cameras to monitor some of the areas where sea lions have historically hauled out on exposed rocks and beaches. One photo will be taken every hour during the day on each camera. The photos will be retrieved in late July 2014. We will use the photos to document important haul out areas, conduct minimum population counts annually, and determine timing of the haul out sites on Unimak Island. In addition, 2 new camera sites will be established in 2014 to document additional haul out areas on Unimak Island.

EDUCATION AND OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

False Pass-Cold Bay School Science Camp

In May 2014, the False Pass and Cold Bay Schools hosted a science camp in Cold Bay in conjunction with Izembek Refuge. Refuge staff brought the students to Grant's Point where they participated in a photo scavenger hunt and had the opportunity to explore the lagoon with nets to capture and study critters found in the lagoon. The students were also able to view the refuge on a bus tour out to First Bridge on Frosty Road.

Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) visit Izembek Refuge

In July the YCC crew from Alaska Maritime Refuge spent two weeks working at Izembek Refuge. The crew consisted of one leader and four members who were all from Alaska (Sand Point, Homer, and Anchor Point). They completed several maintenance projects on the refuge including refurbishing the gazebo at Grant's Point and landscaping around the office flagpole. In addition they helped with several biological projects including Sitka spruce data collection and eelgrass sampling on Izembek Lagoon.

Educational panels on display

In the summer of 2014 four new educational panels were installed on the end of the dock in Cold Bay. These panels feature educational information about the refuge and wildlife that can be seen from the dock and on Izembek Refuge. Visitors on the ferry and in Cold Bay can enjoy the panels during May through October each year. The panels will be removed during winter months to prevent damage.



Ferry Tours

Refuge volunteers and staff provide tours to passengers arriving in Cold Bay every two weeks between May and September on the Tustumena ferry via the Alaska Marine Highway System. Up to 24 visitors can be accommodated on each tour. The tours are popular and provide a great outreach opportunity for the Refuge and local community. Tour destinations include the Refuge office and Grant's Point.

Dolly Derby

Refuge Staff participated in the City of Cold Bay's annual Dolly Derby for kids on May 31st. The annual event was held at Trout Creek and featured fishing, a cookout, and exploration of the area. Approximately 15 kids from Cold Bay and King Cove participated along with other friends and family members.



United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge
1390 Buskin River Road
Kodiak, Alaska 99615-0323
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Subsistence Activity Report Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge April – September 2014

Fisheries

Please note that results of salmon counts presented below were provided by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G).

Western Area

The early-run sockeye salmon in the Karluk River drainage has continued its recovery from the minimal abundances observed during 2008-2011. Specifically, the early-run exceeded the lower escapement goal for the third consecutive year and totaled 236,144 fish in 2014. Village residents of Karluk and Larsen Bay reported good catch per unit effort.

In contrast, Chinook salmon bound for the Karluk River and Ayakulik River have not fared well. Because neither run was expected to meet lower escapement goals, emergency orders were issued to close the subsistence fisheries between June 20 and August 18.

Northern Area

Federal marine waters near Afognak River (Litnik) and Buskin River were intensively used by subsistence anglers. In response to data on initial returns and projected accomplishment of escapement goals, emergency orders were issued in June 2014 to allow subsistence fishing near river termini, areas which are usually closed to fishing. Residents of Kodiak, Ouzinkie, and Port Lions reported good catch per unit effort.

Subsistence Permit Summary

Federal subsistence regulations allow for customary and traditional harvest of Roosevelt elk, Sitka black-tailed deer, and brown bear on Kodiak Refuge lands. Rural residents qualify for federal elk and deer hunts, and a small number of brown bear permits are issued to village residents (Table 1). Federal designated deer hunter and subsistence elk permits can be obtained at the Kodiak Refuge headquarters. Permittees are required to carry their Federal subsistence permits, and current state licenses and tags, while hunting.



Table 1. Federal subsistence permits issued and estimated number of animals harvested based on harvest reports, Unit 8, 2007-2014.

Species	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Deer	83(29)	81(74)	56(38)	67(42)	70(52)	20(11)	46(21)
Bear	5(0)	6(1)	6(1)	7(1)	5(2)	2(0)	4(0)
Elk	6(0)	3(0)	5(0)	8(1)	6(0)	2(0)	5(2)

*Multiple deer eligible to be harvested per permit

Brown Bear

Population Assessment

The Refuge, in cooperation with ADF&G, attempts to annually survey representative areas of Kodiak Island to assess trends in bear population size. In 2014, we planned to survey a region that encompasses Fraser Lake, Red Lake, and Sturgeon River drainages of southwestern Kodiak Island. However, the survey was cancelled because early leaf-out of shrubs and trees created unsuitable survey conditions.

The Refuge conducted aerial surveys of 11 anadromous streams in southwestern Kodiak during July and August to quantify bear stream use group composition (e.g., single, family group, number of first year and older cubs).

Research

In cooperation with the USGS and the University of Montana’s Flathead Lake Biological Station, a graduate student (Will Deacy) and the Refuge will continue a research project initiated in 2012. The goals of the project are to: (1) characterize runs of returning sockeye salmon in spawning streams of Karluk, Frazer, and Red Lakes; and (2) evaluate the relationship between salmon abundance and run timing and brown bear movement, foraging strategies, and salmon consumption.

Sitka Black-Tailed Deer

Harvest

Harvest results for Sitka black-tailed deer in the Kodiak Archipelago, including subsistence and recreational sport hunter efforts, had been assessed annually by the ADF&G via a hunter questionnaire. Between 2006 and 2010, the Refuge had supported ADF&G on harvest assessments, and added a question regarding harvest on federal land. During this time, approximately 40% of deer harvested were taken on federal land. Beginning in 2011, ADF&G migrated to an online deer harvest reporting system that does not support additional information on deer harvests on federal lands, which could be used to facilitate management. ADF&G deer harvest data from the 2013-14 season have not been made available.

