

1 YUKON-KUSKOKWIM DELTA ALASKA FEDERAL SUBSISTENCE
2 REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING

3
4 PUBLIC MEETING

5
6
7 VOLUME I

8
9 Yupiit Piciryarait Cultural Center
10 Bethel, Alaska

11
12 November 13, 2013
13 9:00 a.m.

14
15
16
17 COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

- 18
19 Lester Wilde, Chairman
20 David Bill
21 William Brown
22 James Charles
23 Mary Gregory
24 Evan Polty
25 Greg Roczicka
26 Harry Wilde, Sr.
27
28
29 Regional Council Coordinator, Alex Nick

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P R O C E E D I N G S

(Bethel, Alaska - 11/13/2013)

(On record)

CHAIRMAN WILDE: Good morning. I'd like to call the Yukon Kuskokwim Regional Advisory Council to order.

Alex, would you do the roll call.

MR. NICK: Robert E. Aloysius.

(No comments)

MR. NICK: Not here.

Noah M. Andrew.

(No comments)

MR. NICK: Not here.

David A. Bill, Sr.

MR. BILL: Here.

MR. NICK: Andrew Brown, Sr.

(No comments)

MR. NICK: Not here. William Brown.

MR. W. BROWN: Here.

MR. NICK: James A. Charles.

MR. CHARLES: Here.

MR. NICK: Mary M. Gregory.

MS. GREGORY: Here.

MR. NICK: Paul J. Manumik, Sr.

1 (No comments)
2
3 MR. NICK: Not here.
4
5 Raymond J. Oney.
6
7
8 (No comments)
9
10 MR. NICK: Not here.
11
12 Evan K. Polty, Sr.
13
14 MR. POLTY: Here.
15
16 MR. NICK: Greg J. Roczicka.
17
18 MR. ROCZICKA: Here.
19
20 MR. NICK: Lester Wilde, Sr.
21
22 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Here.
23
24 MR. NICK: Harry Wilde, Sr.
25
26
27 (No comments)
28
29 MR. NICK: Not here.
30
31 Mr. Chair, you do not have a quorum.
32
33 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you, Alex. We
34 do have some people on the teleconference.
35
36 Tina, could you please find out who
37 they are and have them introduce themselves.
38
39 REPORTER: (Nods affirmatively)
40
41 MS. INGLES: Palma Ingles from OSM.
42 I'm the coordinator for the Partners Program.
43
44 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Anybody else on the
45 teleconference?
46
47 MS. HYER: Yes. Good morning. This is
48 Karen Hyer from OSM. I'm a fisheries biologist.
49
50 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Good morning.

1 Anyone else?
2
3 MR. ADERMAN: This is Andy Aderman.
4 I'm a wildlife biologist with the Togiak Refuge and I
5 have Suzanna Henry, the Refuge Manager, with me as
6 well.
7
8 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you.
9
10 Anyone else.
11
12 MR. FOX: Trevor Fox. I'm a wildlife
13 biologist with OSM.
14
15 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you.
16
17 Anyone else.
18
19 MR. ESTENSEN: Mr. Chair. My name is
20 Jeff Estensen. I'm with the Alaska Department of Fish
21 and Game. I'm calling here from Fairbanks and I'm the
22 Yukon area fall manager for commercial fisheries.
23
24 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you.
25
26 Anyone else.
27
28 MR. CRAWFORD: Drew Crawford, Alaska
29 Department of Fish and Game in Anchorage.
30
31 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you.
32
33 Next person.
34
35 MR. NEWLAND: Eric Newland with the
36 Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Yukon area summer
37 season manager.
38
39 MS. APGAR-KURTZ: My name is Breena
40 Apgar-Kurtz. I'm the assistant summer season manager
41 for Fish and Game.
42
43 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Welcome. Thank you.
44
45 Anyone else.
46
47 MR. BROOKS: Yes. Good morning, Mr.
48 Chair. My name is Jeff Brooks. I work with the Office
49 of Subsistence Management in Anchorage. I'm a social
50 scientist here.

1 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you.
2
3 Is there anyone else.
4
5 MR. SHARP: Good morning. This is Dan
6 Sharp with Bureau of Land Management in Anchorage.
7
8 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you.
9
10 Next.
11
12 MR. LIEBICH: This is Trent Liebich.
13 I'm a fish biologist with OSM in Anchorage.
14
15 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you.
16
17 Anyone else.
18
19 (No comments)
20
21 CHAIRMAN WILDE: There being none, we'd
22 like to welcome you all for attending our meeting. The
23 problem is we have a problem with weather in our
24 district, so we are unable to get a quorum and we're
25 going to be discussing just the reports today until
26 such time that we do get a quorum. At that time we
27 will get into our business meeting.
28
29 We are down to -- I will just go over
30 the agenda items just to make sure there are no agenda
31 deletions or additions. The agenda goes as follows:
32
33 Item 5. Election of officers.
34
35 Item 6. Previous meeting minutes.
36
37 Item 7. Reports. Reports from the
38 Council members. Chair report. 2012
39 Annual Report, 2012 Annual Report reply
40 from Federal Subsistence Board
41
42 Item 8. Public and tribal comments on
43 non-agenda items.
44
45 Item 9. Old business. Customary and
46 traditional use determinations.
47
48 Item 10. New business.
49
50 10A. Wildlife regulatory proposals.

1 Statewide proposals are WP14-01
2 trapping - require trap marking,
3 establish a time limit for trap/snare
4 checks, and require harvest reports.
5
6 WP14-02 black bear has been withdrawn.
7
8 On regional proposals we have WSA13-01,
9 WP14-21 moose - revise harvest limit
10 restrictions and extend season.
11
12 WP14-23 moose, lengthen the season and
13 remove bulls-only restriction.
14
15 WP14-24/25 moose, revise the hunt area
16 descriptor.
17
18 WP14-26 caribou, require a permit,
19 revise season dates, and grant closure
20 authority to the refuge manager.
21
22 WP14-27 moose, establish a new fall
23 season.
24
25 WP14-28 moose, extend the season dates
26 and revise the harvest limit.
27
28 Crossover proposals:
29
30 WP14-22 caribou, require State
31 registration permit.
32
33 WP14-32 moose, redefine the descriptor
34 of the Paradise Controlled Use Area.
35
36 WP14-41 muskox, season and harvest
37 limit be changed.
38
39 Item 10B is 2013 USFWS/ADF&G Lower
40 Yukon River fishing season review.
41
42 Item 10C Draft 2014 Fisheries Resource
43 Monitoring Plan.
44
45 Item 1 is Yukon overview.
46
47 Item 2 is Kuskokwim overview.
48
49 Item 3 is Partners for Fisheries
50 Monitoring Program.

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Item 10D rural determination process review.

Council will recess on first day prior to receiving a briefing on this issue. There will be a public hearing in the evening, at which time the rural determination issue will be briefed to the Council and public. Meeting will be facilitated by LT lead, ISC member and/or Board member. Council will conduct its own deliberations on the issue on second day.

Item E. Presentation of 20-Year Service Award by FSB member.

Item F. Council compensation, Robert Aloysius.

Item G. Invasive plants update.

Item 1. Elodea, Pat Samson, Kuskokwim River Watershed Council.

Item 2. Other invasive species.

Item H. Identify issues for 2013 Annual Report.

Item 11 is agency reports.

Under agency reports we have:

Item 1. Budget update.

Item 2. Staffing update.

Item 4. Draft Tribal Consultation Implementation Guidelines.

Item 5. MOU update.

Item B. US Fish and Wildlife Service.

Item 1. Togiak Refuge bulletin.

Item 2. Kenai Fisheries, 30 minutes requested by Steve Miller.

1 Item 3. Lower Yukon Fisheries post
2 season update given by Gerald
3 Maschmann.
4
5 Item C. Bureau of Land Management
6 Resource Management Plan.
7
8 Item D. Alaska Department of Fish and
9 Game.
10
11 Item E. Native organizations.
12
13 1. Association of Village Council
14 Presidents.
15
16 2. Kuskokwim Native Association.
17
18 3. Orutsararmiut Native Council.
19
20 4. Yukon River Drainage Fisheries
21 Association.
22
23 Item A. Draft bycatch resolution via
24 handout.
25
26 Item 12. Future meeting dates.
27
28 Item A. Meeting calendars. Confirm
29 date and location of winter 2014
30 meeting on March 5-6, 2014 in Bethel,
31 Alaska and select date and location of
32 fall 2014 meeting.
33
34 Item 13. Closing comments.
35
36 Item 14. Adjourn.
37
38 Are there any deletions or additions to
39 the agenda as read.
40
41 Mr. Nick.
42
43 MR. NICK: Mr. Chair. Alex Nick for
44 the record, Council Coordinator. There has been some
45 changes to the draft agenda, Mr. Chair.
46
47 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Yes.
48
49 MR. NICK: I would like Steve or Jack
50 to help me.

1 CHAIRMAN WILDE: I'm sorry. Before we
2 get into this, I apologize, I forgot we're going to
3 have an invocation and Mary will lead that.

4
5 MS. GREGORY: Can we all stand, please.

6
7 (Invocation)

8
9 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you, Mary.

10
11 Yes, you may continue, Mr. Nick.

12
13 MR. NICK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. First
14 of all I would like to welcome my new boss, Mr. Gene
15 Peltola, Jr. He's in attendance. He's the new boss
16 for the OSM staff. Jack Lorrigan, he's the Native
17 liaison. Jack and I are going to be providing the
18 revised draft agenda and the presenters' names to you.
19 I would like to again apologize that some corrections
20 that are needed are my responsibility. It was me who
21 provided some corrections, but unfortunately the
22 corrections didn't make it in time before the book
23 production.

24
25 As you may notice, the agenda has roll
26 call as number one, but in the past you've had it as
27 number two, so that's a little change you might notice.
28 Election of officers would be moved to winter 2014
29 meeting because election of officers is supposed to
30 happen in winter Council meetings. We'll go down to
31 item 10. There's a new 10A. Correct me if I'm wrong,
32 Jack, 10A will be summary of tribal consultation and
33 ANCSA consultation.

34
35 CHAIRMAN WILDE: 10A?

36
37 MR. NICK: 10A. And then 10B will be
38 wildlife proposals.

39
40 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Okay.

41
42 MR. NICK: 10C -- am I going too fast?

43
44 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Yeah, just a little
45 bit.

46
47 MR. NICK: Okay. Maybe as we go down
48 I'll tell you who's going to be presenting issues or
49 topics. It is my understanding Chris McKee is going to
50 be presenting all of the wildlife proposals. Item C is

1 2013 U.S. Fish and Wildlife/ADF&G Lower Yukon River
2 fishing season review and that will be.....
3
4 MS. GREGORY: Mr. Chair.
5
6 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Yes.
7
8 MR. NICK:Fred Bue.
9
10 MS. GREGORY: Alex (in Yup'ik).
11
12 MR. NICK: Jack Lorrigan.
13
14 MS. GREGORY: Jack. Thank you.
15
16 MR. NICK: You're welcome. Are we
17 ready to go on?
18
19 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Yes. Go ahead.
20
21 MR. NICK: Item D, draft 2014
22 fisheries. It's my understanding that Karen Hyer might
23 be giving that presentation.
24
25 CHAIRMAN WILDE: What was that, item D?
26
27 MR. NICK: Item D, draft 2014 Fisheries
28 Resource Monitoring Plan. Item E, rural determination
29 process review. Is it you or Steve?
30
31 MR. LORRIGAN: That will be an evening.
32
33 MR. NICK: Okay. Item E will be an
34 evening rural determination process public hearing and
35 review. The review will be provided to you by OSM
36 Staff.
37
38 CHAIRMAN WILDE: What was that again,
39 what number?
40
41 MR. NICK: Item E.
42
43 CHAIRMAN WILDE: E? Draft what?
44
45 MR. NICK: Rural determination process
46 review.
47
48 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Okay. Thank you.
49
50 MR. NICK: And it will be -- there will

1 be a rural determination process public hearing
2 following that. There's going to be an awards
3 presentation only when some of your people arrive later
4 today or maybe tomorrow. Item F is presentation -- I
5 already mentioned that. Item G Council compensation,
6 Bob Aloysius.

7

8 Item H, invasive plants update; item 1
9 is Elodea. Pat Samson was recommended by John Oscar
10 this summer when I contacted them, but he hasn't called
11 to confirm that. I talked to John Oscar about a week
12 or so ago and he said he would contact Pat and I was
13 directed to contact Pat Samson too, but no one answered
14 the phone. I sent an email to Pat. These two items
15 are the ones that the Council wanted to get an update
16 in their future meeting.

17

18 New item I is Donlin Creek EIS. I
19 understand that's Mr. Gordon from Army Corps of
20 Engineers. Item J 2013 Annual Report topics, what we
21 would like to -- what I would like to ask is if that
22 could be moved up and combine that with the Chair's
23 report if that's okay with the Council. What we would
24 like to do is get all of the annual report topics for
25 2013, so we will work on them right away. We will need
26 to move forward pretty fast before the winter meeting
27 this year.

28

29 Item 11 is agency reports. Number 1
30 budget and number 2 update are together. It's budget
31 update. I believe Gene Peltola will be giving that
32 update. Then we go to item 5 MOU update, Steve
33 Kessler. Go on down to Yukon Delta. I understand
34 Mr. Spencer Rearden will be giving an update for Refuge
35 and Togiak Refuge bulletin is in your book. Kenai
36 fisheries will be presented to you by Mr. Steve Miller.
37 Lower Yukon Fisheries post season update. That's not
38 Gerald Maschmann, Mr. Chair. It's going to be Fred
39 Bue.

40

41 Moving down to AVCP, I have no -- I
42 haven't been contacted who's going to be presenting
43 AVCP.

44

CHAIRMAN WILDE: It's Mr.....

45

MR. NICK: Tim.

46

47 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Tim is back there.
48 Tim, are you going to be giving the AVCP report?

49

50

1 MR. ANDREW: Yes, I will. Mr.
2 Chairman, yes, I will. But tonight for the rural
3 determination process Myron will be giving that report.

4
5 MR. NICK: Okay. Number 2, Kuskokwim
6 Native Association. Ms. Jenny Fry will be giving a
7 presentation on behalf of KNA. I believe ONC will be
8 Mr. Roczicka. Yukon River Drainage Fisheries
9 Association, Mr. Wayne Jennings [sic] will be providing
10 information. On the 4A, draft bycatch resolution, as
11 you remember that item was tabled until this meeting
12 from last winter's meeting. Mr. Jennings [sic] and I
13 can go over the draft resolution before we present it
14 to you, Mr. Chair.

15
16 Those are changes that I noted.

17
18 If there's any corrections, Mr.
19 Lorrigan, maybe you could.....

20
21 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you.

22
23 Are there any further corrections on
24 the agenda as read.

25
26 MS. GREGORY: Mr. Chair.

27
28 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Ms. Gregory.

29
30 MS. GREGORY: Having no quorum,
31 corrections (in Yup'ik).

32
33 CHAIRMAN WILDE: What is that again?

34
35 MS. GREGORY: Because we can't do any
36 action items.....

37
38 CHAIRMAN WILDE: No, we're not going to
39 be doing any action items. We'll just be taking
40 reports today until such time that we do get a quorum.

41
42 Any other -- Mr. Roczicka, did you have
43 an addition.

44
45 MR. ROCZICKA: Mr. Chairman. When Alex
46 was giving his recommendations for changes, he did have
47 issues for the 2013 annual report being moved up under
48 Chair's comments I heard you say. For that item, I'd
49 prefer that that stay towards the end because during
50 the course of the meeting, as issues come up we can

1 identify some of those certainly before the meeting is
2 out we'll identify those, but having them right up
3 front -- it will leave the floor open to add some more
4 later that come up in discussion.

5
6 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Good suggestion.

7
8 MR. NICK: Mr. Chair. The idea is to
9 let you bring the issue forward and then take care of
10 it at the end like you've always done in the past. I
11 mean to think about what topics you want on your next
12 annual report.

13
14 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Makes sense. Okay.

15
16 MR. NICK: As you remember, there's
17 been struggle on my part because the Council would tell
18 me that issues would be provided to me later and most
19 of the time it never happened.

20
21 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Okay.

22
23 MR. NICK: Thank you.

24
25 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Any further discussion
26 on the agenda. Yes.

27
28 MR. MILLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
29 Steve Miller, Fish and Wildlife Service. I realize
30 there's not a quorum. There are some agency reports
31 that we would like to give. I know Doug Molyneaux as a
32 private citizen would like to address the Council on
33 the recommendations of the TRC for projects. Mainly
34 it's in reference to not funding the Tuluksak weir and
35 the Takotna weir and we're not sure where we would want
36 to be on this. Hopefully it would be before any
37 actions are taken, that we can address that for
38 fisheries projects on the Kuskokwim.

39
40 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Okay. We need to put
41 your request down for under new business? Would that
42 work?

43
44 MR. MILLER: I think so, yeah. I know
45 there's no actions, you don't have a quorum, but we
46 would like to discuss that prior to.....

47
48 CHAIRMAN WILDE: What was this again?
49 I'm sorry.

50

1 MR. MILLER: It's in reference to the
2 TRC's recommendation not to fund the Tuluksak weir and
3 the Takotna weir projects.

4
5 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Okay.

6
7 Any other changes.

8
9 MR. MOLYNEAUX: Mr. Chair. I'm Doug
10 Molyneaux and I do have copies of the letter. It
11 didn't make it into the information books, but I do
12 have copies. I gave them to Alex and they're available
13 for distribution at that time. I have a little
14 PowerPoint I can show to help walk people through it a
15 little bit too if that would help.

16
17 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Okay. Thank you.

18
19 MR. MILLER: Mr. Chair. Steve Miller
20 again. And I have a packet with Mr. Molyneaux's letter
21 as well as letters from the refuge, the in-season
22 manager, KNA and other Native organizations addressing
23 those issues too and I can provide those.

24
25 CHAIRMAN WILDE: All right. Thank you
26 very much.

27
28 Any other additions to the agenda.

29
30 Mr. Charles.

31
32 MR. CHARLES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
33 I'm already mixed up on the agenda change. I'd like to
34 see -- because we could pull this out because I like to
35 follow along on the agenda. Even it's changed I'd like
36 to see that because I scribbled some and scratched some
37 and moved some, but I'm already mixed up, so I'd like
38 to see that.

39
40 Maybe Alex would give us an updated
41 agenda.

42
43 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Is that possible, Mr.
44 Nick, that we have a written agenda corrected in front
45 of us?

46
47 MR. NICK: Yes, I can do that.

48
49 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Any other discussion
50 on the agenda.

1 MR. ELISON: Mr. Chair. Travis Elison
2 with Fish and Game. I'll give a post-season summary,
3 2013 season summary for Kuskokwim River salmon with a
4 little bit of a look ahead for 2014. I think I'm on
5 there under Fish and Game reports. I would also like
6 to speak on the Technical Review Committee topics after
7 I hear from Fish and Wildlife Service.

8

9 Thank you.

10

11 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you.

12

13 Any other discussion on the agenda.

14

15

16 (No comments)

17

18 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Any discussion,
19 Council. We need a motion for approval of the agenda.

20

21 MS. GREGORY: We don't have a quorum,

22 Mr. Chair.

23

24 CHAIRMAN WILDE: We don't have a
25 quorum, I know that, but we still need a motion to
26 approve the agenda as presented.

27

28

29 (No comments)

30

31 CHAIRMAN WILDE: There being none,
32 since we don't have -- I just realized what you were
33 saying. Thank you, Mary.

34

35 (Laughter)

36

37 CHAIRMAN WILDE: We do not have a
38 quorum, so we'll have to leave that until such time
39 that we do get a quorum. We are down to -- oh, at this
40 time, before we go any further. Public comments are
41 welcome for each agenda item that's in the book and for
42 regional concerns not included on the agenda. The
43 Council appreciates hearing your concerns and
44 knowledge. Please fill out a comment form to be
45 recognized by the Council Chair. There will be no time
46 limits since there aren't that many attendees. There
47 is a form, usually a blue form. Did we have a comment
48 form? There's a blue comment form on the table if
49 there is anyone here that would like to make any
50 comments or to testify on any of the proceedings as we

1 go along.

2

3 We are down to item 7. I think at this
4 time I failed to welcome you. I'd like to welcome all
5 of you to this meeting and at this time I would like to
6 have some introductions, maybe starting from Mr. Gene
7 Peltola in the back and working around.

8

9 MR. PELTOLA: Hello. Gene Peltola, Jr.
10 I'm the new Assistant Regional Director for the Office
11 of Subsistence Management. I moved into the position,
12 vacating the Refuge Manager position here in Bethel
13 this past August. I look forward to working with each
14 and every one of you in a different capacity than I
15 have in the past.

16

17 Thank you.

18

19 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you and welcome.

20

21 MR. PELTOLA: Thank you.

22

23 MR. ANDREW: Good morning. Timothy
24 Andrew with AVCP natural resources. It's a pleasure to
25 be here. Welcome.

26

27 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Welcome, Tim. Just
28 stand up. If you're not going to come up to the mic,
29 just stand up and state your name and introduce
30 yourself, please.

31

32 DR. CHEN: Good morning. My name is
33 Glenn Chen.

34

35 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Staff, if you could
36 come up here, if you don't mind. Since we've got all
37 the time, you might as well come up and get yourself
38 introduced on the record.

39

40 DR. CHEN: Good morning, Mr. Chair and
41 Council members. My name is Glenn Chen. I'm
42 subsistence branch chief for the Bureau of Indian
43 Affairs.

44

45 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you and welcome.

46

47 MR. MCKEE: Good morning, Mr. Chair.
48 My name is Chris McKee. I'm a wildlife biologist with
49 the Office of Subsistence Management and you're going
50 to be hearing from me at length on all the wildlife

1 proposals today.

2

3 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you. Looking
4 forward.

5

6 Next.

7

8 MR. PARK: Jeff Park, Alaska Department
9 of Fish and Game, Subsistence Division.

10

11 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you and welcome.

12

13 MR. PARK: Thank you.

14

15 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Next.

16

17 MR. BUE: Good morning, Mr. Chairman,
18 Council. Fred Bue, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,
19 Yukon River Management.

20

21 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you and welcome.

22

23 MR. MILLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
24 Steve Miller, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Kenai.

25

26 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you and welcome
27 again.

28

29 MR. JENKINS: Good morning, Mr. Chair.
30 Council members. My name is Wayne Jenkins, not
31 Jennings, for the record. I am the new Deputy Director
32 with Yukon River Drainage Fisheries Association.

33

34 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you and welcome.

35

36 Anyone who hasn't been introduced.

37

38 MR. CEBRIAN: Mr. Chair. My name is
39 Merben Cebrian. I'm the new subsistence biologist for
40 BLM in the Anchorage Field Office and I'm here to talk
41 about the Resource Management Plan and I have some maps
42 on the wall too

43

44 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you and welcome.

45

46 MS. CHAVEZ: Good morning. My name is
47 Roberta Chavez and I am the ONC fisheries biologist.

48

49 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you and welcome.

50

1 Alaska. It's an exciting opportunity to have this
2 position.

3
4 I look forward to working with each and
5 every one of you and all the Councils around the state.

6
7 Thank you.

8
9 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you and welcome.

10
11 Anyone else.

12
13 MR. ELISON: I'm Travis Elison. I work
14 for Alaska Department of Fish and Game. I'm the
15 Kuskokwim area management biologist.

16
17 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you and welcome.
18 I notice there's a young man back there with a cap.
19 Can we get -- and the Cabelas shirt.

20
21 MR. HOFFMAN: Greg Hoffman, Jr.
22 Commercial fisheries alternate for the Kuskokwim Salmon
23 Management Working Group.

24
25 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you and welcome.
26 Anyone else that we've missed.

27
28
29 (No comments)

30
31 CHAIRMAN WILDE: If not, we'd like to
32 welcome you all to our Advisory Council meeting. I
33 don't think we've missed anyone else.

34
35 MS. GREGORY: Mr. Chair.

36
37 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Yes, ma'am.

38
39 MS. GREGORY: I'd like to extend a
40 special welcome to the new liaison because I have Haida
41 and Athabaskan and -- I forgot the third person --
42 grandchildren.

43
44 MR. LORRIGAN: Haw'aa.

45
46 CHAIRMAN WILDE: One thing I forgot too
47 is to have the Council introduce themselves. We'll
48 start with Mr. Charles over there. He's hiding behind
49 Robert Aloysius's nameplate.

50

1 MR. CHARLES: My name is James Charles
2 from Tuntutuliak. I'm also Lower Kuskokwim AC chair
3 working group member for our elder member from
4 downriver.

5
6 Thank you.

7
8 MR. POLTY: My name is Evan Polty. I'm
9 from Lower Yukon, Pilot Station. I'm here for Federal
10 Board Subsistence, one of the Board members.

11
12 Thank you.

13
14 MS. GREGORY: (In Yup'ik)

15
16 My name is Mary Gregory. I'm recently
17 from Kipnuk. I moved to Bethel about 50-some years
18 ago. I'm happy to be sitting here on this Council
19 because I feel I must speak for my elders. I want them
20 to eat their food until there are no more on earth.
21 I'll fight for that.

22
23 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you, Mary.

24
25 Mr. Roczicka.

26
27 MR. ROCZICKA: Greg Roczicka, Bethel.

28
29 MR. BROWN: William F. Charlie Brown
30 from Eek.

31
32 CHAIRMAN WILDE: The young lady sitting
33 at the -- our recorder over there.

34
35 REPORTER: My name is Tina. I'm the
36 Council recorder.

37
38 MS. GREGORY: We can't hear you.

39
40 REPORTER: I know.

41
42 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Turn the mic on.

43
44 (Laughter)

45
46 REPORTER: Oh, okay, all right.

47
48 (Laughter)

49
50 REPORTER: My name is Tina. I'm the

1 court reporter for this Council. Thank you.

2

3 MS. GREGORY: Thank you.

4

5 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you. My name is
6 Lester Wilde. I Chair the Advisory Council.

7

8 I notice there's a couple three people
9 standing by the door. Could you please introduce
10 yourselves. For the record, come on up and introduce
11 yourself, please.

12

13 MS. HANSON: Marty Hanson. I just
14 heard -- I'm next door in RH's class and I heard what
15 was going on, so I decided to peek in.

16

17 Thank you.

18

19 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you for peeking
20 in.

21

22 Huey.

23

24 MR. ASHEPAK: Huey Ashepak from Bethel.

25

26 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you.

27

28 MS. WILLIAMS OLICK: My name is Lucy
29 Williams Olick, a/k/a Lopsy. I hope to testify 7:00
30 o'clock this evening. I'm an astute advocate for my
31 subsistence rights and I'm from Akiak, living in
32 Marshall.

33

34 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you for coming
35 and welcome. Any other. I think we've got everybody
36 here. We are down to -- I've never really conducted a
37 meeting where we aren't going into doing our business,
38 so give me a little time to get used to this. I'm
39 working with an agenda that we usually go right
40 through, so I've got to pick and choose as we go down.
41 The minutes, reports.

42

43 Are there any reports.

44

45

46 (No comments)

47

48 CHAIRMAN WILDE: We're down to Item 7.

49

50 Are there any reports, Council member

1 reports.

2

3

4

(No comments)

5

6

CHAIRMAN WILDE: Mr. Nick.

7

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CHAIRMAN WILDE: Okay. If I call for

1 an item and it's an action item, could you make sure
2 you let us know.

3

4 MR. NICK: (Nods affirmatively)

5

6 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you. Is the TRC
7 request an action item?

8

9

10 (No comments)

11

12 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Mr. Nick.

13

14 MR. NICK: Mr. Chair. Alex Nick for
15 the record. All of the regulatory change proposals or
16 policy change proposals are action items.

17

18 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you. All the
19 item proposals are -- so we are actually -- we don't
20 have much of a pick on our agenda items for non-action
21 items.

22

23 I need some help.

24

25 Mr. Nick.

26

27 MR. NICK: Mr. Chair. Alex Nick for
28 the record. If the Council wishes to hear the analysis
29 on the proposals without taking actions, you could do
30 that.

31

32 CHAIRMAN WILDE: I think it would be
33 better to wait to hear the analysis until such time we
34 do have the board members because they're going to have
35 to vote on those proposals too. We don't want to
36 repeat ourselves on these proposals.

37

38 Mr. Nick, if you may, could you give me
39 an idea of what we can discuss on the agenda. I've
40 never actually worked on an agenda where I couldn't go
41 into our action items before, so it's a little new to
42 me. Going through the agenda, could you give us a tip
43 on which items that we can get into on the agenda.

44

45 MR. NICK: Mr. Chair. Alex Nick for
46 the record. You can listen to the reports, like OSM
47 reports, and also agency reports.....

48

49 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Okay.

50

1 MR. NICK:like from other agencies
2 that does not require action.

3
4 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Okay. Thank you.

5
6 We are then to Item 11A.

7
8 Yes, Mr. Peltola.

9
10 MR. PELTOLA: Mr. Chair. RAC members.
11 Gene Peltola, OSM. We had a similar experience here
12 recently with the Western Interior Regional Advisory
13 Council meeting in Fairbanks. One thing the Chair
14 decided to do was go through the regional proposals.
15 We had OSM Staff address the proposal themselves so
16 those members that were present at the meeting would be
17 informed about the proposal itself to minimize the
18 amount of time and effort required at which time you
19 did meet via teleconference to take action.

20
21 So that's one option you have available
22 to you.

23
24 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Okay. Thank you. But
25 I think it might be -- I don't know what the feeling of
26 the Council is. Would you like to wait until such time
27 that we have a quorum before we take the action -- or
28 get the reports on the proposals.

29
30 MS. GREGORY: Mr. Chair. I'd like to
31 suggest to recess until such time you can call us back
32 to order.

33
34 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Okay. We'll take a --
35 we've still got reports to do, the updates and the OSM
36 reports.

37
38 Let's just take a break for 15 minutes.

39
40 (Off record)

41
42 (On record)

43
44 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Call the meeting back
45 to order. We'll take these in no particular order.
46 We'll just call them as they come up. Steve Miller, do
47 you have testimony. Mr. Steve Miller, Fish and
48 Wildlife, you have the floor.

49
50 MR. MILLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

1 Steve Miller again, Fish and Wildlife Service. I put a
2 packet on your table there. I didn't realize I'd be
3 going this soon in the process. If there's any way to
4 -- I'm still waiting for some other -- but I can go
5 ahead and address things.

6
7 CHAIRMAN WILDE: If you want, we could
8 put you on later.

9
10 MR. MILLER: I think Mr. Doolittle is
11 on there too and he's not here yet.

12
13 CHAIRMAN WILDE: What is that again?

14
15 MR. MILLER: Tom Doolittle.....

16
17 MR. ESTENSEN: Mr. Chair. For the
18 record, my name is Jeff Estensen of the Alaska
19 Department of Fish and Game. I noticed that the post-
20 season update is also on there and we have one of our
21 staff members, the summer season manager, Eric Newland,
22 who has to depart here real quick. If there's any way
23 that we could go a little bit ahead, that would be much
24 appreciated.

25
26 CHAIRMAN WILDE: What is that? I
27 didn't quite get him. What is that, Tina? Did you
28 understand him?

29
30 REPORTER: Mr. Estensen is online with
31 Alaska Department of Fish and Game. They'd like one of
32 their people giving a report.....

33
34 MR. ESTENSEN: Should I say it again,
35 Mr. Chair?

36
37 REPORTER: Yes.

38
39 CHAIRMAN WILDE: I didn't quite get
40 him. It's hard to understand you because I don't know
41 that.....

42
43 MR. ESTENSEN: Sorry, Mr. Chair. My
44 name is Jeff Estensen with the Alaska Department of
45 Fish and Game. I'm here in Fairbanks. If Mr. Miller
46 is requesting to go later, I was going to request that
47 maybe next up would be the Lower Yukon fisheries post-
48 season update. One of our biologists has to depart and
49 maybe we could go to that one next if possible.

50

1 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Actually what we were
2 going to go into was taking our testimonies. After
3 that, after we take the testimonies, then we're going
4 to go back into our agenda for the reports. At the
5 time, we are doing the testimonies of the people that
6 requested it in the blue and Steve Miller was the one
7 that I called. Are you ready for your report or did
8 you request something -- I'm having a -- my mind is up
9 here and.....

10

11 MR. MILLER: Yeah, I understand, Mr.
12 Chair, that everything has been pushed up and moved
13 around. I'm under the same type of confusion. I know
14 that Mr. Doolittle is not here and he's part of that
15 presentation.

16

17 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Of your presentation?

18

19 MR. MILLER: Yes, he's on there. We'd
20 like to do it together.

21

22 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Okay. So we'll just
23 put you until later.

24

25 MR. MILLER: And Mr. Doolittle.

26

27 CHAIRMAN WILDE: And Mr. Doolittle.

28

29 MR. MILLER: Is that fine?

30

31 CHAIRMAN WILDE: That's fine. Mr.
32 Roczicka.

33

34 MR. ROCZICKA: Mr. Chairman. If we do
35 have somebody online that has a time constraint that
36 Mr. Estensen just mentioned, I'd recommend maybe
37 hearing from him so that we can get his report in.

38

39 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Okay. I didn't
40 understand what he was saying, but we can get you now
41 then whoever needs to make that report now online.

42

43 MR. NEWLAND: Mr. Chair. This is Eric
44 Newland with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.
45 I'm the Yukon Area summer season manager. I know Fred
46 Bue is there and he was planning on presenting kind of
47 the joint summary and then I was going to be available
48 for questions as well as Jeff Estensen there to talk
49 about the fall season. So I was hoping we could get
50 through it early this morning and move on. So if Fred

1 is ready, we could proceed.

2

3 CHAIRMAN WILDE: That will be fine.

4

5 Go ahead.

6

7 Proceed, Fred.

8

9 MR. BUE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and
10 Council. Fred Bue, Fish and Wildlife Service, Yukon
11 area fisheries manager. I guess I'd apologize for the
12 confusion. Everything is out of order. I think also
13 as far as your agenda they had us down for two
14 different sections, so I guess this will cover
15 everything. Everything on the Yukon fisheries will be
16 under this one item.

17

18 I think also the Yukon is a pretty big
19 area. It's pretty confusing, so what we've tried to
20 do, both the Federal manager and the State manager, is
21 combined our reports into one. I'm presenting this for
22 Fish and Wildlife Service and the State. It's kind of
23 a joint report. That's why the State managers asked to
24 come up at this time.

25

26 Also, as you know, there's a summer
27 season, a fall season. So Eric Newland is the summer
28 manager. Jeff Estensen is the fall season manager.
29 They both had input into this and it's a joint report.
30 Also the agenda states Lower Yukon. Well, it's pretty
31 tough to talk just about the Lower Yukon alone. You
32 have to talk about the whole system. We have fishermen
33 in the lower river, but the spawning goes on upriver,
34 so to give a more complete presentation it's going to
35 be the whole thing. Sort of our standard report. Many
36 of you are familiar with it. I know Lester is.

37

38 So, with that, I guess I'll go through
39 this. Essentially it's kind of dry, but at the same
40 time it's pretty comprehensive and I hope you can
41 tolerate me for a while. So I guess to start out with,
42 the 2013 chinook salmon run was projected to range from
43 poor to below average. Summer and fall chum salmon
44 runs were projected to be average to above averages and
45 the coho salmon were expected to be around average.

46

47 I think also Mr. Nick passed out a
48 brief season summary for Fish and Wildlife Service and
49 then also a much larger report, preliminary summary
50 report for the Fish and Game. Summer season for your

1 reference when you get time or if you care to later on
2 to go through that. So I'm just going to present some
3 highlights here.

4
5 Because the chinook have performed
6 below expectations in recent years, there's been a
7 great deal of public involvement this past winter. We
8 had the Federal Subsistence Board, the Alaska State
9 Board of Fisheries during the regulatory year meetings,
10 you've all been involved in those, a lot of meetings.
11 We have the three Yukon River RACs. Not only YK RAC,
12 but Western Interior, Eastern Interior RACs, numerous
13 State AC meetings.

14
15 On the Yukon side, we have the
16 U.S./Canada JTC and Yukon River Panel that participate
17 in this and then YRDFA, Yukon River Drainage
18 Fisherman's Association. We've all received input on
19 conservation approaches for this season.

20
21 Key conservation approaches we settled
22 on for the 2013 included the windows fishing schedule
23 to begin early at the mouth of the river and progress
24 upstream with swimming speed to help spread the
25 harvest. Of course everybody knows the first fish is
26 the fish everybody wants and it's not just here, it's
27 all the way up the river, so spreading the harvest is a
28 big deal on the Yukon.

29
30 From the beginning of the season
31 gillnets were to be restricted to 6 inches or smaller.
32 No larger than 6 inches. That's to protect the female
33 and large chinook salmon while providing opportunity to
34 harvest the abundant summer chum. Then the first pulse
35 of chinook salmon would be protected by closing at
36 least one subsistence fishing period. For commercial,
37 the chum season would be managed conservatively with no
38 commercial sale of incidently harvested chinook salmon
39 allowed.

40
41 In-season, the run strength assessment
42 of chinook and summer chum is primarily based on the
43 lower river test fisheries near Emmonak, Kotlik. The
44 Yukon River sonar near Pilot Station and then
45 subsistence fishing reports are really important for
46 us. As you know, weather and different mouths. Fish
47 enter different places. Not everywhere the test nets
48 are, so we rely on subsistence fishermen to give us
49 information there.

50

1 The regulatory windows fishing schedule
2 was initiated May 30th in the coastal district in
3 District 1 with gillnets restricted to no larger than 6
4 inches and that was to coincide with the arrival of the
5 early chinook. However, due to the late break up, the
6 window schedule was delayed one period while the mesh
7 restriction continued to allow the harvest of non-
8 salmon species. A lot of people like to catch sheefish
9 and that's an alternate opportunity for fishermen. So
10 it's mitigating the lack of chinook and allowing them
11 to catch some other fish.

12
13 The delayed schedule was restricted to
14 gillnets and then implemented chronologically upriver
15 as the fish migrated. The southern portion of the
16 coastal district, which included Hooper Bay, Chevak and
17 Scammon Bay as well as the Innoko River and the Koyukuk
18 River all had their subsistence gillnet fishing
19 restricted to 6 inches or smaller for the entire
20 summer.

21
22 Initially one subsistence fishing
23 period was canceled in District 1 in the northern
24 portion of the Coastal District beginning June 20th and
25 then applied chronologically as a group of fish moved
26 upriver. That was first pulse of fish. Unfortunately
27 the chinook did not build much in strength while
28 overlapping summer chum run came in well above average.
29 All four pulses of chinook were then protected with
30 subsistence fishing closures on the Yukon.

31
32 Brief subsistence fishing opportunities
33 were provided in between pulses of chinook with the use
34 of the 6 inch or smaller gillnets when and where summer
35 chum were abundant, but also where there was a trough
36 in chinook passage. During the subsistence openings,
37 use of fishwheels in the upriver areas was allowed with
38 the stipulation that all chinook salmon had to be
39 released out of the fishwheels.

40
41 Areas that normally have fewer chum
42 salmon available receive less fishing time as most of
43 their fishing effort would have been focused on chinook
44 stocks. Way upriver they have very few summer chum and
45 all they have is chinook, so those fish that were
46 protected in the lower river were continued to allow
47 protection all the way through even though they don't
48 have a lot of alternative species up there.

49
50 Subsistence gillnets were restricted to

1 6 inches or smaller mesh size, like I said, in the
2 Innoko and Koyukuk Rivers, but no closures were imposed
3 in those areas because few chinook are in those rivers.
4 They're primarily chum and whitefish, stock sheefish.
5 Despite these management actions, the U.S./Canada
6 border passage was only 30,000 chinook salmon, which is
7 well below the interim management escapement goal range
8 of 42,500 to 55,000 and that left no surplus for
9 Canadian harvest share as stipulated in the agreement.

10

11 New commercial fishing gear options
12 intended to provide summer chum directed commercial
13 fishing opportunity while allowing the release of
14 incidentally caught chinook salmon were implemented
15 this season. Commercial dipnet and beach seine gear
16 was employed during most of the summer season when
17 chinook could not have been avoided with traditional
18 gillnet gear.

19

20 Later during the summer season the new
21 5.5-inch gillnet gear was operated in special harvest
22 areas during specific times to harvest the abundant
23 summer chum and avoid concentrations of chinook salmon
24 in the commercial fishery.

25

26 Further upriver special commercial
27 periods were only open for fishwheel gear to target
28 summer chum with a requirement to immediately release
29 all chinook salmon alive. All chinook caught in the
30 dipnets and beach seines and fishwheels were released
31 immediately while those caught in gillnets could not be
32 sold, but they could be kept for subsistence during the
33 commercial periods.

34

35 Preliminary commercial harvest from the
36 summer season fishery is approximately 485,000 summer
37 chum and 1,125 chinook caught and released and then
38 there's an additional 389 chinook salmon that were
39 caught but not sold and were taken home for commercial
40 out of that summer chum fishery.

41

42 For the fall season, it began in the
43 lower river on July 16th, that's regulatory timing,
44 with the expectation that the run size greater than
45 800,000 fall chum. At that level, there should be
46 enough for escapement objectives normal subsistence
47 fishery as well as a surplus for commercial harvest.

48

49 Subsistence salmon fishing reverted to
50 the standard schedule of seven days a week in Districts

1 1, 2 and 3, with only subsistence closures 12 hours
2 before, during and 12 hours after the announced
3 commercial fishing periods. That's normal for them.

4
5 Since little or no commercial fishing
6 effort was anticipated in Districts 4 and Subdistricts
7 5A, 5B and 5C, these sections of river began their fall
8 season on a five-day-per-week schedule. This is
9 specified in regulation. Normally they're two 48-hour
10 periods there. Because no commercial was anticipated
11 they went to five days.

12
13 There's Subdistrict 5D, that's way up
14 Yukon Flats up to the border, returned to the normal
15 seven days per week schedule and then District 6 is a
16 Tanana River drainage and continued on a standard two
17 42-hour periods per week regulatory schedule. Near the
18 end of the season subsistence fishing in those upriver
19 Districts 4, 5, 5A, B and C, was relaxed also seven
20 days per week.

21
22 Commercial fishing was initiated in the
23 lower river at the start of the fall season to take
24 advantage of the overlap of summer chum run and
25 anticipate a strong fall chum salmon run beginning
26 their in-river migration. Through the front half of
27 the fall season chum salmon entered the river in above
28 average run strength. During the second half of the
29 season there were two large pulses of fall chum entered
30 the river and the projection increased the total run
31 size between 900,000 and one million fall chum.

32
33 Similar to the summer season meanwhile
34 we have coho salmon that overlap with the fall chum.
35 Their run appeared to be developing below average.
36 Commercial fishing harvest of coho salmon remained at
37 the upper end of the acceptable level to provide
38 escapement needs and normal subsistence harvest.

39
40 In the Lower River, fall commercial
41 salmon fishing season closed by regulation on September
42 1st without the extension as stipulated in the Coho
43 Salmon Management Plan because of low coho salmon
44 abundance. Commercial fishing ended in Subdistricts
45 5A, 5B and 5C on October 6 and ended in District 6 on
46 September 30th. The commercial fall season harvest
47 through October 7th was 238,000 fall chum and 66,000
48 coho salmon. The fall chum commercial harvest is the
49 third highest since 1995 and coho salmon harvest is the
50 fourth highest since 1995.

1 The completed fall chum escapement
2 projects ended above average with escapement goals
3 being met or exceeded. The Eagle sonar at the border
4 ended with 200,000 fall chum salmon passing the sonar.
5 This is enough to meet the border escapement goals
6 there and also included the amounts necessary for our
7 harvest shares with Canada so that they had adequate
8 fish to fish on.

9
10 Escapement monitoring within the Tanana
11 River still continues. It seems like winter down here,
12 but there's still fish on the Tanana River spawning and
13 they'll continue through November. Indications at this
14 time is that fall chum escapements are expected to be
15 within or above most escapement objectives for the
16 Yukon. For the coho salmon, they attained the low end
17 of the Delta Clearwater goal. That's on the Tanana
18 River escapement goal and that's the only established
19 goal on the Yukon, so although the run was low, we had
20 a pretty good large commercial harvest. They still
21 made the goal there and that was good.

22
23 Subsistence salmon harvest information
24 collected in-season, the State Fish and Game hasn't
25 completed their post-season subsistence harvest, but
26 what we've noted in-season so far is that most
27 fishermen did not meet their chinook salmon escapement
28 harvest goals. Generally fishermen reported lack of
29 fishing opportunity. Yes, it was closed almost the
30 entire season. They had to fish later into the season
31 or they had to shift their efforts to other species.

32
33 Even with implementation of these
34 exceptionally conservative management actions that
35 restricted both chinook salmon subsistence harvest and
36 also restricted the targeted summer chum commercial
37 fishery less than half the Alaska chinook escapement
38 objectives were attained and the U.S./Canada Treaty
39 Agreement was not met.

40
41 It's well recognized the Yukon River
42 fishing community is heavily relied on for assistance
43 in conserving chinook salmon run. To sustain this
44 important resource, fishermen incurred significant
45 hardship. It's well noted through the reduced harvest.
46 Given the trend of chinook runs in recent years, we'll
47 continue to be working with fishermen and interested
48 parties this winter. Work on conservative management
49 strategies with the primary goal to provide escapement
50 needs and subsistence uses during low years like this

1 and while we're looking for ways to accommodate other
2 fishing opportunities.

3
4 Any ideas you could provide feedback on
5 management, that's why we're here, is to see what the
6 RAC has to say. This is not the regulatory cycle for
7 us, but it's important for us to get information so
8 that we can turn it back to our management next year.

9
10 I'd turn it over to Eric Newland or
11 Jeff Estensen if they had anything else to add to this
12 report.

13
14 Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

15
16 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you, Mr. Bue.

17
18 Any further additions to this report by
19 Fred.

20
21 MR. NEWLAND: Mr. Chair. This is Eric
22 Newland with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. I
23 really don't have a whole lot to add to Mr. Bue's
24 report other than I want to extend our thanks to the
25 people on the river as well for another tough season.
26 A lot of restrictions, a lot of management actions that
27 aren't so much fun to hear or put out there, but I
28 think people are really respecting this as far as
29 enforcement.

30
31 There was a lot of enforcement out
32 there on the river this year and most of the reports
33 came back that people were doing what they were
34 supposed to be doing. We really appreciate that.
35 Unfortunately we did fall short on some of our goals
36 and hopefully we see some improvement in the run coming
37 in 2014.