Population Estimate

Minimizing deer impacts to native flora and fauna while maintaining Sitka black-tailed deer (*Odocoileus hemionus sitkensis*) subsistence harvest opportunities on Kodiak Island are goals of the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge. In 2012 and 2013, we refined an aerial survey method to

estimate deer abundances. In May 2014, we estimated deer abundances in non-forested habitats of southern Kodiak Island using double observer (mark-recapture) distance sampling applied to traditional line-transect aerial counts. We conducted two replicate surveys in non-forested grassland, tundra, and shrub habitats at the Aliulik Peninsula, Olga Flats, and the Ayukulik River valley of Kodiak Island, between 16 May and 21 May 2014. We observed an average of 92 deer/survey replicate, with an average deer group size of 1.73 deer/group. After correcting for estimated deer detection, which accounted for imperfect detection on the transect line, distance to the observer, habitat types, and deer group size effects, we estimated that there were 432 deer (SE=65.70) in the survey area at a density of 0.74 deer/km² (SE=0.12). Deer detection rate was 0.93 (SE=0.02). Deer densities at the Aliulik Peninsula (0.86, SE=0.16) were 62% higher than during a 2012 survey (0.53 deer/km², SE=0.07). We opportunistically counted deer carcasses and other wildlife (bears, whale carcasses, and swans), which could be used as an index of annual changes in their abundances. This survey provides the first statistically-robust means of indexing annual trends in deer densities and abundances on Kodiak Island.

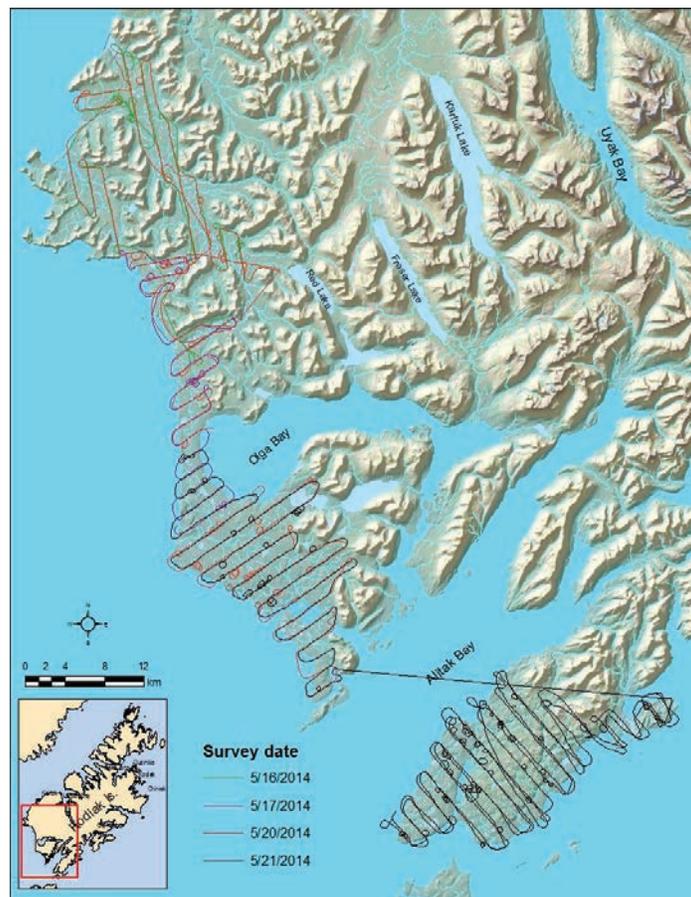


Figure 4. Track lines recorded by GPS in flight during Sitka black-tailed deer aerial line-transect surveys on Kodiak Island, May 16-21, 2014.

Roosevelt Elk



Radio-collared elk provide a basis for ADF&G's efforts to track herd locations and estimate herd composition, population size, and harvest quotas. ADF&G's fall 2013 elk survey indicated that the population size was approximately 765 elk, which was higher than the estimated population of 685 elk in 2012. A total of 43 elk were harvested under state regulations during the 2013 season, of which 16 were bulls. The Waterfall herd, which summers in the vicinity of Refuge lands on Afognak Island, was estimated to have increased to 60 elk in 2013, from 40 elk in 2012. Three elk (two bulls and one cow) were harvested from Waterfall herd. These include two bull elk harvested under federal subsistence regulations.

Feral Reindeer

Refuge biologists counted 315 feral reindeer during a survey in July 2011. Alan Jones, State Trooper, counted 335 feral reindeer while patrolling in the same region that summer. In July 2012, Jones counted approximately 300 reindeer, and in October 2013, he counted 319 reindeer. Based on these results, the reindeer herd appeared to be stable since at least 2011 at approximately 300-325 animals, and it has likely only fluctuated between 300 and 400 reindeer for the past 15 years.

Sea Otters

Population Monitoring

In the Kodiak region, monitoring results provide information on the general health, size, and distribution of a substantial portion of a federally threatened sea otter stock. Results from the last aerial survey indicate that sea otter abundances in the Kodiak Archipelago declined slightly from 13,526 (SE = 2,350) in 1989 to 11,005 (SE = 2,138) in 2004. However, anecdotal evidence suggested that the sea otter population size may have increased and population range may have expanded southward since the 2004 survey. To obtain an updated estimate of sea otter abundance and distributions, the Refuge, in collaboration with FWS's Inventory and Monitoring Program, and FWS's Marine Mammals Management (MMM) office, surveyed the archipelago's population in July 2014. Results from this effort will be presented at the fall meeting.

Diets

Biologists from MMM continue to evaluate sea otter diets in the Kodiak and Homer areas by analyzing stable isotopes of prey items and archived sea otter whiskers collected from beach cast, hunter-harvested, and live-captured animals. Kodiak Refuge has assisted this study by collecting samples of otter prey species. Samples are being used to establish reference data for isotope levels found in different food prey species. Although sea otter consume a diversity of marine foods, a few usually compose the bulk of the diet. Monitoring changes in diet can facilitate management by providing a means of explaining change in reproductive fitness, survival, abundance, and distribution.

Causes of Mortality

Dead sea otters reported by the public, and collected by Kodiak Refuge subsistence staff, are sent to MMM for detailed necropsies to determine their causes of death. No dead sea otters

were reported to the Refuge during this reporting period. A recent publication authored by a MMM biologist in the *Journal of Wildlife Diseases* documents a dead sea otter found by a Kodiak Island local in 2005 that was determined to have died of *Histoplasmosis capsulatum*, a fungal infection of the lungs commonly found in soil associated with decaying bird or bat guano. This was the first documented case of *Histoplasmosis* in Alaska. The authors suggest that migratory colonial-nesting seabirds, feral pigeons, or bats may have served as sources of pathogen transmission.