38
39 Like Fred said, we'll be spending this
40 winter trying to work with folks to try to come up with
41 ways to try opportunities for other species like summer
42 chum or whitefish with the potential that we'll be
43 looking at another poor run in 2014. Hopefully we'll
44 get the funding for some of those meetings that didn't
45 occur in 2013.

46
47 We did not have the YRDFA preseason
48 planning meeting this year and I think that really kind
49 of hurt our ability to get together and get the message
50 out on kind of what we planned and what folks on the

1 river could expect. Hopefully that meeting will happen
2 this year and we will be able to get together with
3 people ahead of time and talk about what the preseason
4 project could look like and what those plans might be
5 and how we might deal with another poor king run and
6 how we should deal with the chum runs.

7

8 I guess that's it unless -- at least
9 for the summer season. Maybe Jeff can add his
10 perspective as far as the fall season.

11

12 MR. ESTENSEN: Yeah, thank you, Eric.
13 Mr. Chairman and the Council. For the record, my name
14 is Jeff Estensen, Alaska Department of Fish and Game,
15 fall season manager. Just a real quick something to
16 add. As you're all aware, things have been going well
17 for the fall chum the last several years and kind of
18 looking ahead to 2014 right now it looks like we can
19 anticipate another good year next year. We've been
20 suggesting to folks along the Yukon River, the
21 subsistence fishermen for the last couple years that
22 they look at being able to harvest other species.

23

24 For the chum salmon, summer chum have
25 been doing well and the fall chum as well. We're still
26 right now putting together our subsistence harvest
27 estimates through our surveys and our permits, but just
28 something to add here is that prior to 2012 the average
29 subsistence harvest for five years prior to that ran
30 about 80,000 fish. In 2012, we saw a subsistence
31 harvest of about 97,000 and this is fall chum that I'm
32 talking about here.

33

34 Having talked to some fishermen along
35 the river and folks, I anticipate that that number
36 might go up this year in 2013. So it does look like
37 folks are taking those fall chum perhaps in trying to
38 supplant the kings that they're not getting. I expect
39 that to go up in 2013, so it's good that folks are
40 being able to harvest more fall chum and we're glad to
41 be able to provide the opportunity.

42

43 That's all I have. Thanks.

44

45 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Any questions of Mr.
46 Bue or the gentlemen by the Council.

47

48 Mr. Charles.

49

50 MR. CHARLES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

1 On Fred's report, I see that he made a good report, but
2 what spoiled us on Kuskokwim site is looking at the
3 graphs even for forecasts. Maybe Doug spoiled me for
4 that. But, anyway, that's -- using the graphs for
5 reports that helps too because the numbers only for
6 preseason and what happened in the past I can't see
7 what was -- how much fish there was on the river and
8 that will help me to see what's going on. Like on the
9 Kuskokwim, almost every report they use graphs and see
10 what's happening or what the forecast is too.

11

12 Thank you.

13

14 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Mr. Bue.

15

16 MR. BUE: Mr. Charles, I appreciate
17 that and me too. Initially, back when we were trying
18 to make the book -- this is a non-fish meeting and so I
19 always feel bad every time I open my mouth about fish.
20 People want to talk about fish, but there were all
21 these wildlife agenda items, so I tried to stay away
22 from that.

23

24 Just for your help, just a real basic
25 one is Fish and Game. This is the thicker one. The
26 first page, Page 2 is the graphic for Yukon River
27 chinook. I guess that's probably the most interesting
28 right now. That will give you the trend. It's the
29 State of Alaska's but the data is the same. We share
30 the data. I think what you see there is that you're all
31 familiar with. In 1998, something changed. We were
32 running along pretty steady at one level. 1998 there
33 was a shift. It wasn't like a decline, it was just a
34 drop. Something happened. This is chinook.

35

36 You also remember summer chum stocks
37 also dropped that same year. Something happened in
38 that timeframe. Since then chum seemed to come back,
39 but kings have just stayed down at this lower level.
40 That's right where we're at. 2013 we're just right as
41 low as we've ever been and that's pretty much our
42 status right now.

43

44 We had really good escapements and then
45 from those good escapements nothing happened. Since
46 then we've had some exceptionally good escapements, but
47 we're still not getting very much return or production
48 off of those escapements. Usually those escapement
49 goals when we reach them we would expect a certain
50 amount of fish to return, but those fish aren't

1 returning even though we've made the objectives. Right
2 now the run is really getting low.

3

4 I hope that helps. I think that we
5 could put together a better packet or a more complete
6 packet for you.

7

8 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

9

10 MR. CHARLES: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

11

12 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Any other questions.

13

14 Mr. Roczicka.

15

16 MR. ROCZICKA: Mr. Chair. You
17 mentioned less than half of the enumeration projects
18 achieved escapement. Are there more than what's listed
19 there on Page 11 for chinook?

20

21 MR. BUE: No, these are actually the
22 established goals, I guess. Yes, I think that's it.

23

24 MR. ROCZICKA: We did better than
25 Kuskokwim anyway. Actually the question I really
26 wanted to ask, I'm curious about this dipnet and beach
27 seine in looking at the numbers you got. I mean 15 and
28 17 commercial openings over there, but it seems like
29 you actually did pretty good. From what I've heard,
30 dipnetting is a pretty labor intensive activity and I
31 would have expected to see more in the beach seine. I
32 don't know how much -- if the fish aren't really bank
33 oriented that much, but that's where you seem to catch
34 most of them along the Kuskokwim is if you're closer up
35 to the bank. I'm just curious if people are dipping
36 out the side of their boats or how does that work.

37

38 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Mr. Bue.

39

40 MR. BUE: Yeah, I could speak to that.
41 Mr. Newland with commercial fisheries may be more
42 appropriate, but I think for the most part beach
43 seining on a big river with a lot of snags, there is a
44 learning curve. Dipnetting, a good fisherman kind of
45 knows the type of water they can go there and it seems
46 like it's -- when the commercial fisheries managers
47 would put them on where they knew concentrations of
48 fish were, so that was really a key part of it.
49 Fishermen would know which way the wind's blowing,
50 which mouth they're coming in, the channel they're

1 going to be using.

2

3 A beach seine is a pretty expensive
4 piece of gear just to purchase and buy and just to test
5 and see if it actually even works. It's a couple
6 thousand dollars anyway and it's kind of unwieldy. So
7 dipnetting was a lot easier to get into. I, myself,
8 was surprised how successful they actually were. Some
9 fishermen were getting two or three fish per dip. In
10 certain spots it was really productive. Other places
11 it was difficult.

12

13 I don't know if Mr. Newland has
14 something to add.

15

16 MR. NEWLAND: Mr. Chair. Members of
17 the Council. This is Eric Newland with Alaska
18 Department of Fish and Game. Thanks, Fred. The fishery
19 was quite successful, like Fred said. It was rather
20 surprising. People did pretty well with the dipnets.

21

22 Very few people did actually
23 purchase/obtain the beach seine gear. It is more
24 expensive. It wasn't really well understood how much
25 we would use this gear ahead of time, so organizing
26 gear pre-season was difficult of such a large gear,
27 whereas a dipnet could be purchased -- it's relatively
28 in comparison cheap. I think for 150 bucks or
29 something people could buy a dipnet. It caught on
30 rather quick.

31

32 Most people fished the banks from a
33 boat or found an eddy and kind of anchored in the eddy
34 and waited for fish to hit. So the dipnets were quite
35 successful and they were the gear choice of -- the
36 popular gear choice, but I believe only three people
37 fished with beach seines and the reports were there
38 wasn't a whole lot of beach to work with. Meaning that
39 the water was high and there were snags and not a whole
40 lot of harvest occurred with that gear type.

41

42 But this is something that we're
43 figuring out how to use and how -- the fishermen are
44 responding in how they're using it, so we're taking it
45 step by step. It did result in the largest commercial
46 harvest of summer chum since 1989. So it was a marked
47 improvement in the commercial summer chum fishery.
48 They were allowed to fish at a time when normally they
49 would have been closed because of observation concern
50 for the king salmon.

1 So it was a good situation. Everything
2 kind of lined up. We had a very strong summer chum
3 run. We had high water pushing these fish to the bank
4 and people were willing to give that new gear a try.
5 So that was a winning situation for the commercial
6 fishery.

7
8 I guess that pretty much sums up what I
9 have to say about the commercial.

10
11 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you.

12
13 Any other questions concerning fishing.

14
15 MS. GREGORY: Mr. Chair (in Yup'ik).

16
17 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Which one?

18
19 MS. GREGORY: This guy who's making the
20 report.

21
22 CHAIRMAN WILDE: That's Mr. Fred Bue.

23
24 MS. GREGORY: Bue. You're talking
25 about dipnetting in the Yukon?

26
27 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Uh-huh. It happened.
28 He was just explaining -- could you explain that some
29 more, please.

30
31 MR. BUE: Mr. Chairman. Ms. Gregory.
32 Yes, during -- you know, there were so few chinook and
33 a really strong summer chum run, Alaska Board of Fish
34 this past winter created a new useable gear type for
35 commercial fishing, dipnets. So it was too high of a
36 risk to put out a gillnet, so with that new authority
37 that Fish and Game had to use dipnets they opened up
38 fishing periods. A boat would have between one and
39 four fishermen using dipnets and a lot of times they
40 would drift through or anchor through an eddy with
41 these dipnets. If they caught a chum, they would bring
42 it in. If they got a king, they could just flip it out
43 right away.

44
45 So, yeah, it's really labor intensive,
46 it's time consuming, but it was catching a fish versus
47 not fishing at all. Some people found that it worked
48 pretty good. It made it so that you could have a
49 little bit longer fishing periods. If you go to one
50 spot and there's no fish, you had time to move and go

1 look for other fish. It wasn't as risky of a
2 management to have a commercial period and really be
3 worried what you're going to catch. You know, am I
4 going to catch too many kings.

5
6 MS. GREGORY: Mr. Chair. I would like
7 to hear from the people who actually fished with a
8 dipnet to feel them out how it went off with them.

9
10 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Mr. Bue.

11
12 MR. BUE: Yes, Mr. Chair. Again,
13 that's one of the questions we have to the RAC. You
14 people -- I guess there's not many from the Yukon here,
15 but that's the sort of feedback the RAC members maybe
16 can get for us and speak to at our winter meeting, how
17 people thought, Mr. Polty, and were the kings easily
18 released. Did it look like they were damaged or
19 injured when they were released.

20
21 The other part of that is our concern
22 is accurate reporting. You know, fishermen are
23 fishermen. Sometimes we get a good report and
24 sometimes we're not so sure. Things sometimes look
25 pretty rosy, but back in your communities what do you
26 think. Like Ms. Gregory says, that's important to get
27 the feedback from the fishermen.

28
29 Thank you.

30
31 MS. GREGORY: Mr. Chair. I'd like to
32 also let you get me information on how the currents
33 were affecting because it could be very swift.

34
35 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Do you have anything,
36 Mr. Polty?

37
38 MR. POLTY: Yeah, Mr. Chairman. I
39 don't usually dip. I no longer commercial fish, 20
40 years ago, but I watched those people are dipping right
41 across Pilot on the west side and one on the other side
42 of the bluff. They were doing pretty good with dipnet.
43 Some did pretty good swift current. When they catch
44 kings, they just flip the net, that dipnet over and let
45 them go. Most of them say that using the dipnet is
46 easier than catching more kings that way. So they were
47 doing pretty good for the season when it opened for
48 them, early season. They liked that right at Pilot,
49 most of the fishermen. Those that usually fished right
50 across Pilot, they looked for stronger current along

1 the bluffs, that area. They were doing pretty good.

2

3 That's all I have. Thank you.

4

5 MS. GREGORY: Thank you, Mr. Polty.

6

7 MR. POLTY: Quyana.

8

9 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Any further questions
10 on the report on the Yukon post season.

11

12

13 (No comments)

14

15 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Mr. Bue.

16

17 MR. BUE: I think if you're all done
18 with that I had an additional thing that I just thought
19 of during the break is relating to fisheries because we
20 may not get back to it, is that there were a number of
21 agenda change requests that went to the Board of Fish
22 work session in October. I don't have those with me,
23 but there were -- Mr. Newland maybe has them. He was
24 at the meeting. But a few of them will be taken up
25 this winter.

26

27 I don't know at what point this RAC
28 will have an opportunity to look at those again, but
29 they regarded commercial fishing regulations on the
30 Yukon and I could probably get those to you later on in
31 the break. I want this RAC to be aware that there are
32 a couple Board of Fish proposals as agenda change
33 request for you to consider.

34

35 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Any further questions
36 of Mr. Bue on the Yukon River.

37

38

39 (No comments)

40

41 CHAIRMAN WILDE: If there aren't any,
42 are there any comments from the telephonic people on
43 anything on the Yukon River.

44

45

46 (No comments)

47

48 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Any comments from the
49 staff that are listening on the telephone.

50

1 (No comments)

2

3 CHAIRMAN WILDE: There being none, I
4 thank you very much, Mr. Bue, for your report, the
5 Yukon Report. Is there anything on the Kuskokwim River
6 post-season report.

7

8 MR. BUE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

9

10 MS. CHAVEZ: I have a brief summary.
11 My name is Roberta Chavez and I am the fishery
12 technician for ONC. I have a summary on our in-season
13 subsistence surveys which began on June 10th. ONC
14 hired three fishery technicians and began their
15 surveys.

16

17 The season opened up with no
18 restrictions and families were out fishing. By July
19 1st most families have met their subsistence needs,
20 which hurt our ASL, age/sex/length project, because a
21 lot of the families were worried about closures and
22 restrictions, so they were fishing hard and were not
23 gathering scales that we needed for our ASL project.
24 We did get a few families who continued to participate,
25 but not as for the past couple years.

26

27 Some of the families that were surveyed
28 didn't target king salmon because they knew the numbers
29 were low, so they fished for chum and silvers to
30 replace their king salmon. The crew interviewed a
31 total of 258 fish camps throughout the season. Overall
32 the Bethel area families that were surveyed were very
33 happy and grateful with Fish and Game for allowing them
34 to fish with no restrictions. Probably by June 26, I
35 think, that's when they put in a restriction of 6-inch
36 mesh or less, but by then everybody had already fished
37 and most of them met their needs.

38

39 Right now we just finished up our pulse
40 season surveys, which began on October 6. ONC hired
41 five fisheries technicians and so we're off to a good
42 start, but by the end of the season we were down to two
43 technicians, so we had to emergency hire one. Our goal
44 was to survey 536 households in Bethel, which we met
45 that goal. Most of the household surveys were very
46 happy with the season. We have some families who are
47 concerned about the conservation of chinook salmon and
48 did not target chinook salmon.

49

50 That is just a brief summary on our in-

1 season and post-season surveys.

2

3 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Any questions.

4

5 MS. GREGORY: I just have a little
6 comment. I was so happy. I was telling some people to
7 go out and fish with any gear because there's no
8 regulations out yet and we re just like before when
9 nobody boss us around and I was happy to do that.

10

11 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Any other questions or
12 comments.

13

14

15 (No comments)

16

17 CHAIRMAN WILDE: There being none,
18 thank you very much for your report.

19

20 MS. CHAVEZ: Thank you.

21

22 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Fish and Game.

23

24 MR. ELISON: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
25 Travis Elison, Fish and Game. I want to present to you
26 here the preliminary season summary, which I just
27 handed out to you and if anybody's interested there's
28 more copies on the back table. I'm just going to go
29 through this kind of briefly and then give a little
30 look ahead to what we're thinking for 2014.

31

32 So in the Kuskokwim River for king
33 salmon, we went into the 2013 season with the forecast
34 of 160,000 to 240,000 chinook salmon, which if it had
35 come back as forecasted, even on the lower end of that
36 range, there would have been enough fish for average
37 subsistence harvest and to meet the established
38 escapement goal for the weirs and the drainage-wide
39 goal of 65,000 to 120,000. That drainage-wide goal was
40 adopted in January of 2013 and also the weir escapement
41 goals were adjusted at the same time in relationship to
42 that drainage-wide escapement goal.

43

44 With the forecast we had we went into
45 the season unrestricted and the run started out late.
46 We caught the first king salmon in Bethel Test Fishery
47 on June 8th, which is about a week later than average.
48 Catches ramped up pretty quickly. Our test fishery was
49 not showing a very strong run, but it did look
50 adequate. It was showing that it was stronger than

1 2012. Subsistence reports were that fishing was very
2 good. People were reporting big catches of king
3 salmon.

4
5 Around about the 24th of June the run
6 really started to taper off. By about the 26th of June
7 it seemed like the run was pretty much over, which is
8 two weeks earlier than the normal end of the run
9 through Bethel, so we were caught by surprise with
10 that. We expected to have more fish coming into the
11 river based on historical run timing when we saw the
12 run start in 2013.

13
14 When our test fish catches dropped and
15 reports from subsistence fishermen were that catches
16 were slowing down, we implemented 6-inch mesh size
17 restrictions for -- we started with I think it was a
18 six day period in the Lower River from the mouth up to
19 Tuluksak and then we had a four day restriction from
20 Tuluksak up through Chuathbaluk with 6-inch or less
21 mesh. We extended those restrictions and ended up with
22 12 days restricted mesh size starting on June 28th in
23 the Lower River, starting on July 3rd from
24 Tuluksak/Chuathbaluk. The Lower River, those
25 restrictions ended on July 9th and in the Middle River
26 they ended on July 14th.

27
28 It turns out those restrictions were
29 too little too late, as you just heard. Most people
30 had completed their subsistence harvest at least in the
31 Lower River by that time. I don't think we really
32 saved many king salmon because most of the run was over
33 by that time.

34
35 Escapement results for king salmon were
36 very very poor. We had the lowest escapements on
37 record for every weir project we operate. All of our
38 escapement goals were missed. Its anticipated the
39 drainage-wide escapement goal was missed. We won't
40 have a total run estimate until our subsistence harvest
41 estimate is done. We just finished the field work this
42 week completing those surveys and then there's going to
43 be a couple months of data analysis, error checking and
44 running a model to get an estimate for that.
45 Optimistically, we hope to have some idea of total run
46 by maybe the end of January.

47
48 As far as the other species, chum
49 salmon overall escapement was about average for chum
50 salmon and escapement Kogrukluk River weir, which has a

1 sustainable escapement goal, that goal was exceeded.
2 Commercial fishing didn't start until July 16th to
3 avoid harvest of chinook salmon in the commercial
4 fishery. The first two commercial fishing periods
5 there were good catches of chum salmon, but we were
6 towards the end of that run and catches fell off pretty
7 quickly.

8
9 By the end of July we moved into coho
10 salmon management for the commercial fishery. Harvest
11 was really good. There was 114,000 coho salmon
12 harvested. That's the biggest harvest in I think
13 approximately 10 years for coho salmon. It also
14 resulted in ex-vessel value for the total District 1
15 all species ex-vessel value was 1,185,000, which was a
16 very good commercial fishing season compared to recent
17 years.

18
19 For escapements with coho salmon,
20 escapements were slightly below average and the
21 escapement goal at the Kogrukluuk River was achieved.
22 It was kind of in the middle range of that escapement
23 goal. Kwethluk River also has an escapement goal for
24 coho salmon, but due to I think high water we didn't
25 get an escapement estimate for that project.

26
27 Looking forward to 2014, a big part of
28 management and a big influence on how we deal with the
29 running season is our forecast or outlook, whatever
30 we're expecting to come back. For the last three years
31 we've been using a very quantitative forecasting method
32 that looks at several different models and
33 relationships between siblings. So, from younger age
34 classes to older age classes, to try to predict how
35 many would come back the next year and also looking at
36 escapements to come up with predictions for returns for
37 the next year, that forecasting method worked actually
38 very well in 2011. However, in 2012 and 2013 it was
39 significantly overestimated, the returning runs.

40
41 That put us in a bad situation,
42 especially in 2013 where we thought we would have
43 enough fish. Our in-season assessment told us we had
44 enough fish and then the run was over. Unfortunately,
45 we made a mistake with that in the management decisions
46 and it resulted in those little escapements. Because
47 of the performance of that forecasting method, which is
48 a standardized method that's used statewide, but
49 because of our recent performance with that forecast
50 we're going with a more conservative strategy as far as

1 an outlook for 2014. We're anticipating a similar run
2 to the last couple years.

3

4 We don't have a total run estimate like
5 I said for 2013, but we think it was similar to 2012,
6 which was about 100,000 king salmon. So, out of
7 100,000 king salmon coming back to the Kuskokwim River,
8 if you don't fish, that puts you right in the middle of
9 the escapement goal.

10

11 So we're working with the working
12 group, councils and committees and other stakeholder
13 groups to try to come up with a management strategy for
14 2014, but we are looking at closures very early in the
15 run if not at the very beginning. I think it's going
16 to require some significant closures maybe similar to
17 2012 in order to try to achieve escapement goals if the
18 run comes back as it has in recent years.

19

20 I want people to be aware that the use
21 of 6-inch mesh restrictions is very very likely. Plan
22 on using 6-inch mesh next year. If the run is coming
23 back poor again, we're going to have to wait until chum
24 and sockeye are here to be able to let everybody go
25 fishing and that would be with 6-inch gear to target
26 the chum and sockeye and reduce that king catch.

27

28 We do always have the option to rescind
29 closures and restrictions and open the fishery up.
30 That's a pretty easy thing to do. It's well accepted
31 and the word travels fast when you open a fishery. If
32 a run assessment, which is mostly based on the Bethel
33 Test Fishery, is showing a good run and we're expecting
34 to meet our escapement goals, we can always relax
35 restrictions and provide more opportunity when we see
36 that the abundance is available.

37

38 I think that's about all I have for the
39 river. There's more information for Kuskokwim Bay, but
40 unless this group is interested in that I'll skip it
41 for now.

42

43 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Is there anybody on
44 the teleconference that has any?

45

46 MR. ELISON: I don't think so. It was
47 just me.

48

49 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Any questions of the
50 Kuskokwim post-season report.

1 Mr. Charles.

2

3 MR. CHARLES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

4 This preseason report helps me with what the return
5 might look like on the river on the Kuskokwim this
6 summer. I heard Travis say that we might start the
7 season closed. I have missed those plans for the
8 season from the working group. I'm a member of the
9 working group, but I have been doing other work when
10 they have meetings.

11

12 I've heard some people report, some
13 individuals from back home area, that they don't like
14 to see the season closed, but they would go for windows
15 if they have to. That's another thing. Gear too. I
16 tell the people that the fish run is not like it used
17 to be years ago because I have seen a lot of fish
18 coming in on the river years ago, but now it's not like
19 it was years ago.

20

21 I've reported how the run used to be in
22 this building a couple years ago for AVCP -- what did
23 they call that. I forgot. Salmon thing going on that
24 time. Anyway, I go along with what's in the plan all
25 the time. People back home trust me to the come to
26 this kind of meetings. Elected me to like AC. They
27 are the people that I represent and I don't want to
28 hurt their feelings when I report to them what was
29 going on at the meeting. Because I always make reports
30 and some of you have heard me on the radio station on
31 talk show inviting people for this kind of meetings.

32

33 Anyway, I don't want to track off too
34 much, but I like Travis's report. That's what I had
35 for a comment, that people back home doesn't like to
36 see the season started closed, but if we have to, we
37 have to do that, and gear restrictions too.

38

39 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

40

41 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you, Mr.

42 Charles.

43

44 Any other comments or questions.

45

46 MR. ELISON: Mr. Chair. If I could add
47 a little bit. You know, we still have a lot of work to
48 do in coming up with a solid management strategy for
49 next year. Nothing is set yet. One of the
50 difficulties in managing the chinook salmon fishery on

1 the Kuskokwim River is the harvest power is tremendous.
2 There's a lot of fishermen out there looking to catch a
3 lot of fish. It's much more harvest power than we have
4 in our commercial fishery even, which makes it
5 difficult to provide windows of opportunity in the
6 middle of the season. If your run is only say 20,000
7 fish above the lower end of your escapement goal, well,
8 if we open even a four-hour commercial period, we could
9 potentially harvest 20,000 kings with this subsistence
10 fishery.

11
12 The Department does have some tools to
13 try to reduce the harvest power. The one that we've
14 been using is 6-inch mesh size during chum and sockeye.
15 Six-inch gear works really good to conserve king salmon
16 when chum and sockeye are there because it's more
17 efficient at catching those species. Before chum and
18 sockeye show up, 6-inch gear is actually really
19 efficient at catching king salmon, even more so than 8-
20 inch gear. So that's kind of limited in the utility.
21 We have to wait until later in June to use that one.

22
23 Something else we're looking into and
24 I'm not sure if we have the authority for this or not,
25 but there's been discussion of reducing net length to
26 25 fathoms, which would reduce some harvest power there
27 by getting fewer nets in the water or less net length
28 in the water.

29
30 Another tool that we have available to
31 us came about during the Board of Fish meeting in 2013
32 when we were rewriting the Kuskokwim River Salmon
33 Management Plan. That was to use an elder's fishery.
34 Use of an elder's fishery was we could open it up for a
35 short amount of time and allow those that are 60 years
36 or older to go fishing.

37
38 The way the regulation is written, the
39 requirement is that one person in the boat has to be at
40 least 60 years or older and they can be assisted and go
41 fishing with anybody that's within a second degree of
42 kinship. So that's mothers, daughters, cousins,
43 grandparents, grandchildren, those kinds of things.
44 Unfortunately U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has
45 informed us that they cannot allow that type of fishery
46 to happen, so it's kind of been taken away from us by
47 Fish and Wildlife Service in a way.

48
49 So that's something I would encourage
50 if you like that idea, the idea with an elder's

1 fishery, you have fewer boats in the water because you
2 just have those -- not necessarily elders, but that's
3 what we call it is the elder's fishery. So that's
4 going to reduce your harvest power and may give us the
5 ability to open up the short window period earlier in
6 the run as opposed to waiting towards the end of June.

7
8 So it's something I think has some
9 potential, but it would require, I think, some input
10 from the public and Councils like this to Fish and
11 Wildlife Service about trying to allow that to happen.
12 So that's kind of what we got.

13
14 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Any questions for
15 Travis.

16
17 MS. GREGORY: Mr. Chair.

18
19 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Go ahead, Ms. Gregory.

20
21 MS. GREGORY: I like your report and I
22 also like the idea of opening it up for elders because
23 that's the primary users of the fish before everybody
24 else decided to come around. In order to keep my goal
25 to have my elders live their life to the fullest as
26 they know it, I think we can pursue that too. Just
27 because darn people sometimes try to -- they stick
28 everything and try to boss us around. We can fight.
29 I'm a fighter. I work really hard for my food and I'm
30 not afraid to get my feet wet.

31
32 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you, Mary.

33
34 Mr. Roczicka.

35
36 MR. ROCZICKA: Mr. Chair. Travis, I
37 might have to wait for a Federal guy to come up, but do
38 you know if that's a regulatory action that the Federal
39 Subsistence Board could change or is that a legal
40 determination coming down from Title VIII of ANILCA?

41
42 MR. ELISON: Mr. Chair. I'm not really
43 qualified to answer that question. I'm not sure
44 exactly. We did have meetings with them last year to
45 discuss it and that was the determination we were told
46 is that they cannot allow that to happen.

47
48 MR. ROCZICKA: The other thing I'm
49 looking at, this success they had on the Yukon with
50 their dip fishery and there's nothing to preempt -- if

1 you don't have any -- if you're worried about the power
2 of -- which is a valid concern, the power of the
3 subsistence fleet out there, but for people to go out
4 and use a dipnet they could still do that under
5 subsistence. Would that be right or is that an option
6 that would require Board action to approve it for the
7 Kuskokwim?

8

9 MR. ELISON: Through the Chair. Dipnets
10 are not legal gear for subsistence or commercial in the
11 Kuskokwim River. We think it was a good idea. It was
12 obviously successful on the Yukon River. We have a
13 similar situation here on the Kuskokwim where we have
14 great concerns for king salmon, but lots and lots of
15 chum salmon. You know, they're very dense out there.
16 I think it would probably be successful, but, however,
17 that would require Board action.

18

19 Another was an agenda change request
20 submitted to I think it was the statewide board to
21 implement dipnets statewide, but I think that one
22 failed.

23

24 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Any other questions of
25 Travis.

26

27

28 (No comments)

29

30 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you. I think at
31 this time -- it's 20 minutes to 12:00. The weather is
32 bad out there. It might be a good idea to break for
33 lunch at this time until 1:30. We have -- yes, go
34 ahead.

35

36 MR. DOOLITTLE: Respectfully, Lester,
37 I'm Tom Doolittle, acting manager for the Yukon Delta
38 and I wanted to address at least one of the comments
39 that was made relative to Federal subsistence.

40

41 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Come on up. Go ahead.

42

43 MR. DOOLITTLE: My name is Tom
44 Doolittle. I'm the acting Refuge Manager for Yukon
45 Delta National Wildlife Refuge and I'm also the acting
46 Federal In-season Manager for the Kuskokwim fishery.
47 The one comment that was made by Travis relative to
48 Fish and Wildlife Service's position on the elder
49 fishery is based in law.

50

1 Two things would have to happen. One,
2 it would have to be restricted to rural residents and
3 it would have to be a Federalized fishery. Secondly,
4 we cannot discriminate to age and so that s the answer
5 to that particular question. I'll have a limited
6 amount of time and I'd like to also address the RAC
7 relative to the Tuluksak weir and the funding of the
8 Tuluksak weir and the Takotna weir also. I can make
9 those comments brief if I could.

10

11 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Well, you're sitting
12 there. You might as well go ahead with your report.

13

14 MR. DOOLITTLE: All right. Thank you
15 very much, Mr. Chair.

16

17 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Could you state your
18 name again.

19

20 MR. DOOLITTLE: My name is Tom
21 Doolittle and I'm the Acting Refuge Manager at Yukon
22 Delta National Wildlife Refuge and the proxy.

23

24 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you, Tom. Go
25 ahead.

26

27 MR. DOOLITTLE: I have written two
28 letters, both to the Office of Subsistence Management
29 and then also to the Regional Advisory Council. Those
30 letters were pertaining to a funding priority for
31 proposed funding to not fund the Tuluksak weir. Also
32 we have another small weir in the Kuskokwim, the
33 Takotna weir.

34

35 When we look at the funding priorities,
36 I would really like the RAC to go through each of the
37 areas that were funded and think to ANILCA and think of
38 two primary things. One is to conservation concern of
39 the resource and what rivers show a conservation
40 concern for king salmon and, secondly, which projects
41 would affect the most subsistence users. How do we
42 monitor those effects to that resource and to the
43 subsistence users. What tools do we have in the
44 toolbox.

45

46 When I stand back and I look at all the
47 different projects that were funded and I look at the
48 Tuluksak, which we only have two weir projects within
49 the Refuge boundaries, the Kwethluk and the Tuluksak
50 weir projects. By taking away the Tuluksak, it's kind

1 of like taking half our tools away.

2

3 Also you have to look at the village of
4 Tuluksak. A community that depends on chinook salmon
5 like any other community and that's part of them.
6 That's who they are, that fishery and that chinook
7 fishery. We also have to look at the other species
8 that those weirs monitor. The Tuluksak weir monitors
9 coho salmon. In fact, it has over 10,000 usually a
10 year that run through that weir, 15,000 chum salmon.
11 So it's just not about chinook.

12

13 Also chinook, just within the last 10
14 years have exceeded 2,000 fish running in that system
15 and now this last year only 193. Likely, of those 193,
16 only a third of them were females. So when we really
17 start to look at our prioritization, do we stop funding
18 a weir because the population has declined or it might
19 go away or we might not be able to track in the future
20 where it's going.

21

22 So my letter, I think, really, to
23 abstract it, is that the monitoring of the Tuluksak
24 system is an important part of the puzzle to have as
25 many active weir projects as possible in the Kuskokwim
26 system. Those weir projects are there for subsistence.
27 They are not there for commercial interests. They are
28 there for subsistence because that is the primary
29 monitoring result is for the subsistence fishery.

30

31 When you look at those other projects,
32 I really reach out to you to look and prioritize to see
33 whether some of those projects may be more beneficial
34 to commercial interests and not as beneficial to
35 subsistence.

36

37 Essentially, in closing, I just wanted
38 to thank all of this RAC because this will be actually
39 my last delivery and last talk to this RAC because I'll
40 be going back to Wisconsin to my family and to a house
41 and grandchildren that I've been away from for seven
42 years.

43

44 So thank you.

45

46 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Any questions.

47

48 MS. GREGORY: Mr. Chair. Mr.
49 Doolittle. I didn't quite understand what you were
50 saying about attract or attack those two concerns that

1 you brought up when conservation and -- attract the
2 most subsistence users.

3

4 MR. DOOLITTLE: One of the most
5 important things that would regulate in the future the
6 subsistence users would be the conservation concern for
7 the resource. So there is some obligation that we
8 would have, in fact a legal obligation, if there was
9 going to be a restriction on the rural resident. Then
10 that's when the Fish and Wildlife Service would look at
11 the protection of those resources in concern with the
12 State under ANILCA.

13

14 MS. GREGORY: My question is attack or
15 attract the most subsistence users.

16

17 MR. DOOLITTLE: Well, no, it's really
18 to protect the resource for the future of subsistence
19 users, so it's probably neither word.

20

21 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Are you done?

22

23 MS. GREGORY: Yeah.

24

25 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Mr. Charles.

26

27 MR. CHARLES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
28 Tom, you were talking about projects or the weirs at
29 Kwethluk and Tuluksak. Were they in operation last
30 summer or is that the last time they're going to
31 operate?

32

33 MR. DOOLITTLE: They were both in
34 operation last summer and then the Kwethluk would
35 continue. However, if there is not funding in the
36 future for the Tuluksak weir, that weir would not be in
37 operation.

38

39 MR. CHARLES: I'm a long time working
40 group member and that -- I made a short note last year
41 to support funding of those projects because that helps
42 us working group members to see what the run is doing
43 on those rivers each year ever since they started
44 working or the weirs were installed.

45

46 I would like to see them keep running
47 as long as they can because it helps us to see what the
48 runs are on those rivers. We don't have -- in the
49 past, we didn't know what was going on, but now since
50 the weirs are installed and operating they let us -- or

1 help us a lot to see what the runs are doing on those
2 rivers.

3

4 Thank you.

5

6 MR. DOOLITTLE: Thank you very much,
7 James. That helps us too. There are projects that
8 will likely continue on the upper reaches outside of
9 the Refuge on the upper parts of the Tuluksak for
10 restoration and a large input of funding that will be
11 both through Donlin and through Calista Corporation for
12 chinook habitat restoration. So a weir really is
13 imperative to the evaluation of that in-stream habitat
14 too, but we need fish in there to make it work.

15

16 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Mr. Roczicka.

17

18 MR. ROCZICKA: Mr. Chair. First, Tom,
19 I want to say I certainly appreciate having you up
20 there. Your insight and your knowledge and experience
21 that you have in management and the background you
22 brought with you in dealing with
23 Native American issues has also been very positive in
24 my experience. I'd like to thank you for being here
25 and you leave some pretty big shoes to fill.

26

27 More to the point of your last
28 statement, I'm wondering to what level -- was the
29 Refuge consulted with TRC or what amount of input did
30 you have in these recommendations, if any?

31

32 MR. DOOLITTLE: We had very little
33 direct input and so we were not necessarily caught by
34 surprise, but what we wanted to do -- and it s at a
35 stage in the process and it's very rare
36 that we would ever question the proposed projects for a
37 coming
38 year, but this one to us was so important, both for the
39 resource and the subsistence user, and particularly
40 important also to the basis of us being able to make
41 scientific decisions. It's both additive to have that
42 information for both State and Fish and Wildlife
43 Service fishery biologists to look at the overall -- be
44 able to evaluate the overall situation.

45

46 MR. ROCZICKA: Thank you. I guess I'd
47 just like to state for the record I find it highly --
48 I'll bite my tongue so I don't say this wrong, but
49 highly improper that the area managers would not be
50 involved in making decisions of this level.

1 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Any further questions
2 of Mr. Doolittle.

3

4

5 (No comments)

6

7 CHAIRMAN WILDE: If not, thank you very
8 much for the service and the help that you've given us
9 in the past and we're appreciative of everything that
10 you've done for us. Thank you.
11 given us

12

13 MR. DOOLITTLE: Thank you very much,
14 Mr. Chair.

15

16 CHAIRMAN WILDE: If there is nothing
17 else concerning the discussion we just had, let us take
18 a break now for lunch. Because of the weather I'd like
19 to give us at least an hour and a half because those
20 roads are not in the best of conditions. So let's come
21 back at 1:30 after lunch. Thank you.

22

23 (Off record)

24

25 (On record)

26

27 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Call the meeting back
28 to order. The next we're going to hear on our reports
29 is Doug Molyneaux with a PowerPoint. Is he available?
30 We had to wait until you left the room in order to call
31 you.

32

33 (Laughter)

34

35 CHAIRMAN WILDE: I guess we're going to
36 have to move back in order to see the presentation.

37

38 MR. MOLYNEAUX: Mr. Chairman. My name
39 is Doug Molyneaux. I'm a former Fish and Game
40 biologist. I was the Kuskokwim area research biologist
41 from 1989 until 2010 field season. I left in the
42 spring of 2011, but I'm not under any affiliation right
43 now, so I'm just presenting myself to you today as just
44 an interested citizen that has a long history with the
45 Kuskokwim.

46

47 MS. GREGORY: Mr. Molyneaux, you're
48 fading in and out.

49

50 MR. MOLYNEAUX: I'll bring it a little

1 bit closer. Is that better? Okay. I sent a letter to
2 the RAC members a while back, but it didn't make it
3 into the packets, so what I wanted to do is just review
4 the letter and that was the one that was distributed to
5 you this morning, so the details are in there if you
6 want. What I wanted to do was just walk you through
7 the information I present in that letter.

8
9 The next few slides are just a summary
10 basically of that letter. The gist of that letter is
11 that I wanted to advise -- my advice to you is that you
12 decide against the Technical Review Committee in their
13 recommendations not to fund Tuluksak and Takotna River
14 weirs. This is a real similar story to what Tom
15 Doolittle from Fish and Wildlife Service told you this
16 morning.

17
18 The Tuluksak and Takotna weirs
19 contribute more to subsistence management than do many
20 of the other projects the TRC has recommended for
21 funding, so I think they should be given priority over
22 some of the other projects. I'll get into a little bit
23 of detail on that.

24
25 To start with, the Kuskokwim River --
26 and this is the distribution of weir projects that are
27 used for monitoring escapement of kings, chums, sockeye
28 and coho salmon, all four species throughout the
29 Kuskokwim area. The projects in question are the
30 Tuluksak River, which is a lower Kuskokwim River
31 tributary, and the Takotna River weir, which is the
32 highest location and drainage where we monitor
33 escapement of all the salmon species.

34
35 Just like on the Yukon, those Upper
36 River fish are oftentimes some of the first fish to
37 come in to the Lower River and probably have a higher
38 exploitation rate in theory than do some of the Lower
39 River tributaries or Middle River tributaries.

40
41 The primary reason given by the TRC not
42 to fund Tuluksak and Takotna weirs is that they
43 contribute minimally to the post-season assessment or
44 estimate of the total king salmon run. The Yukon folks
45 as well as the Kuskokwim oftentimes see this run
46 reconstruction that's done for king salmon in the
47 Kuskokwim. They use all the weir information as well
48 as harvest information to do this run reconstruction.
49 There's certain projects because they have a higher
50 number of fish that escape into them, they tend to be

1 more important for the run reconstruction.

2

3 What I would argue is that basing the
4 decision solely on the contribution of these projects
5 to the king salmon run reconstruction is pretty narrow
6 and short-sighted perspective. It overemphasizes king
7 salmon in the run reconstruction itself and it
8 underemphasizes other salmon species, which are also
9 important to subsistence and just as important to
10 monitor for escapement.

11

12 Mary, do you have a question?

13

14 MS. GREGORY: Yeah. Can you just
15 explain a little bit more. I can't understand you.

16

17 MR. MOLYNEAUX: Explain what about.....

18

19 MS. GREGORY: What you're saying now is
20 the short perspective.

21

22 MR. MOLYNEAUX: Okay. Let me back up
23 one. So you have in your information booklets for this
24 meeting a list of projects that OSM and the Technical
25 Review Committee, the TRC, they've recommended certain
26 projects that were submitted for funding or continued
27 funding. There's quite an array of them, but there's
28 less money this year than what there has been in the
29 past, so not everything can get funded. So this TRC
30 group, part of the Federal advisory panel, they made
31 recommendations on which projects they think should be
32 funded and which ones should not be funded.

33

34 Now it's my understanding that this
35 board, you folks, the RAC members, have the option to
36 either agree with what the TRC has recommended to you
37 or you can question some of the recommendations.

38

39 MS. GREGORY: Or override them.

40

41 MR. MOLYNEAUX: Override them, I'm not
42 quite sure what's feasible and what's not. What I'm
43 suggesting to you is I think the TRC was a little
44 narrow-minded and short-sighted in their perspective on
45 some of the recommendations. That there were some
46 other elements that they did not take fully into
47 consideration. I'm saying there's overemphasis on king
48 salmon at the expense of being able to monitor
49 escapement for these other species, which are also
50 important to subsistence.

1 MS. GREGORY: Okay.
2
3 MR. MOLYNEAUX: And there s also an
4 overemphasis on the run reconstruction itself for king
5 salmon, which is an important tool, but it's a
6 fabrication. It's an estimate statistical in the
7 thing. The weirs are actual fish that they're counting
8 through. That's the most fundamental. We know how
9 many fish went through because you saw those fish going
10 up the river.
11
12 MS. GREGORY: Okay.
13
14 MR. MOLYNEAUX: And they shouldn't
15 underestimate the value of that information over this
16 fabrication of the run reconstruction. They're all
17 important, but when the budgets become tight and you
18 start having to cut things, I don't think this is a
19 good place to cut and I'll explain why. Okay.
20
21 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Can I ask a question?
22
23 MR. MOLYNEAUX: Go ahead.
24
25 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Of the group of people
26 that are in the Technical Review Committee, is there
27 anybody that is familiar to the situation in the
28 rivers?
29
30 MR. MOLYNEAUX: I assume there is. The
31 question was are there people -- I'm repeating this so
32 that she gets it recorded. Are there people on the TRC
33 who are familiar with the Kuskokwim and the different
34 projects. I'm assuming there are, but I'm not the best
35 person to answer.
36
37 Buzzy can answer that question, Gene
38 Peltola.
39
40 MR. PELTOLA: Mr. Chair. Gene Peltola,
41 OSM. If at all possible, after Doug concludes with his
42 presentation I could make some general comments about
43 the composition of the TRC, the roles it has played in
44 the past and the current role it's playing.
45
46 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Okay. Thank you.
47
48 MR. MOLYNEAUX: Okay. So continue on
49 here then. The two projects again, Tuluksak and
50 Takotna, and this is a little redundant with what Mr.

1 Doolittle said, but it gives you -- you can see the
2 numbers. For Tuluksak for chum salmon they've had
3 counts of chum of 8,000 to 36,000 at this one weir.
4 For cohos, 2,400 up to 41,000 cohos. In Takotna, 1,200
5 chum up to 13,000 and for coho 2,600 up to 7,600. The
6 Takotna being a place again highest location in the
7 drainage where we monitor these species. There's
8 genetic differences with the fish in the very Upper
9 Kuskokwim River Drainage.

10

11 Anyhow, in contrast, the TRC has
12 recommended funding of two projects that have minimal
13 value to subsistence fishery management, in my opinion
14 anyway, and one of these is the Kuskokwim River salmon
15 in-season subsistence surveys. Sounds like it would be
16 a good project, but you need to look at the product of
17 that project to see if it's really useful and I'll show
18 you some examples.

19

20 Another project is the Kanektok and
21 Goodnews River salmon weirs. I'll get into a little
22 detail on each of these. So those are two proposals
23 that the TRC recommended to fund, but I'm saying if you
24 have to cut the amount of money, you have to cut a
25 project, it would be better to cut these two rather
26 than Takotna and Tuluksak.

27

28 The results -- I'm going to focus first
29 on this in-season subsistence monitoring project. The
30 results from that in-season survey have been misleading
31 to management. This is why. This is one of the -- a
32 disclosure here. Greg Roczicka is involved with this
33 with ONC because this project, the in-season
34 subsistence monitoring, is done cooperatively with ONC
35 and Fish and Game. This is a portion of the weekly
36 information that they provide to the Kuskokwim River
37 Salmon Management Working Group.

38

39 What I want to bring to your attention
40 specifically on this table that they provide every week
41 is this one section that says when they ask the
42 subsistence fishermen compared with this time in a
43 normal year how are catch rates for salmon this week.
44 This example for 2012 they only had 10 fishermen that
45 they did interviews with that week, but 8 of the 10
46 said it was poor in 2012, as indeed it was in 2012. It
47 was a very poor run 2012 king salmon.

48

49 But now here's 2013. They surveyed
50 more fishermen that year, but 57 percent said it was

1 very good catches that they're having in the Bethel
2 area. That's where this survey is done, in the Bethel
3 area. Fifty-seven percent of the subsistence fishers
4 said, oh, yeah, we're having great catches, very good
5 catches and 26 percent said it's at least normal and
6 only 17 said it was poor. This is that run
7 reconstruction for king salmon. These two bars are the
8 bars for 2012 and 2013. We still need to add in
9 subsistence harvest here. We don't know what -- that's
10 being collected right now. Even if it's a big
11 subsistence harvest it's still -- the height of these
12 bars represents how big the king salmon runs were.

13
14 In 2012 and 2013, they're both very
15 weak years and yet when you look at this subsistence
16 information it makes you think, oh, 2013, we're out of
17 the woods, it's looking good and strong. It wasn't.
18 It misled the managers. This is one of probably three
19 different things that happened that misled the managers
20 to make the wrong decisions in season that made the
21 final escapement so poor in 2013.

22
23 I'm not saying the subsistence
24 fishermen were lying or trying to purposely mislead
25 people. It has to do with their perception of how the
26 runs were. However this project is being operated,
27 it's not serving as the tool that is needed for in-
28 season management. So either they needed to change
29 their methods or take the funding away from that
30 project and put it into something else that is working.
31 And the weir does work.