Marine Mammal Marking and Tagging Update (MMMTP)

Under the 1972 Marine Mammal Protection Act, qualified Alaskan coastal natives may harvest sea otters and use the pelts for handicrafts. Legally harvested sea otter hides and skulls must be officially tagged by a USFWS-approved representative (“tagger”). Currently, there are 15 taggers distributed in the villages of Kodiak Island. During this reporting period, Refuge headquarters staff tagged 14 sea otters.

Migratory Birds

Nearshore Surveys

Staging from the Refuge vessel, *Ursa Major II*, the Refuge bird biologist surveyed breeding populations in the vicinity of western Kodiak Island in June 2013. Preliminary results yielded observations of 25,000 individuals of 48 species of aquatic migratory birds. The majority of these observations were comprised of five species: black-legged kittiwake, glaucous-winged gull, tufted puffin, marbled murrelet, and pigeon guillemot. In August, the same area will be surveyed to assess productivity of selected bird species. Additionally, molting harlequin ducks will be captured and banded. Results from the surveys will be presented at the Council’s March 2015 meeting.

Migratory Bird Harvest Surveys

Results from the last subsistence harvest survey (2006) can be accessed and viewed at <http://alaska.fws.gov/ambcc/harvest.htm>.

Subsistence Salmon Harvest Surveys

Last winter, ADF&G’s Division of Subsistence, in cooperation with the Refuge and local researchers, began a project that seeks to understand the factors that have shaped the Kodiak subsistence salmon fishery over time. This project responds to “Priority Information Needs” identified by the Council and Office of Subsistence Management by investigating the “environmental, demographic, regulatory, cultural and socioeconomic factors affecting harvest levels of salmon for subsistence use in the Kodiak Area”. Specifically, the study uses household surveys and key respondent interviews to document the status and trend in salmon harvest, harvest practices, and processing methods in the Old Harbor, Larsen Bay, and selected areas of the Kodiak road system. The study scope also included interviews of individuals who use and process salmon but are not directly involved in salmon harvest. Results will be published in a publically-accessible technical report to facilitate management and education.



Alaska Department of Fish and Game Report to the Kodiak-Aleutian Islands Region Subsistence Advisory Council: Update through August 1, 2014 on the Buskin River Sockeye Salmon Fishery and Stock Assessment Project

**By
Tyler Polum**

August 2014

Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Division of Sport Fish



PROGRESS REPORT

INTRODUCTION

The Buskin River drainage, located on Kodiak Island approximately 2 miles southwest from the city of Kodiak, traditionally supports the single largest subsistence salmon fishery within the Kodiak/Aleutian Islands Region. The fishery occurs in nearshore marine waters adjacent to the river mouth and targets several species of salmon, although sockeye salmon typically comprise about 75% of the total subsistence harvest (Table 2). Between 2009 and 2013 federally qualified subsistence users annually harvested an average of 3,334 Buskin River sockeye salmon, which accounted for 29% of the total sockeye salmon harvest reported for communities on Kodiak Island (Table 1). In addition, a little less than half of all Kodiak area subsistence users reporting activity during this period harvested salmon from the Buskin River fishery (Table 3). During 2008 and 2009, low sockeye escapement on the Buskin and closure of the subsistence fishery prompted subsistence users to fish elsewhere. However, participation and harvests increased significantly in recent years with rebounding sockeye returns to the Buskin Drainage. Historically, 40-50% of the sockeye harvest in the Kodiak/Aleutians region has come from the Buskin fishery and half of all permit holders in the region report fishing Buskin.

Table 1.- Kodiak Area reported federal subsistence harvest of sockeye salmon by location, 2009-2013^a.

Location	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2009-2013
						avg.
Buskin River	1,883	1,476	4,674	2,606	6,083	3,344
Old Harbor/Sitkalidak	591	501	391	455	621	512
Alitak Bay	669	767	643	987	1,013	816
Karluk Village	223	127	276	150	417	239
Larsen Bay/Uyak Bay	894	705	737	616	863	763
Uganik Bay	1,568	1,077	1,123	1,051	752	1,114
Afognak Bay	2,085	2,146	1,978	1,711	2,012	1,986
Remainder Afognak Island	1,969	1,502	2,186	2,906	2,949	2,302
Total	9,882	8,301	12,008	10,482	14,710	11,077

^a. Source: ADF&G Division of Commercial Fisheries, Kodiak.

Table 2.- Buskin River drainage reported subsistence salmon harvest by species, 2009-2013^a.

Year	Permits	Reported Subsistence Harvest									
		Chinook		Sockeye		Coho		Pink		Chum	
		No. Fish	% of Total	No. Fish	% of Total	No. Fish	% of Total	No. Fish	% of Total	No. Fish	% of Total
2009	179	0	0%	1,883	66%	874	31%	77	3%	9	0%
2010	164	16	1%	1,476	63%	679	29%	146	6%	38	2%
2011	255	11	<1%	4,674	92%	287	6%	67	1%	15	0%
2012	280	1	<1%	2,606	69%	978	26%	154	4%	12	<1%
2013	308	8	<1%	6,083	89%	611	9%	117	2%	39	<1%
5 Year Avg.	237	7	<1%	3,344	76%	686	20%	112	3%	23	<1%

Table 3.- Federal subsistence harvest locations in the Kodiak Area by number of permits fished, 2009-2013^a.

Location	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2009-2013
						avg.
Buskin River	180	164	255	224	308	226
Old Harbor/Sitkalidak	28	25	21	29	30	27
Alitak Bay	23	29	31	34	28	29
Karluk Village	5	6	6	4	10	6
Larsen Bay/Uyak Bay	31	31	31	26	27	29
Uganik Bay	56	45	40	40	35	43
Afognak Bay	95	90	81	70	85	84
Remainder Afognak Island	73	52	49	61	61	59
Number issued	491	442	514	488	584	504

^a Source: ADF&G Division of Commercial Fisheries, Kodiak.

In 2000, in order to ensure sustained sockeye salmon production over time, a stock assessment study was initiated by Alaska Department Fish and Game (ADF&G) on the Buskin River. It was funded by the Office of Subsistence Management with the goal to establish a Biological Escapement Goal (BEG) for the sockeye salmon run on the Buskin. The BEG is based on a population model which incorporates annual escapement and harvest figures with the age composition of annual returns to estimate the total production of each year class (known as a brood table). Samples of male to female ratios, average length and age classes are collected each year over the course of the run from both escapement and the subsistence harvest. Because development of the brood table requires age composition data collected over at least 3 generations, annual data collection for completion of the study is necessary over a 12-15 year period. The current escapement goal range is set at 5,000 - 8,000 sockeye salmon and is used for management of the subsistence, sport and commercial fisheries to ensure a sustained yield from the population. An annual sockeye salmon escapement objective for Catherine and Louise lakes (reported as Lake Louise) has not yet been established.

Sockeye salmon escapements are annually accounted for through in-season counts of adult fish migrating into the drainage. A salmon counting weir located on Buskin River for this purpose has been operated by ADF&G since 1985. In 2002, a second weir was installed on a major tributary stream flowing into the Buskin River from Catherine and Louise lakes.

2014 PROJECT RESULTS

Escapement

For 2014 the Buskin River weir count through July 31st was 13,189 sockeye. This is more than the recent 5-year average of 10,859 (Figure 1). The Buskin River weir, located at the outflow of Buskin Lake, was operational on 17 May and is still in place at the time of this writing, although the sockeye run is virtually complete. Timing of the 2014 run was similar to historic run timing with 25% of the run counted by June 8th, 50% by June 13th, and 75% by June 25th (Figure 2). Typically, the Buskin River sockeye run is virtually over by the end of July and while some fish may yet enter the system, counts have slowed dramatically for this season.

The Lake Louise tributary weir was located approximately one-eighth mile upstream of the Buskin River confluence, below the Chiniak Highway. The weir was installed on 4 June and is in place at the time of this writing. The Lake Louise weir count through 31 July was 85 sockeye salmon, and the run is at about 25% of historical run timing (Figure 1).

Timing of the 2013 Lake Louise run is similar to other years in that the majority of the escapement coincided with high water events. Nearly all of the fish were counted during four separate periods of rainfall and high-water. This year, timing was earlier than the previous three years with most of the escapement counted in August rather than September. This was most likely due to more rain falling in August this year than in previous years, as in recent years it is common to count sockeye in this system into late September. Sockeye movement into the Lake Louise tributary continues to be directly related to rain fall and the level of water in the stream (Figure 3).

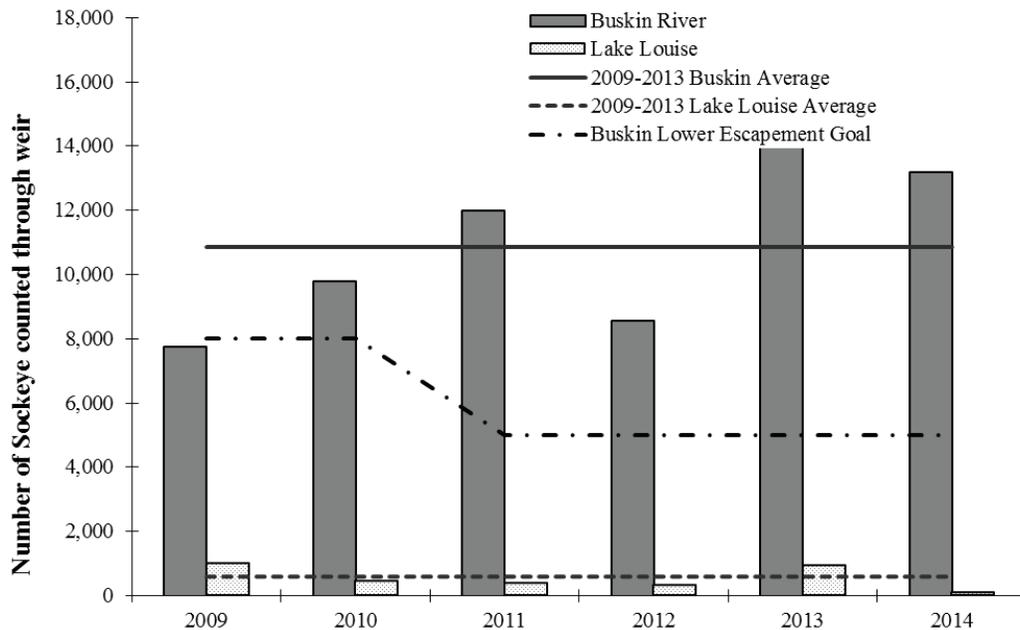


Figure 1.- Buskin River and Lake Louise sockeye salmon escapement, 2009-2014.



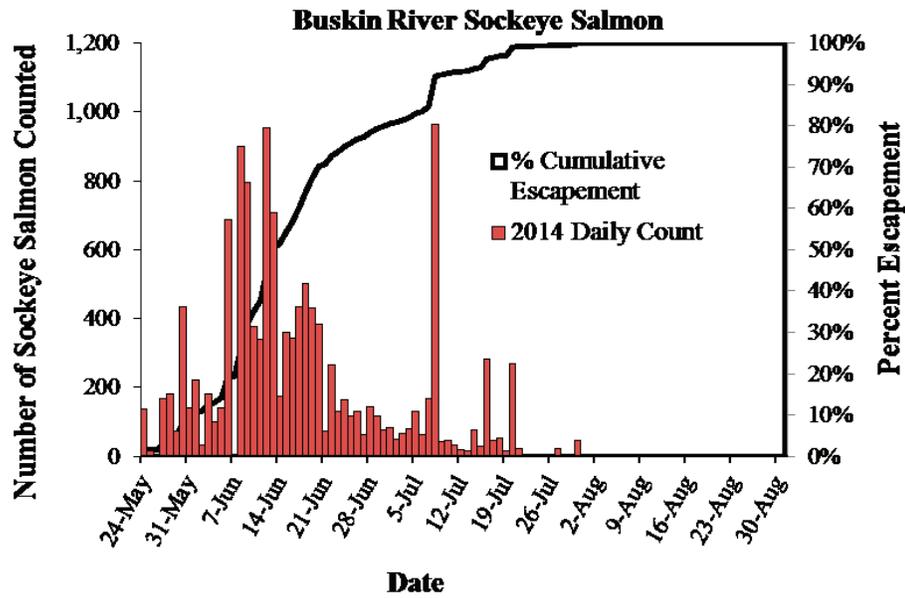


Figure 2.- 2014 daily sockeye salmon weir counts into Buskin Lake.