32
33 So the second project I wanted to
34 address was the Kanektok and Goodnews River weir.
35 There was one proposal for those two weir projects and
36 the Kanektok and Goodnews River weirs are of most value
37 to commercial fisheries management, not subsistence
38 management. I'll give you a map again for the
39 location. The Kanektok River is located down here and
40 actually drains into Kuskokwim Bay and the community of
41 Quinhagak is at the mouth and the Middle Fork.
42 Goodnews Weir is down where Goodnews and the community
43 of Platinum are located and also drains into Kuskokwim
44 Bay.

45
46 The Kanektok has a commercial fishing
47 district out in front of it, District 4, and the
48 Goodnews has District 5. These commercial fishing
49 districts are managed completely independent of the
50 Kuskokwim River. So those are the weirs for managing

1 these commercial fisheries and then this is the array
2 of weirs used for managing the commercial and
3 subsistence fisheries of the Kuskokwim.

4
5 So this little table that comes up here
6 right now shows what the subsistence -- what the
7 average subsistence and commercial harvest are for the
8 three commercial fishing districts or three districts
9 within the Kuskokwim area. District 1 is the Kuskokwim
10 River, District 4 is where the Kanektok River is at and
11 District 5 is where Goodnews is at.

12
13 What I want to point out for the
14 Kuskokwim River, which is really more than just
15 District 1 for the subsistence, it's the entire
16 Kuskokwim River, but look at the king salmon, 73,000
17 king salmon in the subsistence versus the overall
18 average of 2,600 in the commercial. Chum, 54 and 26.
19 Sockeye, you can kind of look across. When you get
20 down to District 4, it's the reverse. The commercial
21 fishery takes the vast, vast majority of the king
22 salmon harvest in District 4. The same thing with
23 chum, sockeye and coho salmon.

24
25 When you look at District 5, the
26 commercial fishery has taken even higher proportion of
27 the total runs. The subsistence harvests are really
28 pretty darn small in those areas. In those areas,
29 District 4 and District 5, have no subsistence issues
30 about subsistence fishermen not getting enough fish.
31 If they're having problems with escapement, the primary
32 management tool they need to use to try to get
33 escapements up are to reduce commercial harvest, not to
34 do anything to subsistence.

35
36 So the Kanektok and Goodnews River
37 weirs really are benefitting the commercial fishery and
38 are of negligible value I would say for managing the
39 subsistence fishery. So the Kanektok and Goodnews
40 River weirs are very valuable projects, but for
41 commercial. For this funding source, the Federal
42 Office of Subsistence Management, it seems the
43 direction of funding from this organization should be
44 at things that are really helping to manage subsistence
45 fisheries, not commercial fisheries.

46
47 The other thing I wanted to bring up,
48 in the executive summary -- in the executive summary
49 that was submitted as part of the proposal it states in
50 there that the Kanektok weir has a good operational

1 history and I think they misspoke. I'm not sure
2 exactly what they meant, but if you look at what's
3 recorded in the literature, in the area management
4 report, the Kanektok River weir for kings and chum, the
5 Kanektok River weir counts were incomplete for 6 of 10
6 years and for sockeye and coho it was incomplete for 5
7 of 10 years.

8
9 Not all rivers are the same. You guys
10 have been up the rivers. You know some rivers are a
11 little more placid. Other rivers are wild. The
12 Kanektok River is a very difficult stream to try to put
13 a weir in and keep it in and that plays out in our
14 successful these projects are. In contrast, the
15 Tuluksak and Takotna River weirs have had a much better
16 track record, so the investment made in keeping those
17 projects going, you're getting estimates of all salmon
18 species 10 out of 10 years as is reported in the 2010
19 AMR, annual management report, for Fish and Game.

20
21 So, again, just in closing, my advice
22 to you is that you decide against the Technical Review
23 Committee and the recommendation not to fund Tuluksak
24 and Takotna, that I hope you can find funding to cover
25 all these projects and improve the in-season project,
26 but if something needs to be cut, I don't think these
27 are two projects you want to cut.

28
29 Tuluksak, as Tom Doolittle mentioned --
30 one thing he didn't mention is that Tuluksak has been
31 closed to even subsistence fishing these last few
32 years. The reason it's been closed is looking at the
33 weir counts, how weak the weir counts have been. If
34 you're going to lift that restriction, you need to have
35 a basis for lifting that restriction. The way to get
36 that information is from the Tuluksak River weir. If
37 you take that weir away, then how do you stop
38 restricting Tuluksak fishermen from fishing in the
39 Tuluksak River.

40
41 The other thing that Tom Doolittle
42 mentioned, which was new to me is that they're going to
43 do restoration work on the very upper Tuluksak where
44 there was a lot of mining damage from the past. How
45 are you going to know if that restoration work was
46 effective unless you're counting how many salmon are
47 going up the Tuluksak River. You're going to end up
48 wasting the money on that restoration. You're going to
49 have no way of telling whether the work was really
50 effective or whether it was just a boondoggle.

1 For Takotna, again, it's the highest up
2 in the drainage that's being operated. Both of these
3 projects too are cooperative projects with the local
4 organizations, local communities.

5
6 Anyhow, quyana.

7
8 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Any questions for Mr.
9 Molyneaux.

10
11 MS. GREGORY: Mr. Chair. I'd like to
12 thank Mr. Molyneaux for letting us know about this. We
13 need people like that to know because our goal is to
14 keep our subsistence lifestyle going.

15
16 I appreciate what he did.

17
18 Thank you.

19
20 MR. MOLYNEAUX: I'll let you come back
21 up to your seats so they can record what you're saying
22 here for questions.

23
24 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you.

25
26 Mr. Miller, are you going to be.....

27
28 MR. MILLER: I'll present some stuff
29 first, Mr. Chair, and then I have a slide presentation.

30
31 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Okay. Prior to your
32 presentation I'd like to have Mr. Peltola up here to
33 explain the workings of the TRC.

34
35 MR. PELTOLA: Good afternoon, Mr.
36 Chair. Members of the Regional Advisory Council. Once
37 again my name is Gene Peltola, Jr. I m the Assistant
38 Regional Director for the Office of Subsistence
39 Management. Coming into the position in August, I
40 didn't -- coming from the field, being the Refuge
41 Manager here, I did not quite totally understand the
42 FRMP process and the role of TRC. Part of my education
43 to that coming to the new position is to inform myself
44 of these.

45
46 So this program has been in place for
47 many years. We have the Technical Review Committee,
48 which reviews proposals and makes recommendations to
49 fund or not fund proposals. The Technical Review
50 Committee is comprised of members from all the bureaus;

1 the Fish and Wildlife, BIA, BLM, National Park Service,
2 Forest Service, in addition to a representative from
3 Alaska Department of Fish and Game Commercial Fisheries
4 Division, Alaska Department of Fish and Game Sport
5 Fisheries Divisions, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
6 Subsistence Division. That body is the entity which
7 makes the recommendation to fund or not fund.

8

9 Coming into it, I always thought OSM or
10 Office of Subsistence Management, what was their role.
11 The formal role of OSM is to provide input into the
12 technical review of the proposals which are provided to
13 the TRC or Technical Review Committee.

14

15 So what happens once the TRC makes the
16 recommendation. Historically, for the most part,
17 Regional Advisory Councils have affirmed or accepted
18 the recommendations of the TRC. Up until recent
19 history, more along the lines of this particular cycle
20 or this year, we're starting to see Regional Advisory
21 Councils take no action, meaning they accepted the
22 TRC's recommendation. An example being the North
23 Slope. We have seen Regional Advisory Councils
24 reshuffle the order so to speak and make their own
25 recommendations, which is what has happened in the
26 Southeast Regional Advisory Council meeting early on
27 this year. Then the Western Interior is also
28 considering the same thing.

29

30 With regard to that, another question
31 is what is the role of OSM. This year the Western
32 Interior asked us to provide some circumstances or
33 results of taking one proposal and replacing it with
34 another or one project with another. That's the role
35 that OSM plays.

36

37 Because it is relatively new with
38 regard to the history of this program, what are the
39 options for the YK Delta RAC. You could take, one, no
40 action. Two, you could come up with your own list or
41 you could ask for assistance from OSM in order to
42 better inform you on those decisions. So that's what
43 we're faced with the TRC up until this point in time.

44

45 If there's any other specific questions
46 you had, I'd be more than happy to try to address
47 those.

48

49 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Any questions of Mr.
50 Peltola.

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(No comments)

MR. PELTOLA: I apologize for my brevity, but once we get to the RAC stage, the Regional Advisory Council stage, like the Southeast, they came up with their list. If that approach is taken, you have to realize if you pull one, two or three projects out and replace them with others, there s consequences. Some project will not be funded. An example for the Yukon Kuskokwim Delta list, we have more proposed projects than we have funding available. So if you modify the list, then some will get funded and some will not, so that's allowed for the RAC.

Once the Regional Advisory Council makes or doesn't make those recommendations, what occurs then. Then it goes to the full Federal Subsistence Board. They act upon the recommendations for the particular Regional Advisory Councils or the Councils as a whole. They make their recommendation and then that finding coming from the Federal Subsistence Board comes to the Assistant Regional Director for OSM and then in this case I sign off on obligation of those funds, Fish and Wildlife Service funds.

It's handled a little bit differently with Forest Service funds from the Southeast because down there Beth Pendleton, the Regional Forester, has to sign off on obligation of those Forest Service funds.

Thank you. Appreciate your time.

CHAIRMAN WILDE: Any questions.

Mr. Roczicka.

MR. ROCZICKA: Not a question, just a comment. Thank you, Gene, for making that clarification. I just wanted to give notice because my employer is directly involved with one of these that when it gets time for deliberations here I will be declaring a conflict, so I won't be participating in the debate, but I'd strongly urge the consideration of the rest of the Council if we get a quorum to vote with, once it occurs, that you do look at a reprioritization of the current projects.

1 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Any other comments.
2
3
4 (No comments)
5
6 CHAIRMAN WILDE: If not, thank you, Mr.
7 Peltola.
8
9 MR. PELTOLA: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
10
11 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Mr. Miller.
12
13 MR. MILLER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
14 Steve Miller, Fish and Wildlife Service, Kenai. In
15 your packet -- I handed out a packet earlier today and
16 Mr. Doolittle addressed some of those issues and then
17 you just heard Mr. Molyneaux address some of the issues
18 too. I was here on behalf of Ken Harper, who is the
19 senior fisheries biologist from the Kenai Fisheries
20 Field Office. Also Jeff Anderson, who is our field
21 supervisor and myself. There's also letters in that
22 packet from various individuals in support of those
23 projects and there's also letters from Kuskokwim Native
24 Association, AVCP and from other individuals too. If
25 you have the time -- and ONC actually has a letter in
26 there too as a proponent for the weir projects.
27
28 The issue is under the current funding
29 and prioritization of the 2014 and 17 project proposals
30 for the Kuskokwim Bay by the TRC and the OSM and the
31 recommendations not to fund the Tuluksak and the
32 Takotna monitoring projects, which we've gone over.
33
34 Mr. Chair, members of the RAC, I'm here
35 to address the Technical Review Committee's decisions
36 not to fund the Tuluksak River weir. Those are in the
37 packet, the yellow packet there on Pages 207 and then
38 there's a summary on Page 225.
39
40 We have entered a new management
41 timeframe on the Kuskokwim River with this
42 implementation of the basin-wide escapement, goals,
43 strategy and the adoption of the new Bayesian and
44 Ricker spawner-recruit model during the 2013 escapement
45 goals were reduced almost half of the previous goals
46 and in the example the Tuluksak River the escapement
47 goal was completely done away with. Harvest rates have
48 remained high or even elevated to levels decreasing any
49 buffering effects of past escapements.
50

1 Because of this management, managers
2 have entered untested waters. The new management
3 strategy is based upon the theory of the new Bayesian
4 and Ricker spawner-recruit model. For the past several
5 years, and especially this past year, the predicted
6 return of chinook salmon failed to materialize and the
7 chinook salmon escapement was one of the lowest on
8 record. This low escapement most certainly will impact
9 future runs.

10
11 It is our concern that if managers lose
12 the ability to monitor the small stocks, such as the
13 Tuluksak River and the only headwater river, the
14 Takotna River, we're throwing out our ability to
15 monitor the effects of this new basin-wide escapement
16 goal in the drainage, not just the most productive
17 stocks in the drainage.

18
19 Will these and the other 75 percent of
20 the unmonitored stocks be impacted, leading to a
21 further productivity decline of chinook salmon
22 populations in the Kuskokwim River. We are dealing
23 with unknowns and to stop monitoring small systems in a
24 time of change is not sound science and a benefit to
25 the managers, the users, neither chinook salmon that we
26 need to conserve.

27
28 The Federal in-season manager has
29 written a letter, which is in your packet. That was
30 the one that Mr. Doolittle already addressed some this
31 morning on his concerns. It stated he was concerned
32 about the weir project directly addresses published
33 priority information needs for the Kuskokwim River.
34 That's stated in his letter too.

35
36 Another thing I'd like to bring up is
37 the village of Tuluksak is concerned. The monitoring
38 of the Tuluksak River fish stocks that have provided
39 generations of residents with a food source will be
40 dropped. The Tuluksak Native community has two letters
41 of support in that packet as well as Mr. Moses Andrew
42 is on the RAC Committee here today, but he was, I
43 guess, weathered out, so he wasn't able to testify in
44 that realm.

45
46 He also speaks to the same issues of
47 the critical needs of the priority and monitoring
48 projects and was part of the process when these systems
49 were first chosen of mixed monitoring projects. We
50 started a partnership with the village of Tuluksak over

1 30 years ago. We've been working with them on
2 projects. They are hopeful too that the RAC members
3 and the representatives in the communities on the river
4 can see the need to fund monitoring projects on the
5 Tuluksak and Takotna Rivers.

6
7 Projects that monitor small stocks
8 which will see impacts of changes in management long
9 before the most productive stocks will and sometimes we
10 see changes in these small systems that are masked by
11 these larger systems and we think it's very critical to
12 have those small systems in the set of data as well as
13 just the large productive ones.

14
15 So, with that, Mr. Doolittle gave his
16 report. There are this packet that addresses some of
17 those issues and I know it takes time to go through all
18 that. The other thing is I had a slide presentation
19 that I was going to do later and they're just going to
20 put it all together now.

21
22 The one thing I have here too is some
23 packets I was going to hand out and I'm going to
24 address some of this stuff in the slide presentation,
25 so I can give that now. One of the things that we've
26 got to look at is on these long-term monitoring
27 projects, long-term datasets is we start to see trends
28 in what's going on and that's important to managers.

29
30 So, with that, I guess we can switch
31 seats again. (Pause) Mr. Chairman, I was asked to have
32 somewhat of a presentation. I got to thinking about
33 what's value. What's value can be a lot of things. It
34 can be the relationship of one thing to something else,
35 it can be a contribution, it can be information, it can
36 be real, we can touch it, it can be intrinsic, it can
37 be measurable and then we always think it can have a
38 monetary value, so there's a lot of things and there's
39 a lot of different values.

40
41 So I got to thinking about it. What's
42 the value of the planet to the universe. What's the
43 value of the ocean to the planets. Earth mainly.
44 What's the value of fish to the ocean. What's the value
45 of those fish to subsistence. What's the value of
46 subsistence to the subsistence user. So it's all
47 interlinked and there's different values associated
48 with all of this. Small things can mean a lot to big
49 things.

50

1 I thought about intrinsic value. So
2 you cannot separate the light of a star from a star.
3 Does that make sense? So you can't separate a way of
4 life in a culture. You can't separate culture and
5 subsistence. You can't separate subsistence and fish.
6 Just like you can't separate the star and it's light.

7
8 So what's the value and what's that
9 relationship. What's the relationship of those fish to
10 other mammals, other things in the ocean. What's that
11 relationship to the past, the subsistence past. What's
12 that relationship to the present. What's that
13 relationship to the commercial fishery, which many of
14 the men on this river and subsistence users are also
15 commercial fishermen. What's that relationship to the
16 commercial fishery or somebody in the supermarket.

17
18 When I pull this picture up, you notice
19 that circle I just threw up there? How much does it
20 say, one pound? You'll notice it says wild chinook
21 salmon. I went on the internet. It's anywhere from
22 \$19.99 a pound to as high as over \$40.00 a pound in
23 different markets. We don't think of that dollar value
24 when we think about this relationship.

25
26 So when I thought about it, okay, so
27 what's the relationship of the Tuluksak weir to the
28 other projects on this system. I looked at a small
29 system, okay. So in the run reconstruction, we've
30 heard about that, it's .7 percent of what we know.
31 There's 75 percent there that's unknown, so it's of
32 very little value or contribution to that model. But
33 what's the known value and the known contribution to
34 what we know. It's 2.8 percent. So it's larger, but
35 yet it's still small.

36
37 Then we heard Mr. Doolittle talk about
38 -- the in-season Refuge Manager -- what's the value of
39 the Tuluksak weir to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife
40 Service. Well, we have two projects. So now look at
41 the contribution. It's 50 percent. That's a big
42 difference. So then I thought about it. What's the
43 value of that project to Tuluksak. It's everything.

44
45 So then I looked at what's the value
46 and what's the relationship between datasets. So we
47 did a study in the past where we characterized the
48 Tuluksak chinook salmon fishery and we went into the
49 fish camps and we did data and we did numbers and
50 there's a direct comparison to the data that was

1 collected at that subsistence fishery, which is a
2 completely different project and the weir. We looked
3 at what's the contribution of females to the harvest in
4 the subsistence fishery. What was the contribution and
5 what was the composition of females at the weir the
6 same year, two years, 2008 and 2009. So we compared
7 these datasets. I think this is the only project I
8 know of that's done this. So, again, it's a small
9 system.

10

11 So then I looked at what's the
12 relationship and can I validate datasets between the
13 Kwethluk, the Tuluksak and the Bethel Test Fishery.
14 We've heard about the Bethel Test Fishery. So what I
15 did was I went in and I looked just at last year alone
16 and I think there's a pointer here. If you look at the
17 peaks and the valleys, these are the cumulative
18 proportions. The fish that went by the Tuluksak weir
19 on one day, the same day at the Kwethluk River weir and
20 15 days prior what was in the Bethel Test Fishery.
21 This one? Oh, look at that.

22

23 So what you'll see is in 15 days you'll
24 see these peaks and these valleys somewhat line up, but
25 you also see right in here -- you heard Travis talk
26 about we had some issues with the weir. We're not sure
27 what they are yet, but you would think that on this
28 same day we would see more fish and we go back and we
29 address it. Look at how these peaks line up. Then I
30 looked at it. Seventeen days. So it's 17 days. I
31 say, well, I get similar patterns, it's a little bit
32 different, but I still should have seen fish at this
33 weir on these days. In Tuluksak we did get fish. So
34 that works. That tells me something was wrong at the
35 Kwethluk. I can go back and I can address that for
36 this period of time.

37

38 Also, one of the things that I looked
39 at, we talked about pulsing. Well, here you see the
40 Bethel Test Fishery and here you see the Tuluksak
41 fishery and here you see the Kwethluk fishery and you
42 see high numbers going through the Tuluksak River, you
43 see high numbers go through the Kwethluk, you saw high
44 numbers in the Bethel Test Fishery. These same days
45 line up. Look at this, peak, peak, peak. Peak, peak,
46 peak. That's not coincidence.

47

48 Then you go over here. Something tells
49 me here we have no Tuluksak fish to speak of. The
50 numbers have really dropped off. The numbers at the

1 Bethel Test Fishery have started to drop, but these
2 peaks still are pretty close. But look, we've got all
3 kinds of fish coming through the Kwethluk, so that can
4 tell me were those fish staging in the Lower River, was
5 something going on.

6
7 We definitely see that there's two
8 pulses that we talk about and we hear about, where we
9 see that at the weirs. We don't see that to the same
10 extent as late in the Tuluksak that we do. It's more
11 compressed. But the one thing it tells me is that we
12 may have more Kwethluk fish down here in the Bethel
13 Test Fishery earlier than we did Tuluksak, so maybe the
14 majority of the Tuluksak fish are through the system.
15 So that's information managers can use and that just
16 compare another bit, small.

17
18 One thing I wanted to look at, we were
19 talking about we had in 2012, we had restrictions on
20 the river. Prior to that we didn't. Now where are
21 restrictions effective. Well, let's look at it.
22 Here's how many fish we were getting through the weirs
23 years prior. We had restrictions this year in 2011,
24 but not on the mainstem. Here we had restrictions on
25 the mainstem. Last year we had no restrictions. Look
26 what happened the year we had the rolling closures on
27 the Tuluksak, on the George, on the Takotna and the
28 Tatlawiksuk we don't see as much. Something affected
29 these three systems. These three systems were also
30 systems that we were concerned about that we have
31 restrictions on those rivers.

32
33 Also, if you look, and Doug brought
34 this up, we have years of data for every year for the
35 Tuluksak, for the Takotna, for the Tat. These are
36 smaller systems. What happened in 2012. The Kogrukluuk
37 blew out. Kwethluk, no data. So we have those
38 long-term trends, but some of the smaller systems
39 they're giving us that information. Everything we
40 looked at is percent of females over time and this is
41 the Tuluksak River weir again.

42
43 MS. GREGORY: Mr. Miller. Mr.
44 Chairman. Can I ask a question.

45
46 MR. MILLER: Sure.

47
48 MS. GREGORY: Go back one slide. When
49 you say restriction, what does that mean?
50

1 MR. MILLER: In 2012, if you remember,
2 Mary, they had what they called the rolling closures.
3 So we started out with closure on the Lower River and
4 then it was seven-day time periods. We moved up the
5 river, so it was closed and then it was open.

6
7 MS. GREGORY: For fishing?

8
9 MR. MILLER: It was for subsistence
10 fishing, yes.

11
12 MR. MOLYNEAUX: What was total on that,
13 like 30-some days? It was a lot of days. A couple
14 weeks.

15
16 MR. MILLER: It was a lot of days.
17 What I was trying to point out is you've heard about
18 windows in the past and they said windows didn't work
19 and I don't have that data, but they did something
20 different in 2012 when they went to the rolling
21 closures. Those were for a little bit longer periods
22 of time and they figured it takes at least seven days
23 for those fish to pass a certain area, 11 days. On the
24 Kwethluk, when I went back, if you look here, that's a
25 15-day lag. I looked at the Bethel Test Fishery and
26 what happens 15 days later. If you see -- look how
27 these peaks line up and these valleys line up.

28
29 What I realized is that if I see fish
30 from the Kwethluk River or fish from the Tuluksak River
31 and I even put fish from the Kogrukluuk on here, I see
32 the same pattern, but somewhere between 15 and 17 days
33 the same fish that were in the Bethel Test Fishery are
34 going through the weirs. That's how I look at that.

35
36 So it's an indication that starts to
37 give us data. This is from long-term trend data. It's
38 not from just collecting it one year, one year and then
39 skip. It takes these long-term trends. This is just to
40 point out can I say that the rolling restrictions were
41 responsible for this. I can't say this in one year.
42 But if you look at that, something definitely happened.
43 So I would say it was a positive that, yeah, they
44 probably did have an effect.

45
46 Here we're looking at the contribution
47 of females over time. If I look at chum from 1991 and I
48 look, you can see that it varies, but it doesn't change
49 a whole lot, but last year for some reason it jumped
50 quite a bit in the favor of females or 2012. That was

1 the same year we had those restrictions.