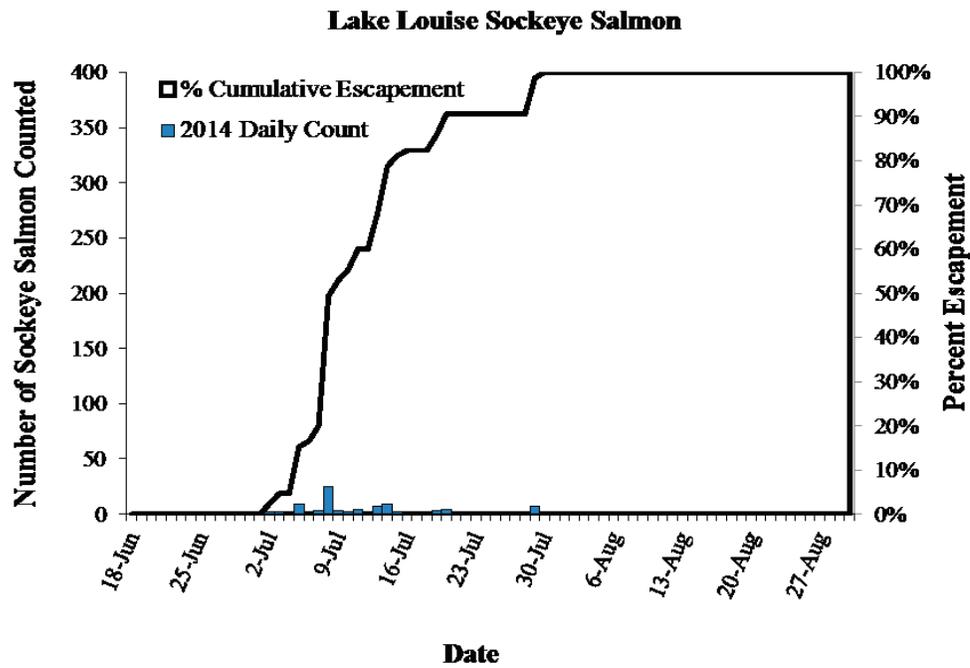


Figure 3.- 2014 daily sockeye salmon weir counts into Lake Louise.

An emergency order was issued in 2014 liberalizing the Buskin River subsistence fishery. On 19 June, the closed waters markers for the subsistence fishery on the Buskin River were reduced to the stream mouth when weir counts exceeded the upper escapement goal of 8,000 sockeye. An emergency order was also issued liberalizing the harvest of Buskin River sockeye salmon in the sport fishery when sockeye escapement on the Buskin projected to exceed 8,000 fish. On 12 June, the bag limit for Buskin River sockeye was increased to 5 per day for the remainder of the season.

Stock Assessment

In 2014, at the Buskin Lake weir, 352 sockeye salmon captured from the escapement were sampled for age, sex and length between 29 May and 30 July. Between 26 May and 11 July, a total of 176 sockeye salmon were sampled from the subsistence harvest. At Lake Louise weir, 55 sockeye salmon were sampled between 2 July and 30 July, these fish are continuing to be sampled through the end of August.

Age composition of sockeye sampled from the Buskin River escapement, Lake Louise escapement and the subsistence fishery have not been determined yet. Scales will be aged in fall 2014. Typically, sex and age samples from the escapement and subsistence harvest indicate that during most years the Buskin Lake run component is primarily comprised of age 1.3 and 2.3 fish. Sample age and length data collected from the Lake Louise escapement typically are different than those from Buskin Lake, containing a substantially larger proportion of age 1.2 fish. Age and length of the sockeye salmon subsistence harvest typically differs markedly from that of escapements, consisting almost exclusively of larger 1.3 and 2.3 fish (most likely a result of size selectivity by gillnets used in the fishery).

Mean length of females in the Buskin Lake escapement was 490 mm, while mean length of males was 514 mm (Figure 4). Mean length of females sampled in the subsistence harvest was 518 mm, and 536 mm for males. Mean length of Lake Louise females to date is 500 mm and mean length of males was 476 mm.

As a result of predominantly younger age classes in the population, the Lake Louise run is typically comprised of fish smaller in size than those returning to Buskin Lake. Average length of sockeye salmon taken in the subsistence harvest typically differs markedly from that of escapements, resulting from a predominance of larger fish selected by gillnets used in the fishery.



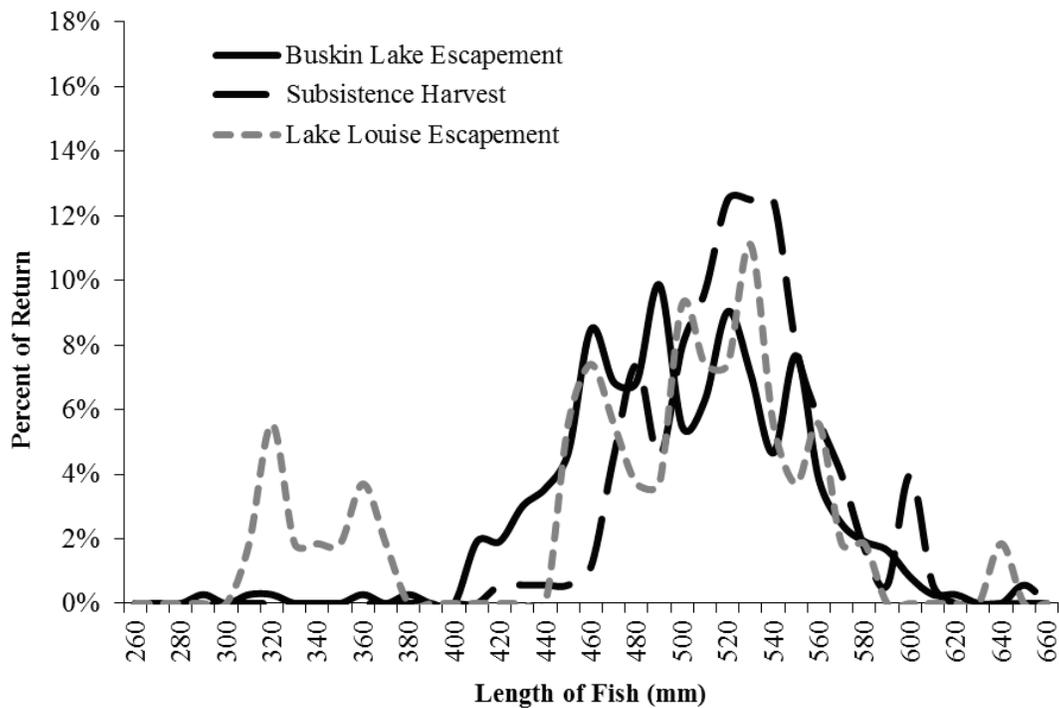


Figure 4.- Length frequency distribution of sockeye salmon from the Buskin Lake and Lake Louise escapements and the Buskin River drainage subsistence harvest, 2014.

Reconstruction of the Buskin Lake portion of the sockeye salmon run by its various harvest components indicate that historically the total return has remained relatively stable at around 19,000 fish, however between 2000 and 2004, the estimated total increased substantially to an average of 33,500. The recent five-year average (2009-2013) is below the historical average at about 15,000 fish (Figure 5). During the last five years subsistence harvests have averaged 21% of the total run and, by number of fish harvested, constituted the most important user group dependent on the Buskin River sockeye salmon resource. Subsistence and sport fish harvests for 2014 are unavailable at this time, however, and the 2014 total return should be considered a minimum estimate.

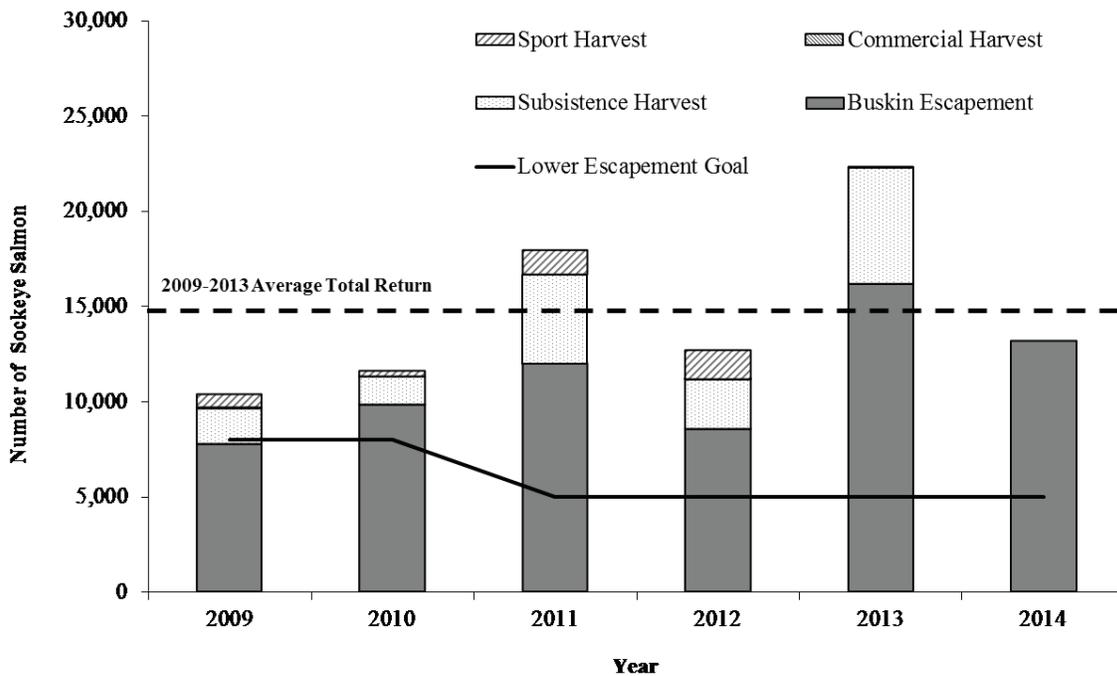


Figure 5.- Composition of total sockeye salmon return to the Buskin River, 2009-2014.

GENETIC TESTING

In 2008, ADF&G’s genetics laboratory conducted analyses of Buskin and Lake Louise sockeye salmon escapement samples collected in 2005. Genetic differences in the populations were distinct enough to conclude that the two runs could be identified through genetic testing alone. Between 26 May and 11 July, 2014, a total of 186 sockeye salmon were sampled from Buskin subsistence harvest in order to genetically apportion Buskin and Lake Louise harvest components for more precise run reconstruction.

Analysis of the 2010-2013 subsistence samples was conducted during the spring of 2014. Harvest of Lake Louise bound sockeye ranged from 0.1% to 6.5% of the total subsistence harvest while sockeye from systems other than the Buskin drainage made up from 10.9% to 24.7% of the harvest (Figure 6). In 2013, there were enough samples to apportion them between ‘early’ and ‘late’ harvested fish. This found that the proportion of Lake Louise fish in the harvest increased from 0.1% to 6.4% over the course of the season. It was expected that a low percentage of the harvest was comprised of Lake Louise fish due to later run-timing and smaller size, however, it was not expected that other Kodiak stocks could make up nearly a quarter of the harvest in some years. Samples from the subsistence fishery will continue to be collected and will be analyzed at the conclusion of this project cycle to further apportion the harvest.



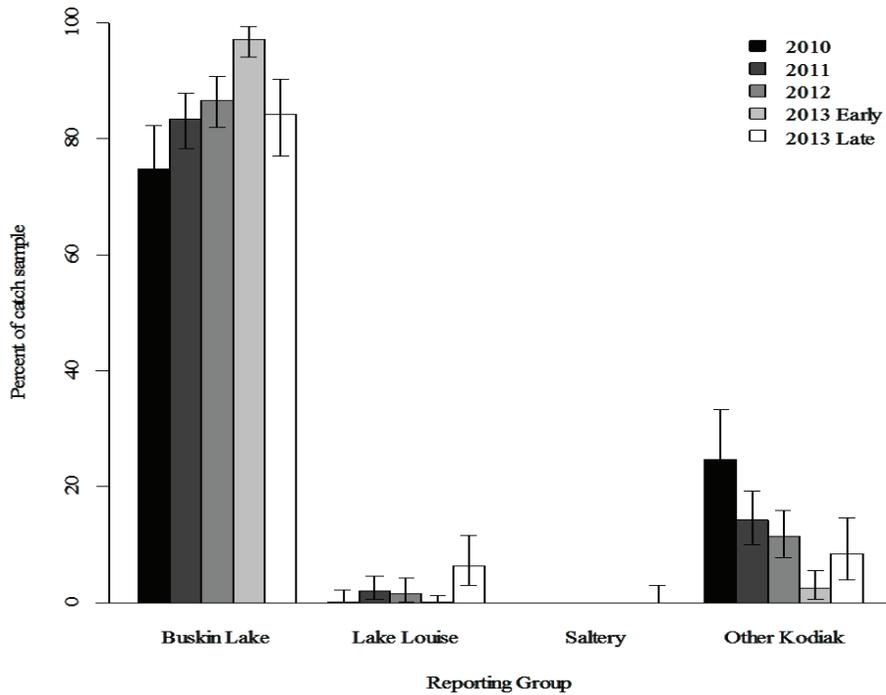


Figure 6.- Composition of sockeye salmon harvested in the Buskin subsistence fishery 2009-2013.