2

3 Now look at chinook. This is the
4 contribution of chinook over time from the years of the
5 projects. In that year it jumped from -- we were
6 getting like 26, 26. It jumped -- here we had 43, 41,
7 48, but we see it changes. Same thing with sockeye.
8 And you'll notice what the overall contribution -- I
9 should have run through and averaged this. Let's just
10 say it averages out to 30 percent for chinook.

11

12 If you look at sockeye, you have a way
13 higher fecundity rate, you have more females in that
14 than you do in chinook or you would have in chum. The
15 other one we're looking at is coho. You'll see a high
16 ratio of male to female of almost 50 percent a lot of
17 years, males to females, males to females. Some years
18 it's different. So we start to look at that data and
19 what does it mean over time.

20

21 Here I was just looking at a
22 relationship between length and age and sex within a
23 species. Remember we discussed in Mr. Doolittle and
24 Mr. Molyneaux brought up the fact that there's more
25 than just chinook in those systems and we have to
26 monitor for those species as well. So I just looked at
27 chum and I just drug these up quick, but if you look at
28 the contribution and the medium age, the average length
29 of what those fish are at three year old male chum,
30 you'll see that it's somewhat been decreasing over
31 time. If you look at females, they seem to be getting
32 larger over time. What does that mean? Well, we'll
33 know more in the future.

34

35 Trends. Long-term trends are important
36 in management. If you look up here at the top, what's
37 been the trend and I just looked at the last three
38 generations. Roughly 2000 to 2013. So what's the
39 trend in our coho escapement. Well, it's been going
40 down. What do we see in the Tuluksak chinook salmon
41 fishery. We see this same trend. Is something going
42 on? These species are in the system in fresh water
43 from one to two years. Is there something going on
44 there? I look at chum, I don't see a big change. If
45 we looked at sockeye, we see somewhat of an increase. I
46 didn't fill out the Kwethluk data, but Kwethluk we see
47 a much larger increase in sockeye production, but we
48 see the same trend in coho and chinook. We see a
49 similar trend in the chum stocks.

50

1 So, another reason we look at small
2 systems. So why do we pick a small system to do
3 things. There's more to it than just -- one of the
4 reasons we look at small systems is they're easier, can
5 we add some new technology or some new information to
6 that system that we can get results from.

7
8 A few years back we looked at genetics
9 and we looked at chinook specifically. We were
10 wondering what system can we use that we know we can
11 get an adequate sample size to cover the population and
12 it happened to be the Tuluksak River. So we used it to
13 get genetic heritability study and that's a whole other
14 study. We also used it when we incorporated video.
15 First thing we did was is there a system that we can
16 try this out on that we think we can get it to work to
17 work the bugs out before we put it in a larger system.
18 So we went to the Tuluksak.

19
20 The other thing is we get the ASL and
21 now with our video we have an archived data of every
22 fish that goes through that weir basically. There are
23 a few hours maybe we missed something. We can go back,
24 we can sex fix. Now we can do lengths on fish. The
25 weir is open 24/7. We have a new methodology where we
26 can look at the length of these fish without doing our
27 ASL. We maybe not have to do as many fish. We did
28 this because we knew we may be able to start and get an
29 idea if we can do it, if it's feasible to do it on
30 other systems. We started with a small system.

31
32 So we were talking a little bit about
33 models. The other day I asked a statistician can you
34 drop me off at the airport. Simple questions, right.
35 So his reply was that's a complicated question. So the
36 first thing the statistician says is we need a model.
37 We've heard about models. So I just asked him to take
38 me to the airport, right. So he's going to start
39 thinking about how old is your car, how many miles to
40 the gallon, do you need new tires, are you sure you
41 don't need a truck. All of this information goes into
42 the model. So we still come out with a question mark
43 maybe.

44
45 So sometimes we think of these models
46 and we expect a lot. Sometimes our expectations are
47 like this. Boy, it's really going to work. We've got
48 great hope. Sometimes this is reality. That's a huge
49 difference. We have to think of those things. That's
50 just like Mr. Harper pointed out, you have to monitor

1 change and if you put something new in a system and a
2 new strategy, we need to monitor and we need to monitor
3 small systems just as much as large systems. We have
4 only two systems on the Refuge that are being monitored
5 and we think that's very important.

6

7 Again, it's how does everything relate.
8 Small things can be of value too. Remember that little
9 star up there.

10

11 Any questions?

12

13 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Any questions.

14

15 MS. GREGORY: No, it was good.

16

17 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you, Mr. Miller.

18

19 MR. MILLER: Thank you.

20

21 MS. GREGORY: And it was simple enough
22 for us to understand.

23

24 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Any questions for Mr.
25 Miller, Council members.

26

27

28 (No comments)

29

30 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Wherever we are, the
31 rest of us.

32

33 Continue.

34

35 MR. ELISON: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

36 Once again this is Travis Elison. I'm the Kuskokwim
37 Area Manager for Commercial Fisheries Division of Fish
38 and Game. I didn't put together a pretty slide show,
39 so I asked Doug if I could borrow his map and he
40 graciously provided that for us.

41

42 I want to speak to the funding and some
43 of the results of the Technical Review Committee and
44 kind of give you another perspective. My perspective
45 is from the State of Alaska as a Kuskokwim area
46 management biologist. All of these projects that we're
47 discussing today are within the Kuskokwim area and I
48 look at data that comes from every single one of these
49 projects basically on a daily basis all summer long to
50 try to make the best decisions possible. They're all

1 very good projects. They all have merit. I wish we
2 could keep them all, but it's become obvious that
3 funding is limited, so we have to prioritize here and
4 make some tough decisions as to which projects to let
5 go.

6
7 On the Kuskokwim River we have seven
8 weirs currently. There's actually an additional eighth
9 that counts sockeye, but there's seven weirs that count
10 chinook, chum and coho salmon on a regular basis.
11 They're all very good weir projects and it's a nice
12 array setup that we have. In Kuskokwim Bay on the
13 Kanektok River, we have one weir project. Just one.
14 Goodnews River we have one weir project. That's it.

15
16 The entire Kuskokwim area we fly aerial
17 surveys in addition to weirs. We do that on the
18 Kanektok, the Goodnews. We fly a lot of the rivers in
19 the Kuskokwim River -- a lot of tributaries I mean,
20 including Tuluksak River.

21
22 Mostly I want to talk about the weirs
23 and how I used them to make management decisions. On
24 the Kuskokwim River we have, like I said, seven weirs
25 there. Takotna and Tuluksak combined to make up one
26 percent of an entire escapement in the Kuskokwim River.
27 So it's hard for me as a fisheries manager to make a
28 decision to close a subsistence fishery or to open a
29 subsistence fishery based on one percent of the entire
30 escapement.

31
32 We look at the Kuskokwim River as one
33 stock, so we manage it as one. When people go out and
34 harvest subsistence, especially in the Lower River,
35 they're harvesting all of these stocks. So it's all
36 one piece. The point I'm trying to make here is that
37 if we take away two out of seven weirs we still have
38 five weirs and we're only losing 1 percent of our
39 escapement assessment.

40
41 In Kanektok, granted most of the
42 harvest has been commercial fishing, but the Kanektok
43 is not different than the Kuskokwim River in that is
44 also seeing chinook salmon in decline. The last time
45 we met a king salmon escapement goal in the Kanektok
46 River, which is assessed by aerial surveys was 2008.

47
48 The king salmon commercial fisheries
49 has been greatly reduced in Kanektok. In 2012, we cut
50 harvest in half from what it was on average. In 2013,

1 we closed king salmon fishing in Kanektok. We also
2 closed king salmon fishing in Goodnews last year. Even
3 with those closures of the commercial fishery we did
4 not meet escapement goals at either river, Kanektok or
5 Goodnews. Goodnews hasn't met it in 2012 or 2013.

6
7 Quinhagak is a substantial subsistence
8 fishery. It can harvest upwards 3-4,000 king salmon,
9 which on a low year is a significant portion of that
10 Kanektok River stock. So we have some concerns for the
11 first time since I've been here managing -- this will
12 be my fifth year. For the first time we're actually
13 concerned about subsistence harvest of king salmon in
14 Quinhagak. Because we closed the commercial fishery
15 and we still didn't meet escapement goals, I always
16 kind of thought that if we just stop commercial fishing
17 we would have no problem meeting our goals. That
18 wasn't the case. We're still missing our goals.

19
20 So we're actually considering
21 subsistence restrictions in Quinhagak, District 4 next
22 season. Another reason we're concerned about Quinhagak
23 is if the Kuskokwim River is closed to king salmon
24 fishing. You can imagine where many hard core
25 subsistence fishermen, especially in the Lower River,
26 are going to go subsistence fishing. They're going to
27 move to Quinhagak. Not move, but go down there and
28 fish. So we think there could be potentially increased
29 subsistence harvest effort in Quinhagak if the
30 Kuskokwim River is closed and that's another cause for
31 concern.

32
33 Also a little bit about the operation
34 of these weirs. The Kanektok weir is operated
35 cooperatively by us, Department of Fish and Game, in
36 the Native Village of Quinhagak, so the village does
37 have a stake in that project. We also work with the
38 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on that project.
39 Goodnews River is run by Fish and Game in cooperation
40 with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

41
42 So both of these weirs are also
43 assessing stocks that are within Refuge boundaries.
44 They're not the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge.
45 It's the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge. The Togiak
46 National Wildlife Refuge also only has two weirs in the
47 Refuge.

48
49 So you just heard the perspective from
50 Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge, but I'm trying to

1 give you a perspective that's a little bit bigger in
2 scope. I know the Togiak Refuge really likes these
3 projects. They use the data and we work with this
4 closely on it.

5
6 Something else with Goodnews is the
7 Goodnews portion that's asking to get funded is only
8 for the coho salmon part of it. Part of the assessment
9 there. It's a relatively low cost for what you're
10 getting because we already have the weir there, the
11 crew is already hired, the weir is already in place,
12 the camp is already set up, so everything is there, so
13 it's relatively inexpensive for what you're getting.

14
15 Kanektok, we've been greatly increasing
16 our understanding and we're starting to get somewhere.
17 We finally have about 10 years -- actually I think 12
18 years of data now for most species. Over the last three
19 years our operations have actually been very good on
20 the Kanektok River. When many rivers like in 2012 and
21 Kwethluk and Kogruklu were blown out, not counting
22 fish, we were still counting king salmon in the
23 Kanektok River.

24
25 So I just wanted you guys to
26 understand, you know, as the area manager it's my job
27 to use all this information that we can get. From my
28 perspective I could still manage the Kuskokwim River
29 without Tuluksak and Takotna, but I can't manage the
30 fisheries at Quinhagak without the Kanektok River weir.
31 It becomes a very risky situation when you're not
32 assessing the weir, especially when you have
33 significant subsistence fishery and then potentially
34 that high harvest rates with the commercial fishery.
35 So we need to have that weir there to make sure that
36 we're not overfishing with the commercial fishery and,
37 therefore, impacting the subsistence fishery.

38
39 One other thing I wanted to mention is
40 with the in-season subsistence survey. I do agree with
41 Mr. Molyneaux's assessment of that project. It can be
42 misleading. For me, I'd prefer to have a weir if that
43 would make the difference. I don't know -- like I say,
44 I don't know the details of what money is available
45 versus what's being asked for from each project, but
46 when I read through the TRC report on our assessment of
47 these proposals, I thought they did a very good job.

48
49 Thank you.
50

1 If you have any questions.

2

3 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Any questions for
4 Travis.

5

6 MS. GREGORY: I just have a comment, Mr.
7 Chair. I am not sitting here to regulate commercial
8 fisheries. I am here to make sure that the subsistence
9 way of life is maintained. Can you understand that?

10

11 MR. ELISON: Through the Chair, Ms.
12 Gregory. I do understand that and commercial fisheries
13 are part of the big picture here. In order to maintain
14 the subsistence fishery and to protect the subsistence
15 fishery, we have to make sure and assess how we manage
16 the commercial fishery will not impact the subsistence
17 fishery. In order to do that, we have to have the
18 escapement information.

19

20 MS. GREGORY: That's why we have those
21 weirs and we know those weirs in the Kuskokwim River
22 because the Kuskokwim River is not being used only by
23 the people on the side of the river but also with the
24 tundra and some from downriver who have -- that used to
25 keep their fish camp here that inherited them and then
26 come up and fend for themselves.

27

28 MR. ELISON: Yeah, it's similar in
29 Quinagak too. I meet people from Kipnuk down there
30 subsistence fishing in June. So people do travel
31 there. I know people travel there from Lower Kuskokwim
32 River too to subsistence fish.

33

34 One other thing I left out I wanted to
35 address is Tuluksak weir. Alaska Department of Fish
36 and Game is also concerned about that stock -- I'm
37 sorry, about that tributary there. Like I said, we do
38 have aerial surveys. We have historical aerial survey
39 data on Tuluksak and would plan to continue to manage
40 that small system conservatively by implementing
41 tributary restrictions such as we have done since 2011.
42 I think we would need to see recovery in the overall
43 Kuskokwim River chinook salmon before we would consider
44 opening that tributary back up to fishing. So just
45 because you have a weir there doesn't mean you can't
46 still have some conservation on that river.

47

48 Thank you.

49

50 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Are you done?

1 MS. GREGORY: Yes.
2
3 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Any other comments or
4 questions for Travis.
5
6 Mr. Roczicka.
7
8 MR. ROCZICKA: Mr. Chair. Travis, I
9 agree with you that subsistence fishery for every
10 village is very important to them, but wouldn't you say
11 it's a fair characterization though that as far as
12 Quinhagak or Districts 4 and 5 go, there are other
13 resources that could help fund those weirs rather than
14 OSM?
15
16 MR. ELISON: I think you have the same
17 funding sources available to fund, say Takotna River as
18 you do for Kanektok. Coastal Village Regional Fund
19 actually provided funding for Telequana River weir,
20 which is on the upper Stony River. So I think that
21 potential is there, whether it's in the bay or in the
22 river no matter what the funding source is.
23
24 CHAIRMAN WILDE: If I may, it would
25 seem like the Regional Fund would be more interested in
26 their commercial area down around Quinhagak and in that
27 area. That would be a source of funding if that was to
28 be questioned on where the funding for those two would
29 come. I'm sure that they would be more than happy to
30 be able to contribute to funding those projects because
31 they're the ones that take advantage of the information
32 that is coming out of those two weirs on the lower
33 river or down at the bay area.
34
35 MR. ELISON: Yeah, you're probably
36 right in your assessment there.
37
38 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Any other statements or
39 questions.
40
41
42 (No comments)
43
44 CHAIRMAN WILDE: If not, thank you very
45 much.
46
47 MR. ELISON: Thank you.
48
49 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Is there someone
50 online that might be ready for the FRMP review? Karen

1 Hyer from OSM, are you online?

2

3 MS. HYER: Mr. Chairman, I'm right here
4 and I am prepared to do the FRMP if we're ready to do
5 that.

6

7 (Echo on speakerphone)

8

9 CHAIRMAN WILDE: What was that again?
10 Let's take a 10-minute break.

11

12 MS. HYER: Okay. A 10-minute break
13 would be great.

14

15 (Off record)

16

17 (On record)

18

19 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Call this meeting back
20 to order. At this time, instead of listening to the
21 review of the FRMP, since that is going to be needing
22 some action on it we will forego that until a later
23 time. At this time we will listen to the report from
24 Ms. Stockdale from AVCP. Thank you, Karen, for your
25 turn to do this next, but we'll just hold off that
26 review until later.

27

28 MS. STOCKDALE: Thank you, Mr.
29 Chairman. I did have some comments that were just
30 following the previous discussion, so thank you for
31 letting me go. My name is Casie Stockdale and I'm a
32 biologist for AVCP. I get nervous talking in front of
33 people, so if I'm quiet tell me to speak up.

34

35 Mr. Miller provided you with a letter
36 from AVCP in that packet. The letter was dated
37 September 17, 2013 and it was addressed to the Office
38 of Subsistence Management, signed by AVCP president
39 Myron Naneng. This letter is in support of continuing
40 the Tuluksak and Kwethluk River weir projects. Also
41 urging OSM Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program to
42 reverse the decision of the TRC not to fund the
43 Tuluksak weir.

44

45 Like many of the other comments from
46 the other speakers, this letter describes that these
47 are long-term, reliable projects which involve
48 partnerships with the local tribes and community
49 members. The projects are essential to ensure adequate
50 escapement and to provide reasonable subsistence

1 opportunity for future generations.

2

3 I don't want to repeat what's already
4 been said very well by Mr. Miller and Mr. Doolittle and
5 Mr. Molyneaux, but I'll just add a little bit about
6 what I think the value of long-term datasets are.
7 There was a recent paper looking at king salmon
8 declines throughout Western Alaska and they had years
9 and the escapement on each of the Alaskan rivers, the
10 king salmon escapements, and when escapement goals were
11 established and whether or not these goals had been
12 met. I found it very striking that the Kuskokwim has a
13 very long-term and complete dataset compared to other
14 Western Alaska systems. That's extremely valuable for
15 making sure that our resource is protected and make
16 sure that we have that opportunity for future
17 generations.

18

19 Besides the Bristol Bay area, I think
20 we have one of the largest and most complete datasets.
21 At these weir projects, they also collect
22 age/sex/length information. Because we have long-term
23 datasets we're able to look at not just the trends and
24 abundance over a long period of time, but also trends
25 in the sex ratio and the length of the fish.

26

27 In contrast, on the Yukon River and
28 many other areas, there isn't this long-term consistent
29 database. For example, on the Yukon, they're trying to
30 develop a biologically-based escapement goal into
31 Canada and it's very difficult to do because there just
32 isn't a long-term, consistently collected dataset to
33 use to develop this goal.

34

35 On the Yukon there's been elder's
36 observations of a decline in the size of king salmon
37 and that's been difficult to show in the data partially
38 because if you look at the entire collection of the
39 age/sex/length information, it's been collected a few
40 years here, a few years there and not long term
41 consistently in various different places, so assessing
42 those trends has been difficult.

43

44 So I just wanted to urge that the RAC
45 weigh in and try to get the Tuluksak and also the
46 Takotna River weirs to stay in place. I think this
47 long-term information, both the abundance and the
48 age/sex/length information is invaluable for protecting
49 our salmon and other species.

50

1 That's all I had to say about that. I
2 also wanted to provide something on behalf of the
3 working group if that's okay or if you have any
4 questions.

5
6 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Yes.

7
8 MS. GREGORY: (In Yup'ik)

9
10 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Ms. Stockdale.

11
12 MS. STOCKDALE: Casie Stockdale.

13
14 MS. GREGORY: Doctor?

15
16 MS. STOCKDALE: Stockdale.

17
18 MS. GREGORY: Stockdale. Did you get
19 any information regarding the weir at Takotna from the
20 Interior RAC.....

21
22 MS. STOCKDALE: I did not.....

23
24 MS. GREGORY:or any information
25 from them?

26
27 MS. STOCKDALE: I did not. I did see
28 some letters in support of keeping the Takotna River
29 weir project. Ray Collins is one that I saw a letter
30 of support from and Mr. Molyneaux, but I didn't see if
31 the RAC met or not.

32
33 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Any other questions.

34
35 Mr. Roczicka.

36
37 MR. ROCZICKA: Not a question, but the
38 Western Interior RAC was supposed to have met last
39 week. They ended up in the same situation that we are.
40 They did not have a quorum. They discussed the issue,
41 but they weren't able to take a position, so they'll be
42 dealing with it later in a teleconference as well.

43
44 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Any other questions
45 for Ms. Stockdale.

46
47 MR. CHARLES: Mr. Chairman.

48
49 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Mr. Charles.

50

1 MR. CHARLES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
2 It's not a question, but talking about those weirs up
3 there at Tuluksak and Takotna. As many of you know,
4 when we first started talking about the weirs people
5 were very against those weirs. Now they quiet down and
6 people don't want to fund them again because we are
7 hurting for some money in some areas, but that has
8 helped our working group every since those weirs
9 started for subsistence purposes. We look at numbers
10 more that way than guessing. When we didn't have those
11 weirs in place, we didn't know how many fish came up
12 those tributaries. Now we are getting closer and
13 people quiet down, but I hate to see them go. That's
14 why I made the note last year for Kwethluk and
15 Tuluksak.

16
17 Thank you.

18
19 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Any other questions,
20 comments.

21
22
23 (No comments)

24
25 CHAIRMAN WILDE: If not, thank you.

26
27 MS. STOCKDALE: I'm sorry, I did -- is
28 it okay if I address on behalf of the working group
29 another item right now? I'm also one of the Kuskokwim
30 River Salmon Management Working Group co-chairs and I
31 was asked to come today and I put a packet of
32 information in front of you guys.

33
34 The first thing is a letter that is
35 being sent to tribal councils this week and it
36 describes a lot of what we've already heard about the
37 poor runs since at least 2010 and missed escapement
38 goals and 2013 was probably the lowest escapement we've
39 ever seen.

40
41 So what the working group is doing,
42 we've heard from Travis Elison and our area management
43 biologist that restrictions will be necessary. So the
44 working group is doing everything that we can to try to
45 get public input to come to solutions together, as
46 Ms. Gregory said earlier, not the hammer coming down on
47 the people, but trying to get the public input and
48 consensus on what we should do.

49
50 So this letter is explaining what the

1 issues are and then there's a blank form with a list of
2 recommendations that came out of an August 27th working
3 group meeting. We're looking for tribal councils,
4 individuals, groups to go through each recommendation.
5 I'm not asking you to do it right now because I know
6 you have a full agenda. But we're asking to provide
7 input on -- to discuss each one of these
8 recommendations, provide input and even to vote to
9 support or not support certain recommendations. I
10 separated it into what's possible for 2014 and also a
11 list of what would need additional regulations, but
12 maybe options for the future.

13

14 I also gave you a summary of the August
15 27th working group meeting and the discussion that came
16 out about each one of those recommendations. I gave
17 you some graphs from the working group packet just
18 showing how low the Bethel Test Fish was and each one
19 of the weir projects, which we've already talked about
20 quite a bit today.

21

22 Then finally there's an article that
23 appeared in the Delta Discovery last week from one of
24 the co-chairs, Beverly Hoffman, and it's titled What
25 Are We Willing To Do To Save Our Kuskokwim King Salmon.
26 What would you do. I just wanted to include that in
27 case you hadn't seen it and it's just asking for your
28 input and solutions on what we should do.

29

30 So if there aren't any other questions,
31 I just wanted to make you aware of what we're doing and
32 that we have a working group meeting on December 17th
33 where we'll be talking about management options and
34 then January 8th and 9th and those are public meetings.

35

36 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Any questions.

37

38

39 (No comments)

40

41 MS. STOCKDALE: Thank you, Mr.

42 Chairman.

43

44 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Any further
45 presentations on the.....

46

47 MR. LISAC: Mr. Chairman.

48

49 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Yes.

50

1 MR. LISAC: Can you hear me all right?

2

3 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Who is that?

4

5 MR. LISAC: This is Mark Lisac,
6 fisheries biologist for the Togiak National Wildlife
7 Refuge.

8

9 CHAIRMAN WILDE: You have the floor.

10

11 MR. LISAC: Thank you, sir. I just
12 thought I'd weight in on the Fisheries Resource
13 Monitoring Plan discussion. As a fisheries scientist,
14 I hate to see any monitoring tool go away. I believe,
15 as some of the others have stated there, that we also
16 need to be concerned with the smaller stocks, not just
17 the largest runs or the most targeted species or just
18 those that are in the largest rivers.