SUBSISTENCE USER INTERVIEWS

In response to a priority information need recently identified by the Kodiak/Aleutians Region Subsistence Advisory Council (RAC), verbal interviews taken on the fishing grounds with Buskin River subsistence users have been conducted annually since 2007 to determine residency of subsistence users and patterns of historic fishing effort. Interviews were conducted in 2014, where technicians opportunistically contacted subsistence users on the fishing grounds in front of the Buskin River, and at the harbors in the City of Kodiak, while sampling the harvest for age, sex and length information. The 2014 survey sample was collected over the duration of the subsistence fishery, providing residency and effort data not currently available from subsistence permit returns. A total of 20 subsistence users were interviewed beginning 1 June (Table 3).

Table 4.- Results from verbal interviews conducted with Buskin River subsistence users between 1 June and 25 June, 2014.

User Statistics:			
Total Users Interviewed:	20		
Interview dates:	June 1 - June 25		
User Demographics			
	Kodiak	Alaskan	Unknown
Residency	20	0	0
	Buskin	Pasagshak	Unknown
Location of Traditional	15	5	0
	Yes		No
Have Occasionally Fished Other Areas Besides Traditional Location(s)	17		3

*Other areas occasionally fished: Pasagshak, Litnik, Port Lions, Ouzinkie

CAPACITY BUILDING

Since 2001 ADF&G and the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge have maintained a cooperative agreement to use the Buskin River weir as a platform for the Kodiak Summer Salmon Camp Program, which provides school-aged children a medium for activities and science-based learning. In July of 2014, 36 elementary school students visited the Buskin Lake weir on two different occasions to learn about salmon anatomy, life histories and how the weir functions.

Since 2003, the Buskin River project has also been a vehicle for fisheries-based education and development of career interest for young subsistence users through establishment of a high school intern program. During this internship, students gain knowledge of the principles involved in fisheries management and research while obtaining field experience in fisheries data collection methods and techniques. The intern program annually employs two top qualified students who work on the Buskin project under supervision of ADF&G staff between June 1 and July 31. The high school intern program has been an outstanding success, to the extent that six former interns are currently employed with ADF&G as seasonal Fish and Wildlife Technicians or Fisheries Biologists, and 16 of 22 former interns have returned to work for the Department at some point.

CONCLUSION

With exception of the 2008 and 2009 returns, Buskin River sockeye abundance has remained relatively stable and has allowed for continued, sustained harvest by subsistence users and anglers alike. In 2014, the escapement far exceeded the upper end of the Biological Escapement Goal even though opportunity for harvest by subsistence and sport users alike was increased substantially.

Annual implementation of the Buskin River sockeye salmon weir project, made possible with funding from the Federal Subsistence Management Program, has been essential for in-season



management that is necessary to sustain the health of the Buskin River sockeye salmon stock while providing maximum harvest opportunity for subsistence users. Continuation of this project will allow for additional analysis of run productivity to aid in the ongoing assessment of sockeye salmon returns to the Buskin River. It will also aid in refining the BEG during triennial Board of Fisheries meetings, as in the 2011 meeting. Continued evaluation of the escapement goal for Buskin Sockeye is a direct result of this project.

Winter 2015 Regional Advisory Council Meeting Calendar

February–March 2015 current as of 4/2/2014

Meeting dates and locations are subject to change.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Feb. 8	Feb. 9 <i>Window Opens</i>	Feb. 10	Feb. 11	Feb. 12	Feb. 13	Feb. 14
Feb. 15	Feb. 16 HOLIDAY	Feb. 17	Feb. 18 SC — Anchorage SP — Nome	Feb. 19	Feb. 20	Feb. 21
Feb. 22	Feb. 23	Feb. 24 BB — Naknek	Feb. 25 YKD — Bethel	Feb. 26	Feb. 27	Feb. 28
Mar. 1	Mar. 2	Mar. 3 WI — Fairbanks	Mar. 4 EI — Fairbanks	Mar. 5	Mar. 6	Mar. 7
Mar. 8	Mar. 9 NWA — Kotzebue	Mar. 10	Mar. 11 K/A — Old Harbor	Mar. 12	Mar. 13	Mar. 14
Mar. 15	Mar. 16	Mar. 17 SE — Yakutat	Mar. 18	Mar. 19	Mar. 20 <i>Window Closes</i>	Mar. 21



Fall 2015 Regional Advisory Council Meeting Calendar

August–November 2015

Meeting dates and locations are subject to change.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Aug. 16	Aug. 17 WINDOW OPENS	Aug. 18	Aug. 19	Aug. 20	Aug. 21	Aug. 22
Aug. 23	Aug. 24	Aug. 25	Aug. 26	Aug. 27	Aug. 28	Aug. 29
Aug. 30	Aug. 31	Sept. 1	Sept. 2	Sept. 3	Sept. 4	Sept. 5
Sept. 6	Sept. 7 HOLIDAY	Sept. 8	Sept. 9	Sept. 10	Sept. 11	Sept. 12
Sept. 13	Sept. 14	Sept. 15	Sept. 16	Sept. 17	Sept. 18	Sept. 19
Sept. 20	Sept. 21	Sept. 22	Sept. 23	Sept. 24	Sept. 25	Sept. 26
Sept. 27	Sept. 28	Sept. 29	Sept. 30 <i>End of Fiscal Year</i>	Oct. 1	Oct. 2	Oct. 3
Oct. 4	Oct. 5	Oct. 6	Oct. 7	Oct. 8	Oct. 9	Oct. 10
Oct. 11	Oct. 12	Oct. 13	Oct. 14	Oct. 15	Oct. 16	Oct. 17
Oct. 18	Oct. 19	Oct. 20	Oct. 21	Oct. 22	Oct. 23	Oct. 24
Oct. 25	Oct. 26	Oct. 27	Oct. 28	Oct. 29	Oct. 30	Oct. 31
Nov. 1	Nov. 2	Nov. 3	Nov. 4	Nov. 5	Nov. 6 WINDOW CLOSES	Nov. 7

**Department of the Interior
U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

Kodiak/Aleutians Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

Charter

1. **Committee's Official Designation.** The Council's official designation is the Kodiak/Aleutians Subsistence Regional Advisory (Council).
2. **Authority.** The Council is reestablished by virtue of the authority set out in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 3115 (1988)) Title VIII, and under the authority of the Secretary of the Interior, in furtherance of 16 U.S.C. 410hh-2. The Council is established in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), as amended, 5 U.S.C. Appendix 2.
3. **Objectives and Scope of Activities.** The objective of the Council is to provide a forum for the residents of the Region with personal knowledge of local conditions and resource requirements to have a meaningful role in the subsistence management of fish and wildlife on Federal lands and waters in the Region.
4. **Description of Duties.** The Council possesses the authority to perform the following duties:
 - a. Recommend the initiation of, review, and evaluate proposals for regulations, policies, management plans, and other matters relating to subsistence uses of fish and wildlife on public lands within the Region.
 - b. Provide a forum for the expression of opinions and recommendations by persons interested in any matter related to the subsistence uses of fish and wildlife on public lands within the Region.
 - c. Encourage local and regional participation in the decisionmaking process affecting the taking of fish and wildlife on the public lands within the Region for subsistence uses.
 - d. Prepare an annual report to the Secretary containing the following:
 - (1) An identification of current and anticipated subsistence uses of fish and wildlife populations within the Region.
 - (2) An evaluation of current and anticipated subsistence needs for fish and wildlife populations within the Region.
 - (3) A recommended strategy for the management of fish and wildlife populations within the Region to accommodate such subsistence uses and needs.



- (4) Recommendations concerning policies, standards, guidelines, and regulations to implement the strategy.
 - e. Make recommendations on determinations of customary and traditional use of subsistence resources.
 - f. Make recommendations on determinations of rural status.
 - g. Provide recommendations on the establishment and membership of Federal local advisory committees.
5. **Agency or Official to Whom the Council Reports.** The Council reports to the Federal Subsistence Board Chair, who is appointed by the Secretary of the Interior with the concurrence of the Secretary of Agriculture.
6. **Support.** The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will provide administrative support for the activities of the Council through the Office of Subsistence Management.
7. **Estimated Annual Operating Costs and Staff Years.** The annual operating costs associated with supporting the Council's functions are estimated to be \$150,000, including all direct and indirect expenses and 1.0 staff years.
8. **Designated Federal Officer.** The DFO is the Subsistence Council Coordinator for the Region or such other Federal employee as may be designated by the Assistant Regional Director – Subsistence, Region 7, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The DFO is a full-time Federal employee appointed in accordance with Agency procedures. The DFO will:
 - Approve or call all of the advisory committee's and subcommittees' meetings,
 - Prepare and approve all meeting agendas,
 - Attend all committee and subcommittee meetings,
 - Adjourn any meeting when the DFO determines adjournment to be in the public interest, and
 - Chair meetings when directed to do so by the official to whom the advisory committee reports.
9. **Estimated Number and Frequency of Meetings.** The Council will meet 1-2 times per year, and at such times as designated by the Federal Subsistence Board Chair or the DFO.
10. **Duration.** Continuing.
11. **Termination.** The Council will terminate 2 years from the date the Charter is filed, unless, prior to that date, it is renewed in accordance with the provisions of Section 14 of the FACA. The Council will not meet or take any action without a valid current charter.

12. Membership and Designation. The Council's membership is composed of representative members as follows:

Ten members who are knowledgeable and experienced in matters relating to subsistence uses of fish and wildlife and who are residents of the Region represented by the Council. To ensure that each Council represents a diversity of interests, the Federal Subsistence Board in their nomination recommendations to the Secretary will strive to ensure that seven of the members (70 percent) represent subsistence interests within the Region and three of the members (30 percent) represent commercial and sport interests within the Region. The portion of membership representing commercial and sport interests must include, where possible, at least one representative from the sport community and one representative from the commercial community.

The Secretary of the Interior will appoint members based on the recommendations from the Federal Subsistence Board and with the concurrence of the Secretary of Agriculture.

Members will be appointed for 3-year terms. A vacancy on the Council will be filled in the same manner in which the original appointment was made. Members serve at the discretion of the Secretary.

Council members will elect a Chair, a Vice-Chair, and a Secretary for a 1-year term.

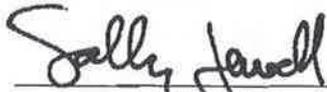
Members of the Council will serve without compensation. However, while away from their homes or regular places of business, Council and subcommittee members engaged in Council, or subcommittee business, approved by the DFO, may be allowed travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence, in the same manner as persons employed intermittently in Government service under Section 5703 of Title 5 of the United States Code.

13. Ethics Responsibilities of Members. No Council or subcommittee member will participate in any specific party matter in which the member has a direct financial interest in a lease, license, permit, contract, claim, agreement, or related litigation with the Department.

14. Subcommittees. Subject to the DFO's approval, subcommittees may be formed for the purpose of compiling information and conducting research. However, such subcommittees must act only under the direction of the DFO and must report their recommendations to the full Council for consideration. Subcommittees must not provide advice or work products directly to the Agency. The Council Chair, with the approval of the DFO, will appoint subcommittee members. Subcommittees will meet as necessary to accomplish their assignments, subject to the approval of the DFO and the availability of resources.



15. **Recordkeeping.** Records of the Council, and formally and informally established subcommittees or other subgroups of the Council, shall be handled in accordance with General Records Schedule 26, Item 2, and other approved Agency records disposition schedule. These records shall be available for public inspection and copying, subject to the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. 552.


Secretary of the Interior

NOV 25 2013

Date Signed

DEC 03 2013

Date Filed