19

20 The most important thing is to ensure
21 the protection of the resources out there so that there
22 will be salmon in the future. Also, as others have
23 stated there, I agree with the continuing of the long-
24 term datasets and how important they are for
25 establishing necessary escapement goals and monitoring
26 the long-term trends of all the salmon runs out there.

27

28 So that being said, I just want to say
29 that Togiak National Wildlife Refuge supports the
30 continuation of the Kanektok and Goodnews River weirs.
31 Those rivers there, the Kanektok and Goodnews drainage
32 salmon stocks, they have been coming under more
33 intensive harvest interest and that's pretty evident by
34 the construction of the two new processing plants there
35 in Quinhagak and Platinum, right at the mouth of those
36 two rivers.

37

38 These are unique small drainages and,
39 as Mr. Elison stated, those two weirs are the only
40 escapement monitoring efforts for those two drainages
41 and in the Lower Kuskokwim Bay side of the Togiak
42 Refuge.

43

44 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Before you go on --
45 could I ask you a favor before you go on. There's a
46 heck of an echo in this room. Are you holding your
47 phone? If you're holding your phone.....

48

49 MR. LISAC: No.

50

1 CHAIRMAN WILDE:and talking into
2 your phone.....
3
4 MR. LISAC: I'm speaking in the
5 speakerphone. I can try to just hold the phone.
6
7 CHAIRMAN WILDE: If you would, hold the
8 phone and talk into the phone, it would help the echo
9 over here on this end.
10
11 Thank you.
12 MR. LISAC: Okay. How is that? Is
13 that any better?
14
15 CHAIRMAN WILDE: That's a lot better.
16
17 MR. LISAC: Oh, good. Shall I start
18 over?
19
20 CHAIRMAN WILDE: What was that?
21
22 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: No.
23
24 MR. LISAC: Shall I start over?
25
26 CHAIRMAN WILDE: No.
27
28 MR. LISAC: I'm just joking.
29
30 (Laughter)
31
32 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Continue.
33
34 MR. LISAC: Thank you, sir. So not
35 only is salmon escapement important for the refuge
36 ecosystems, it's also important for the residents out
37 there in the communities of Quinhagak, Goodnews Bay and
38 Platinum. As part of the two projects that have been
39 going on for decades now, there's a host of partners
40 that have been involved as Travis mentioned. Not only
41 Fish and Wildlife Service and Fish and Game, but also
42 the Native Village of Quinhagak and Coastal Village
43 Regional Fund and CVRF has been contributing funding
44 for Kanektok River project and especially for the NVK
45 technicians.
46
47 We've had a lot of interest in the
48 capacity building aspects of the project out there. So
49 much so that even the BBEDC, which is the Bristol Bay
50 Economic Development Corporation, and the Bristol Bay

1 Native Association have also funded technicians to put
2 on those two projects because of that capacity building
3 aspect of them and because they have been successful.
4 CVRF has a greater commercial interest in the bay out
5 there. They realize and everyone realizes that there
6 can't be a continuation of commercial and subsistence
7 fishery without ensuring escapement into those rivers.

8

9 Just another point to make on the
10 Middle Fork Goodnews River weir project that's been in
11 operation since 1981. It actually has resulted in
12 escapement goals and escapement goal evaluations over
13 the last several decades for king salmon, sockeye
14 salmon, chum salmon and silver salmon and it's one of
15 the few projects that actually monitors the majority of
16 the silver salmon run out there. Most years that weir
17 count is instrumental for estimating escapement into
18 the entire Goodnews drainage.

19

20 So we at Fish and Wildlife Service and
21 Togiak Refuge, we find these two projects very valuable
22 for our management and I appreciate your time, sir.

23

24 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you. Any
25 questions.

26

27

28 (No comments)

29

30 CHAIRMAN WILDE: If not, thank you very
31 much. Any other comments concerning the monitoring
32 program from any of our staff members, Fish and
33 Wildlife, Fish and Game out there.

34

35

36 (No comments)

37

38 CHAIRMAN WILDE: If not, we will
39 continue with our reports. I think at this time AVCP.

40

41 MR. ANDREW: It will take me a minute
42 to get set up here. You caught me by surprise.

43

44 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Sorry.

45

46 MR. ANDREW: No problem. I had a
47 PowerPoint presentation, but I'll just go ahead and
48 read off from it. It's not very long.

49

50 For the record, my name is Timothy

1 Andrew. I'm the director of Natural Resources for AVCP
2 and I'm glad to be here providing a report to you.
3 What I'm going to be reporting on is the work activity
4 that AVCP or the natural resource department has been
5 doing since the 2012 convention.

6
7 We were assigned a total of -- I
8 believe it was six resolutions or seven resolutions
9 from that convention and this is not -- what I'm
10 reporting on is not the only activity that we do. We
11 do quite a bit of work outside the resolution that's
12 assigned for us. Last year the convention adopted the
13 resolution number 121003. This is the authorization of
14 agreement between the Bering Sea Elders Group and the
15 Alaska Seafood Cooperative.

16
17 The history of that agreement is that
18 the yellow fin sole trawl fishery had historically come
19 within three miles of the communities of Quinhagak,
20 Kohkonak. They fished the Etolin Strait area and areas
21 south of the Nunivak Island. In pursuit of the yellow
22 fin sole, these trawlers harvest herring as bycatch and
23 also halibut as bycatch and their salmon bycatch is
24 extremely minimal, but as you know herring and halibut
25 are extremely important for people in the coastal
26 areas. At times when they get a little too close into
27 shore they harvest a huge number of herring as bycatch.
28 When they get too far out they start harvesting more
29 halibut.

30
31 In any case, through an agreement with
32 the Bering Sea Elders Group we were able to push them
33 out 25 miles outside the State jurisdiction boundary
34 and also came into agreement that they shall provide
35 funding for the research of potential impacts to the
36 affected communities in Kuskokwim Bay. With that
37 funding, what we're doing is we are hiring a youth
38 outreach coordinator to work with our youth in the
39 region.

40
41 On Resolution Number 121004, that
42 resolution calls for the reduction of chinook and chum
43 bycatch in the Bering Sea pollock trawl fishery and in
44 the Russian Economic Zone. We've continuously
45 pressured the North Pacific Fishery Management Council
46 to try and reduce the chinook salmon bycatch in the
47 Bering Sea.

48
49 Through our efforts and also with our
50 partners as well, various non-governmental

1 organizations and other regions, like Tanana Chiefs
2 Conference in the Kawerak Region, the Commission of
3 Fish and Game, Cora Campbell, made a motion -- and
4 she's a member of the North Pacific Fishery Management
5 Council -- made a motion to review the impacts of the
6 Bering Sea trawl fishery on our salmon and chum salmon.
7 The final report will be presented at the June 2014
8 council meeting that's going to be held in Nome.

9
10 We've continuously pushed for the
11 enumeration of the Russian Economic Zone area for their
12 trawl activity and their trawl impacts on our chinook
13 salmon. As you know, chinook salmon has no boundaries
14 in the Bering Sea. They basically go where there is
15 feed. They have a potential of being impacted on both
16 sides of U.S. and Russian waters.

17
18 Resolution Number 121005 calling for a
19 delay to changes in the Kuskokwim escapement goals.
20 Casie and I -- primarily Casie has been working very
21 hard to try and develop a sensible and best practice
22 escapement goal for the Kuskokwim River. We attended
23 the Alaska Board of Fisheries. Unfortunately I had to
24 go home due to an emergency at my house, but she
25 continued the work there to try and not reduce the
26 escapement goals until we had a chance to further
27 review and provide a recommendation to those escapement
28 goals.

29
30 Unfortunately, the Department prevailed
31 at the Alaska Board of Fisheries. They adopted it and
32 this past year we saw the fruit of what happens as we
33 move in that direction. It is our hope that our chinook
34 salmon stocks on the Kuskokwim River will rebound
35 through the cooperative and collaborative work efforts
36 of all the partners. Fish and Wildlife, Department of
37 Fish and Game, AVCP, KNA, the Kuskokwim River Salmon
38 Management Working Group and others.

39
40 Resolution Number 121006, requesting
41 the western population of the Mulchatna Caribou Herd
42 remain open for Federally qualified users only. This
43 past -- I can't recall the exact month and date that we
44 submitted a special action request to the Federal
45 Subsistence Board to close the entire hunt of non-
46 Federally qualified users on the Mulchatna Caribou
47 Herd.

48
49 This past summer there was a hearing
50 that was held here at the Refuge office with personnel

1 from the Office of Subsistence Management. Through the
2 recommendations of the State head biologist who deals
3 with the Mulchatna Caribou Herd out of Dillingham, I
4 can't quite recall his name, and through various
5 segments of OSM our special action request was denied.

6
7 We base our request action request on
8 the harvest of large breeder bulls of the herd. We
9 felt that the caribou herd needed these big bulls to
10 breed like any moose populations or ungulate
11 populations. Whenever you have a situation where you
12 have smaller bulls, the cows don't want to breed with
13 smaller bulls, so they utilize a lot of energy, they
14 use a lot of -- the bulls use a lot of energy, they
15 breed late, they give birth late, the calves go into
16 the season extremely weak, they're more subject to
17 predation, thus decreasing the Mulchatna Caribou Herd.
18 It was up to 220,000 animals in 1996 and most recent
19 counts suggest that they're probably around 30-40,000
20 animals.

21
22 We also believe that we need more
23 caribou to maintain diversity so that they do not
24 succumb to one disease or a segment or portion of
25 diseases that could possibly decimate the herd.

26
27 Resolution Number 121007 requesting the
28 development of a mainland muskox management plan. We
29 submitted a regulatory proposal before the Alaska Board
30 of Game. In fact, two of you were at the Lower
31 Kuskokwim Fish and Game Advisory Committee meeting and
32 you heard -- or you considered our proposal at that
33 time.

34
35 Our primary concern about the muskox in
36 the region is they're starting to grow in population.
37 We started having more encounters. In fact, in one of
38 the villages there was muskox that came into town and
39 just wouldn't leave for several days in trying to get
40 away from predators. We've had one instance where we
41 had one muskox that came into Bethel about a year ago
42 and possibly a dozen or so had taken residence on one
43 of the islands here this past summer.

44
45 We also had an incident that occurred
46 not very far from Russian Mission where a muskox was
47 blocking the way of a person trying to run his dogs
48 through a portage. Unfortunately the muskox wouldn't
49 move and charged the dog musher, injured a few dogs and
50 ran him up a tree and he had to call for reinforcements

1 from his home town of Russian Mission. They came out
2 and dispatched the muskox.

3
4 We believe that there are a number of
5 herds on the mainland north of the Yukon River. The
6 Askinuk Mountains, the Mud Volcanos and possibly up
7 around the Kilbuk Mountains as well. We don't know
8 what the numbers are. The Department of Fish and Game
9 doesn't know what the numbers are. Fish and Wildlife
10 Service doesn't know what the numbers are either. By
11 submitting this proposal we ask that there be a count
12 so that we can determine whether or not we can have a
13 limited hunt for these muskox or these various muskox
14 populations.

15
16 Unfortunately, the Lower Kuskokwim Fish
17 and Game Advisory Committee did not recommend the
18 adoption of this proposal, but we have four fish and
19 game advisory committees within the region along with
20 the RAC as well to take these proposals into
21 consideration. All may vary or all may join together
22 and say that we're not ready for these muskox hunts.
23 We look forward to bringing this to the Alaska Board of
24 Game that will be meeting in January in the community
25 of Kotzebue.

26
27 Resolution Number 121008, which is the
28 elders fishery you heard from Travis earlier, that
29 would allow for an exemption for them to subsistence
30 fish during restricted closures. Unfortunately you
31 heard that when Tom Doolittle reported that the Federal
32 management system cannot authorize such a fishery.

33
34 It was really amazing that this
35 resolution was brought forth by the Native Village of
36 Napaskiak and they sent a delegation to the Board of
37 Fisheries . As far as we were concerned, the Board
38 would not likely take up this issue because it was at a
39 very late stage to submit proposals, but the leadership
40 of -- I believe it was Earl, they talked to a number of
41 Board members and they got it incorporated into the
42 Kuskokwim River Chinook Salmon Management Plan. So
43 kudos to them for the work that they did on the State
44 management side.

45
46 Resolution Number 121009 requesting the
47 review and revision of the Yukon River Salmon Treaty to
48 include provisions for low chinook salmon production
49 years. This resolution was contingent upon the
50 development of fully functioning Intertribal Fisheries

1 Commission. We are not at that stage yet, so we'll
2 keep this resolution as a standing resolution.

3
4 Resolution Number 121010 calling for
5 the establishment of Intertribal Fisheries Commissions
6 for both the Yukon Kuskokwim Rivers. We've started
7 much of the work way earlier since the State of Our
8 Salmon Convention. We've coordinated with our sister
9 organization, Tanana Chiefs Conference, we've briefed
10 the congressional delegations, we've drafted the
11 legislation to develop the Yukon River and Kuskokwim
12 River Intertribal Fisheries Commissions.

13
14 I believe -- I can't quite remember
15 which one of our congressmen or senators was going to
16 introduce this legislation, but it was one of them, and
17 it's currently being considered in committee by the
18 congressman's office to be submitted. We've also
19 received the support of the National Congress of
20 American Indians, the Northwest Indian Fisheries
21 Commissions, the Columbia River Intertribal Fisheries
22 Commission. They have dedicated their staff, time and
23 resources to help us develop these fishery commissions
24 on both rivers to make sure that we succeed and making
25 sure that we have resources for future generations.

26
27 This final Resolution Number 121011
28 calling for Kuskokwim River salmon test fisheries to
29 occur. This resolution requests that test fisheries be
30 developed in every one of our villages on the Kuskokwim
31 River, but due to concerns of the number of chinook
32 salmon and the associated mortality with the activity,
33 the expense and the high cost for such an endeavor
34 we'll probably not see this resolution be implemented.

35
36 That concludes my report, Mr. Chair,
37 and I'll be glad to answer any questions if you have
38 any.

39
40 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you, Tim. Any
41 questions for Mr. Andrews.

42
43 Mr. Roczicka.

44
45 MR. ROCZICKA: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
46 Tim, under the Commissioners motion at North Pacific
47 Council there's a component of that as well that calls
48 for a change in the accountability under seasons. Can
49 you elaborate a little bit more on what effects that
50 might have.

1 MR. ANDREW: I have not totally read
2 into the motion where the current standing is on that
3 area, so my apologies.

4
5 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Any questions.

6
7 Ms. Gregory.

8
9 MS. GREGORY: Mr. Chair.

10
11 (In Yup'ik)

12
13 Resolution Number 10, Intertribal
14 Fishery Commission, what kind of duties are they going
15 to have and are they duplicating anything that's
16 already formed?

17
18 MR. ANDREW: I'm sorry. Can you repeat
19 your question, please.

20
21 MS. GREGORY: Are they going to repeat
22 somebody else's job that is already being done or
23 what's the purpose for creating this commission?

24
25 MR. ANDREW: They you for that
26 question. Mr. Chair, if I may. It's probably not
27 necessarily repeating. Perhaps doing work that -- I'm
28 not sure how to explain it, but we are looking to
29 enhance the science and incorporating the traditional
30 knowledge of our elders to incorporate the people in
31 our villages into the management of the fishery. Right
32 now YRDFA has a board, they have members from each of
33 the villages from Hooper Bay up to.....

34
35 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Eagle.

36
37 MR. ANDREW:Kotlik and all the
38 way up to Eagle. A lot of these members, these
39 officers, they're not elected by tribal governments.
40 They can be anybody from the villages. We have a whole
41 bunch of tribal villages from the coast up to the
42 border between Alaska and Canada that are stakeholders
43 that have the most to lose if we ever lose our chinook
44 salmon resource. The same way on the Kuskokwim River.
45 We have the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working
46 Group.

47
48 They're not tribally authorized. They
49 are volunteers. We really appreciate their work.
50 We're wanting to work with both the organizations to

1 make sure that this Intertribal Fishery Commission
2 moves forward in the best possible direction that we
3 can to conserve, to preserve, to make sure that our
4 children, our great-grandchildren, our future
5 generations have salmon resources to live off of.

6

7 MS. GREGORY: Mr. Chair. If this
8 commission has any powers, how are they going to be
9 structured to operate? Just in the Kuskokwim area or
10 does that include Yukon already?

11

12 MR. ANDREW: The Yukon and Kuskokwim
13 Rivers would have their own Intertribal Fisheries
14 Commissions. How the organization is developed is
15 going to be built by the executive or steering
16 committee of these organizations or of these
17 Intertribal Fisheries Commissions. There's many, many
18 different options the way that we can proceed in
19 creating these commissions, but it will be up to the
20 steering committees.

21

22 MS. GREGORY: Thank you.

23

24 MR. CHARLES: Mr. Chairman.

25

26 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Mr. Charles.

27

28 MR. CHARLES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I
29 was at Aniak last week and I was wondering if AVCP have
30 any concerns about -- I was there for Donlin Gold
31 environmental impact statement for subsistence and
32 subsistence activities on the river. They're planning
33 to go 110 trips per season and it's going to hurt our
34 subsistence fishery up there above Bethel or it's going
35 to hurt the fish little by little and that worries me.

36

37

38 When they said -- or it was on the list
39 on the site for 110 trips per season and maybe 58 trips
40 for fuel, but I said that there are other ways to haul
41 fuel or equipment up there because we are on new
42 technology. They have the money to haul the equipment
43 and fuel other ways, not by the river only because it's
44 going to hurt the fish that's trying to go upriver.

45

46 Thank you.

47

48 MR. ANDREW: James, Mr. Chair.
49 Several years ago the AVCP convention took this up as
50 one of their issues during their convention, but since

1 it's such a controversial issue I believe that the
2 convention at that time decided that AVCP would remain
3 neutral in the development of Donlin. Although I do
4 have some major concerns about what you just brought up
5 and perhaps several others have that concern as well.

6

7 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Could you say again
8 why AVCP had decided not to go into this.

9

10 MR. ANDREW: The reason why we decided
11 not to go into it is because AVCP is a huge region. It
12 goes all the way from -- on the Kuskokwim River it goes
13 from the coast all the way up to Lime Village and
14 Crooked Creek is probably about a third of the way
15 down. We have these villages that are supporting the
16 Donlin Creek development. We have some segments in
17 these villages that are not supporting. Whenever we
18 come into that situation where our villages are doing
19 this, we can't take a position because if we take this
20 position, we'd hurt these tribes. If we took this
21 position, we'd hurt these tribes. That's the reason
22 why we remain neutral.

23

24 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Okay. Any other
25 questions of Mr. Andrew.

26

27 Mr. Polty.

28

29 MR. POLTY: Yeah. Mr. Andrew. Thank
30 you, Mr. Chairman. I have a question about muskox.
31 It's been a few years now they've been discussing about
32 muskox and they discuss about one day start increasing.
33 The Fish and Game will decide what they're going to do,
34 a hunt in the area. So who's going to be the one
35 counting muskox at certain times, see what they have
36 and be able to hunt those later date?

37

38 MR. ANDREW: Mr. Chair. Evan, that
39 would likely be the responsibility of either the State
40 or Federal management side or a combination of both. I
41 don't know what kind of resources they could possibly
42 dedicate to muskox counting. Since they are the
43 management authority, they have that responsibility.

44

45 MR. POLTY: Yeah. Thank you, Chair.

46

47 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Any other questions of
48 Mr. Andrew.

49

50

1 (No comments)
2
3 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you, Mr. Andrew.
4
5 MR. ANDREW: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
6
7 CHAIRMAN WILDE: At this time we're
8 going to continue on with our reports. I think at this
9 time we'll go on down. Since we have at least an hour
10 and 15 minutes we'll call on Mr. Cebrian. I'm sorry.
11
12 MR. CEBRIAN: Cebrian.
13
14 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Okay. Merben Cebrian.
15
16 MR. CEBRIAN: Yes, Mr. Chair. My name
17 is Merben Cebrian for the record. I am the new
18 subsistence biologist for BLM in Anchorage. By way of
19 introduction, I'm adopted into the village of Northway
20 in Upper Tanana and I've worked here in Alaska as a
21 biologist for 12 years.
22
23 What I am here for today is to give
24 notice to the Chair and the members of the Council that
25 the BLM is beginning a resource management plan, an
26 RMP. On Page 285 of your workbook is an announcement
27 and also on 287 -- so 285 through 287 is a notice, an
28 announcement for BLM conducting a resource management
29 plan. This is a multi-year plan. This plan is meant to
30 be in effect for 20 years. What I m about to show you
31 is a slide presentation of what the plan entails and
32 what we would like to get from the villages within this
33 region.
34
35 CHAIRMAN WILDE: A slide presentation?
36
37 MR. CEBRIAN: Yes, sir. I don't know
38 if we should change seats for a little bit.
39
40 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Are you ready for
41 that?
42
43 MR. CEBRIAN: Yes, sir.
44
45 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Okay. Let's switch
46 chairs again unless you want to sit there.
47
48 MR. CEBRIAN: So we'll change seats for
49 the moment. Mr. Chair. So the BLM again is embarking
50 in the Bering Sea- Western Interior Resource Management

1 Plan. In short, we call it the BSWI RMP. This
2 overview presents that the resource management plan is
3 the same as a land use plan. For the refuges, they
4 call it a CCP, a conservation comprehensive plan. For
5 BLM, we call it a resource management plan, which is
6 equivalent to a land use plan.

7
8 This presentation will go over why we
9 are here, review the planning area and there are maps
10 on the wall as well that cover the area that is within
11 the management plan, an overview of the process and
12 review issues and planning criteria BLM has identified.
13 Now what we want from you is input on what these issues
14 may be in the future.

15
16 So why are we here. BLM will develop
17 an RMP, a resource management plan. Scoping is the
18 first step in the RMP process. During scoping BLM will
19 listen to you. What works well, what concerns you have
20 about BLM land and what you would like to see in the
21 future.

22
23 Granted, BLM land in this area is very
24 scarce. There's not too much BLM land towards this
25 area. There's more BLM land further upriver, but
26 because BLM lands, as it goes further towards the
27 coast, there is State selected land, there's Native
28 corporation selected lands that have not been patented
29 yet. So these lands right now are managed by BLM in
30 consultation with the Native groups.

31
32 So here's a quick view of the timeline
33 of how we conduct this planning process. Up till
34 January 17 is when public scoping is open. In 2014,
35 alternatives will be developed and a draft of the
36 resource management plan will be created. In 2015,
37 public comments on the draft will be taken in and then
38 a final proposed RMP will be created between 2015 and
39 2016. As you can see, this is not a short-term
40 process. The final product is foreseen to be in 2017.
41 And along the way there different ways that we can get
42 input from the villages.

43
44 Here is a table of the various scoping
45 meetings scheduled for the region. Coming up soon is
46 Crooked Creek. It's still to be determined what time.
47 Here in Bethel on November 20, which is sometime in a
48 week or so, will be a scoping meeting and that will be
49 6:00 p.m. here. In Chuathbaluk and in other areas
50 they've been scheduled between November 21st and all

1 the way to December 17. Because of the holidays we
2 haven't quite determined when the other villages will
3 be scheduled for scoping meetings.

4
5 The BSWI RMP planning area, in order to
6 include all BLM managed lands in the RMP, the planning
7 area boundary is drawn on a scale and whatever
8 decisions will be included in the resource management
9 plan will apply only to BLM managed public land in the
10 plan area. Again, there's a map on the wall that you
11 can refer to as far as what is BLM managed lands.

12
13 You can see here in this map the gold
14 or yellow areas are unencumbered BLM lands. There are
15 other land status shown in here. The Yukon Delta
16 Refuge lands are shown. The brown ones are Native
17 lands and the blue ones are State lands and there are
18 some State selected lands in between. For a better map
19 we have an insert in your workbook that you can refer
20 to and there are also flyers that are being distributed
21 in the different villages.

22
23 So the purpose of an RMP is such. BLM
24 is required. There has been no resource management
25 plan in this area since 1983. It's a very old plan.
26 I'm sorry, it's 1981 that the last plan for this region
27 has taken place. More than due for BLM to write a
28 management plan. These are the two plans that
29 encompass the current area and you can see that they've
30 been created since 1981 and 1986.

31
32 Again, it's a long time to write a
33 plan.

34
35 The types of RMP decisions that are
36 included in the plan is what the folks in this region
37 desire as a future condition of the resources. Actions
38 needed to achieve the desired conditions and allowable
39 land uses. These allowable land uses describe how and
40 where to manage uses and activities in the land and
41 where uses and activities should be excluded.

42
43 There are different categories of
44 issues that are included in the plan. There are four
45 main categories. Those are management of resources,
46 management of resource uses and activities, special
47 designations, public safety, social and economic
48 features. We're going to go through them one by one.

49
50 Management of resources. These are the

1 resources that BLM has identified that we'll be taking
2 up in the plan. Other resources that the folks here
3 might bring up can also be added to the plan.

4

5 Now, for the second category, the
6 resource uses and activities, these are the activities
7 that have been identified by BLM that occur within
8 these lands. Berry picking, taking of bark, mushrooms
9 and firewood for fire, reindeer grazing in some areas,
10 renewable energy, wind, hydropower, biomass and
11 geothermal and mining.

12

13 As far as lands and realty, there are
14 withdrawals, right-of-way corridors, utility roads and
15 pipelines, communication tower sites. For recreation,
16 commercial recreation uses, non-commercial recreation
17 uses and other trails and management of off-highway
18 vehicles.

19

20 Now in terms of land and realty, BLM is
21 mostly a land management agency. We don't quite have
22 so much at stake in terms of river management and water
23 management, but we do have a lot at stake in terms of
24 land management. What we do most is permit different
25 projects on BLM lands. Some of those projects include
26 communication sites, utilities, such as the upcoming
27 Donlin Mine EIS, which I think somebody will speak to
28 here in a few minutes.

29

30 Withdrawals from leasing, withdrawals
31 from location and entry under the mining laws, so there
32 are different withdrawals on BLM lands. As far as
33 recreation uses and activities, there is commercial
34 recreation that have been permitted on BLM lands in
35 different areas. Some have helicopter skiing,
36 outfitter guides and hunting. There are competitive
37 events like Iditarod, sled dog race and non-commercial
38 recreation, youth camps, group hikes and group rides.
39 These are just examples of what BLM does and permits.

40

41 With special designations there are
42 areas of critical environmental concern, Wild and
43 Scenic Rivers, national trails and then for public
44 safety social economic features there's subsistence,
45 abandoned mines, hazardous materials and environmental
46 justice.

47

48 What I would like to get from the
49 scoping meetings would perhaps be what the Council
50 thinks about subsistence uses in the area that we can

1 bring into the planning. So Title VIII of ANILCA
2 requires BLM to have the least adverse impact and to
3 have access to public lands and available fish and
4 wildlife resources and habitat.

5
6 So, in terms of this Council, I would
7 hope that you would bring back to the villages
8 questions and concerns and that people have other
9 thoughts about management of resources, what resources
10 are valuable to you and how do you think BLM is doing
11 and what can BLM do in the future that we can put into
12 this plan so that we can manage the resources in this
13 area. Management of resource uses and activities.
14 Again, this is a review of what those different
15 categories are of resources.

16
17 So these are general questions that we
18 would like the Council members to think about, how
19 would you like these resources managed in the future,
20 what your desired future condition of each resources
21 are and are there sensitive areas where a certain
22 resource occurs. In the Upper Tanana, we have, for
23 example, trails that we value. Trails have stories and
24 trails have value to us, so those were identified as
25 important to the people in the region. So, in this
26 area there might be other areas that would be of value
27 culturally and then we can put that in a plan as an
28 important area and that can be protected.

29
30 So how would you like these uses or
31 activities to be managed? Do you know of any conflicts
32 with these uses or activities? Again, these questions
33 are meant to spur your thought and begin the thinking
34 process so that when BLM comes in a scoping meeting on
35 the 20th here in Bethel people have an idea of what to
36 contribute to the planning process.

37
38 Special designations. Again the BLM is
39 allowed to designate special areas. My example of
40 trails is just one example. There are different areas
41 that the folks in this region might deem important. If
42 it's important to you, it might be important enough to
43 be considered under special designations. So you can
44 nominate an area that is important in this area. It's
45 not just limited to Wild an Scenic Rivers.

46
47 So these are just other factors that
48 can be raised in the planning process. Which areas in
49 the BLM land are important for subsistence uses, for
50 example. How can the BLM protect resources that are

1 important to the people of this region.

2

3 Again, RMP decisions should be fair and
4 no group of people should experience unequal share of
5 negative environmental or economic consequences. These
6 are another example of questions to ask what are some
7 of the desired economic and social conditions that your
8 community is trying to achieve.

9

10 These are big words, but the bottom
11 line here is that what is important to this community
12 and how can BLM help and put those things into the plan
13 and make sure that there are protections enough in the
14 plan so that we can use the plan for the next 10 or 20
15 years. Remember, this plan is not for short term. The
16 plan that we're proposing to write is meant to help BLM
17 manage the land within the next 20 years after the plan
18 is written.

19

20 My last slide here is information where
21 folks can go to get more updates on the plan. This is
22 a website blm.gov/ak/planning and there's a phone
23 number that folks can call with regards to further
24 question.

25

26 Again, the bottom line I think for me
27 is that the Council is aware that BLM is planning for
28 the next 20 years and it's important for BLM to seek
29 information from you folks in the village to let us
30 know what is important to you.

31

32 Thanks, Mr. Chair.

33

34 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you. Any
35 questions.

36

37 MR. CHARLES: Mr. Chairman.

38

39 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Mr. Charles.

40

41 MR. CHARLES: Merben, are you having
42 scoping meetings only at the villages where BLM lands
43 are close to the village or where village are on BLM
44 lands or where are you having your scoping meetings. I
45 see the list, but are they villages close to the BLM
46 lands or on the BLM lands?

47

48 MR. CEBRIAN: Through the Chair, Mr.
49 Charles. The villages that are identified here I think
50 were chosen because they are likely close to BLM lands,

1 but I would hope that folks in the Lower River -- even
2 though in the map it shows that there's not much BLM
3 land, if folks in the Lower River think that there is
4 an issue that would affect them from further upriver
5 they would voice that concern and certainly that is
6 welcome by BLM.

7

8 MR. CHARLES: Thank you.

9

10 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Any other questions.

11

12

13 (No comments)

14

15 CHAIRMAN WILDE: If not, thank you.

16

17 MR. CEBRIAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

18

19 CHAIRMAN WILDE: At this time, since we
20 have time, we can listen to Mr. Keith Gordon and who
21 else? I'm sorry, I didn't get all the names.

22

23 MR. BRELSFORD: Taylor Brelsford.

24

25 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Okay, Taylor.

26

27 MR. BRELSFORD: Keith will make a
28 presentation. I'm just a backup guy.

29

30 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Okay. Mr. Gordon and
31 you can be the backup man.

32

33 MS. GREGORY: Mr. Chair. I'd like to
34 ask those people who are online not to make too much
35 noise because when you do it disturbs us.

36

37 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Is there any Council
38 members online?

39

40 MR. N. ANDREW: Yeah, there is from
41 Tuluksak.

42

43 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Who is this?

44

45 MR. N. ANDREW: There's some Council
46 members here from Tuluksak. This is Noah.

47

48 CHAIRMAN WILDE: I can't understand
49 you. Mr. Nick, can you please get on there and.....

50

1 MS. GREGORY: (In Yup'ik).
2
3 MR. N. ANDREW: (In Yup'ik).
4
5 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Okay. Thank you.
6
7 MS. GREGORY: He's one of us.
8
9 CHAIRMAN WILDE: I think at this time
10 we'll go ahead with that Donlin Creek EIS.
11
12 MR. GORDON: Mr. Chairman. My name is
13 Keith Gordon for the record. Would you all be
14 interested in switching chairs so you can see the
15 screen?
16
17 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Yes, we would.
18
19 MR. N. ANDREW: Mr. Chairman. This is
20 Noah. I have a comment here.
21
22 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Go ahead with your
23 comment. I was sitting outside of the area where
24 the.....
25
26 MR. N. ANDREW: Mr. Chairman. There
27 are lists of correspondence here pertaining to several
28 areas and we are at this time looking into the wording
29 in this correspondence and we may have some finalized
30 data to present in due process here.
31
32 I'll let you know that.
33
34 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Okay. Understood.
35 Thank you.
36
37 MR. BRELSFORD: I think we're ready to
38 go. Mr. Chairman, my name is Taylor Brelsford. I was
39 a former staffer with the Office of Subsistence
40 Management. I want you guys to know I'm still trying
41 to find honest work. Now I'm working as a staffer on
42 contract to the Army Corps of Engineers for the Donlin
43 Gold EIS, environmental impact project. Again, we'd
44 like to thank the Chairman and the member of the
45 Regional Council, Alex in particular and some of the
46 staff at OSM for helping us to squeeze in.
47
48 We believe that the Donlin Gold Mine
49 Environmental Impact Statement is a very important
50 issue for the region. It's one with a lot of

1 implications for subsistence issues, so we're pretty
2 sure that the Regional Advisory Councils would be very
3 interested to understand the timeline, kind of where we
4 are now and where you would have additional
5 opportunities to offer your comments and to review some
6 of the environmental impact documents.

7

8 So the briefing here is pretty short.
9 It's actually the one that Keith was ready to go give
10 at the AVCP convention a few weeks ago, but Keith will
11 be very happy to answer questions. So let me introduce
12 Keith Gordon. He works for the Army Corps of Engineers
13 in the regulatory division. They are the lead Federal
14 agency responsible for the preparation of the EIS.

15

16 There are many agencies that cooperate,
17 including the BLM. Merben was talking a bit about some
18 of the overlapping contributions from the BLM for this
19 EIS, the Refuge, Fish and Wildlife Service also
20 cooperate with us in developing this project.

21

22 So let me just stop there and invite
23 Keith to go ahead and offer our comments and then we'll
24 entertain questions at any point that you have
25 questions for us.

26

27 MR. GORDON: Mr. Chairman. Thank you
28 for the opportunity to meet with you all today. For
29 the record, Mr. Brelsford is my backup to the extent
30 that he's here to help make sure I get the facts right.

31

32 The Donlin Creek Project is, as you all
33 know, the largest proposed open pit mine project in the
34 state of Alaska. The United States Army Corps of
35 Engineers regulatory program or role in this project is
36 as the Federal lead agency for the development of the
37 environmental impact statement.

38

39 The Army Corps of Engineers is the lead
40 basically because of the permitting role we potentially
41 have in the project if the project goes through to
42 completion. URS is the Corps of Engineer's contractor
43 and provides the vast majority of the environmental
44 engineering expertise that will be used to develop the
45 background information and analysis in addition to the
46 knowledge we'll receive from the Native community, the
47 public in general, Federal and State agencies, et
48 cetera.

49

50 This is the overall project area for

1 the Donlin Mine Project. The project, as you know, is
2 located approximately 10 miles north of Crooked Creek.
3 As far as the mine site itself, there's two pits that
4 would ultimately be a single 1,400-acre pit 2.2 miles
5 long, 1 mile wide, 1,850 feet deep. There's 3.5 square
6 miles of tailings impoundment.

7
8 The tailings storage facility you see,
9 number 2 up there, basically that's the material after
10 it comes out of the mill. The mine is proposing to
11 process on average 59,000 tons of ore per day and the
12 powder that comes out of that would go into that
13 tailings storage facility. Material that does not meet
14 a high enough requirement as far as the amount of gold
15 it contains would just go into the waste rock
16 facilities and you can also see some of the overburden
17 stockpiles up there. So, of course, initially they
18 would take off the overburden, put it in various
19 stockpiles, then take off waste rock if it -- go ahead.

20
21 MS. GREGORY: Do you have that little
22 pointer that you could use.

23
24 MR. GORDON: As we were talking about,
25 the various overburden stockpiles, first Donlin would
26 remove the overburden and stockpile it for use in
27 reclamation. Second, they would remove whatever rock
28 didn't meet the criteria as having sufficient amount of
29 gold in it to be worth processing and that rock would
30 go in the waste rock facility.

31
32 Of course, as they went through the
33 operation of the mine they would tend to find that rock
34 in different stratas throughout the development of the
35 pit. Then materials we discussed that was processed,
36 that 59,000 tons a day would go into the tailings
37 storage facility. You can see there's an impoundment
38 dam below the tailings storage facility.

39
40 There's various water ponds and small
41 water reservoirs either to supply water for the project
42 or to retain water so it can be treated. So we deal
43 with any issues that might be related to contaminates,
44 et cetera.

45
46 As I noted, the tailings impoundment is
47 3.5 square miles. The waste rock facility 3.5 square
48 miles. Forty million gallons of diesel would be stored
49 on site and they estimate they would use 40 million
50 gallons of diesel per year in their operations.

1 There is also a 313-mile 14-inch steel
2 buried natural gas pipeline that would run from Beluga
3 Point in Cook Inlet along the Alaska Range through the
4 Alaska Range and terminate at the mine site
5 approximately 10 miles north of Crooked Creek. As
6 proposed, it would cross 56 percent -- of the land
7 crossed, 56 percent of it would be state land, 34
8 percent Federal owned by BLM and 10 percent Native
9 corporation land.

10
11 The project would also include a 5,000
12 acre airstrip west of the mine site, a new barge
13 landing cargo and fuel staging port facility at
14 Jungjuk, a 30-mile road from the Jungjuk Port site to
15 the mine site, a Bethel cargo transfer facility, in
16 other words, some cargo being shipped from Seattle
17 would be offloaded at Bethel from ocean-going barges to
18 river barges.

19
20 As far as fuel and cargo shipments,
21 there would be 122 fuel and cargo barge round trips
22 from Bethel to Jungjuk during the 110-day barging
23 season. Of course, as I mentioned, that material is
24 coming from Seattle. The fuel would, in some cases, go
25 to Dutch Harbor and be staged in storage facilities
26 there before being shipped to Bethel and then upriver
27 to Jungjuk, then to the mine site.

28
29 To switch gear slightly, that's the
30 proposed project. The Corps of Engineers via the NEPA
31 process, the process behind the development of
32 environmental impact statements that tells us what
33 we're doing, requires that we identify and disclose
34 potential effects to inform the public of the potential
35 effects to inform the public of the potential effects
36 of proposed projects and to inform decision-makers this
37 is done via various scoping and public alternative
38 development processes so people understand what's being
39 proposed versus what alternatives to those proposals
40 might be if the project went through.

41
42 These processes are both integrated and
43 integrative. In other words, we repeatedly go through
44 some of these processes as we define impacts and
45 develop alternatives to come up with a reasonable range
46 of alternatives that need to be looked at in serious
47 detail. The effects are disclosed repeatedly as we go
48 through the process.

49
50 We would initially develop what's

1 referred to as a preliminary draft EIS, which would be
2 reviewed by the Federal agencies, the State, the
3 cooperating entities, et cetera. Then we would draft
4 an environmental impact statement which would go out
5 for public review and comment. Then a final
6 environmental impact statement would go out for public
7 review and comment.

8

9 As I mentioned, the Corps of Engineers
10 is the lead Federal agency due to our general overall
11 role in the project. Cooperators that have been
12 invited and accepted participation to date are the
13 village of Crooked Creek, the Native Village of
14 Chuathbaluk, the Native Village of Napaimiut, the Knik
15 Tribal Council, the Village of Lower Kalskag, the Aniak
16 Traditional Council, the State of Alaska, Bureau of
17 Land Management, EPA, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
18 and PHMSA, the Pipeline Hazardous Materials and Safety
19 Administration.

20

21 In the development of the EIS -- and
22 just tell me if I need to shorten it up or lengthen it.
23 In the development of the EIS, we start by reviewing
24 existing baseline data and defined initial data gaps.
25 The types of resources we're looking at are physical,
26 biological and social resources. Once those are
27 identified, the cooperators review and comment on the
28 data gaps. We develop technical working groups to help
29 define some of the baseline data and determine where we
30 need to do additional literature searches, research in
31 the field, et cetera and so on.

32

33 For this project, the technical working
34 groups that have already been completed or are actually
35 still in process, they're working, are the
36 geochemistry, fish and aquatics, visual resources,
37 subsistence and traditional ecological knowledge and
38 there may be a technical working group on the potential
39 effects of barging related to the project. That hasn't
40 been determined yet.

41

42 Scoping, which was completed between
43 January to March of 2013 this year, developed a wide
44 variety of comments on a wide variety of issues. I'll
45 just flip through them fairly briefly. A major area of
46 comment was barge traffic and the potential effects on
47 barge traffic, including impacts to river bank erosion,
48 turbidity, disturbance to fish migration, salmon runs,
49 displacement of commercial and subsistence fisheries,
50 the potential for accidents or spills.

1 Another major area of comment was
2 potential impacts to subsistence traditions, culture
3 traditions obviously, traditional way of life, the
4 potential impacts the mine, its construction and
5 operation might have on the subsistence communities and
6 their way of life and the rate of social change from
7 new residents coming in, potentially new access through
8 the pipeline corridor and increased pressure for rapid
9 cultural change.

10
11 Water quality, quantity and flow was
12 another area of major comment. Concerns about
13 contaminants, run off from the mine site itself, waste
14 rock and tailings facilities, adequacy of water
15 treatment not only now but throughout the life of the
16 mine and after work is completed.

17
18 Taylor, water treatment will take place
19 for how many years after the mine is closed if the
20 project goes forward? It's 50-plus years, I believe.

21
22 MR. BRELSFORD: So during the operation
23 of the mine any water that comes into contact with the
24 mine, with the rock, will be collected. It's called
25 contact water and that is stored and reused in the mill
26 process. When the mine closes, the big hole, the ore
27 pit, becomes a pit lake and after closure all of the
28 water that's contacted the rock, potentially acidic,
29 it's potentially lower in water quality. All of that
30 water is directed to the pit lake.

31
32 It takes 60 years -- the current
33 estimate is that it would take 60 years for the pit
34 lake to fill up. At that point, somewhere in the 50 to
35 60 years out range, the water treatment plant would
36 then process water before it's discharged into the
37 Crooked Creek drainage.

38
39 So the principal of this mine is no
40 contact water discharged into the open environment,
41 into the open waters, retain all contact water into the
42 pit lake and then, when the pit lake becomes full, a
43 permanent water treatment facility would treat the
44 water before it's discharged into upper Crooked Creek.

45
46 CHAIRMAN WILDE: What is the life of
47 the mine supposedly?

48
49 MR. GORDON: Oh, I'm sorry. Three to
50 four years to construct, approximately 27.5 years of

1 operation, followed by reclamation, but reclamation
2 would begin actually as proposed, before the mine is
3 closed. That would take something like three to five
4 years. Then there's at least 50 years of monitoring
5 after the mine is closed in relation to water quality
6 primarily and the State is currently proposing a 200-
7 year bond on this project so that 200 years from now if
8 the project went forward, there would be money
9 available to deal with any issues that might come up if
10 something doesn't operate as expected.

11
12 Regarding Taylor's comments about water
13 quality, there's two things you would see in the
14 project documents and in the EIS as it's being
15 developed, NAG and PAG. NAG is non-acid generating and
16 PAG is, I believe, potentially acid generating.

17
18 Because of the geochemistry of the rock
19 and because there's arsenic and mercury, other
20 potential contaminants that just occur in rock in
21 Alaska throughout the state in varying quantities, the
22 rock has to be handled depending on whether it's
23 potentially acid generating and therefore stored in
24 some of these facilities with the water that it comes
25 in contact with potentially treated to make sure that
26 if it does generate any acid, it doesn't get released
27 to Crooked Creek or outside the facilities in a manner
28 that might harm the environment, et cetera.

29
30 As I mentioned, mercury is one of the
31 contaminants that's naturally occurring in the rock.
32 There were comments in the EIS regarding air quality
33 from mine emissions due to excavation, due to
34 processing, et cetera and so on.

35
36 There's obviously history in the area
37 of mercury contamination due to Red Devil and the EIS
38 will go into some lengthy discussion of the past
39 history and the potential for this project and how the
40 applicant is proposing to deal with these issues.

41
42 Substantial comments on fish, wildlife
43 and birds, everything from migration to the status of
44 the health populations, et cetera, potential blockage
45 of fish passage.

46
47 We discussed some of the impacts,
48 socio-cultural impacts in relation to subsistence
49 traditions. Well, there was a variety of comments that
50 related to people, the local communities, their ability

1 to earn an income from the proposed project, the
2 potential for a boom and bust cycle if the mine is
3 constructed and then in a number of years ceases
4 operations and there isn't work for those people that
5 worked at the mine to go to something else.

6

7 Then a fair number of concerns about
8 just general health impact from additional development
9 in the area of the mine site itself.

10

11 MR. BRELSFORD: Keith, if I could. So
12 the scoping meeting is the start -- those scoping
13 meetings through January, February, March are the start
14 of the detailed review of a very large proposed
15 project. They're like the open questions that we heard
16 from the public and in developing the environmental
17 impact statement we're trying to answer those open
18 questions.

19

20 So it's like the bottom of the pyramid.
21 The questions and concerns in the communities are the
22 targets. They're the questions that have to be
23 addressed in the EIS. This is a very quick summary of
24 it and Keith will conclude with a website address where
25 there's a longer document. It's actually several
26 hundred pages of the detailed testimony and comments
27 from the many people who came to share their thoughts
28 and concerns during the scoping period.

29

30 MR. GORDON: As Taylor has mentioned,
31 from the scoping meetings the scoping report is
32 generated. That is put out for the cooperators to
33 review and comment and will be an appendix to the EIS
34 itself. The next step in the process is a defined
35 purpose and need, which is effectively chapter one of
36 the document, that helps inform the Federal agencies as
37 to each entities' role in relation to the decision-
38 making process in the document, and helps define the
39 scope of analysis. In other words, what's the depth
40 and breadth of the analysis we're going to do in this
41 document in relation to the proposed project and
42 potential alternatives.

43

44 Then we continue with the initial
45 alternatives development process in part from public
46 comment and from the experience of the various
47 technical experts and the various agencies, et cetera.
48 From there, the initial affected environment -- in
49 other words, the baseline environmental condition as
50 described in chapter three, followed by the initial

1 development of environmental consequences in chapter
2 four with public comments and responses in chapter
3 five.

4

5 The project status to date, which is
6 what you're really here for. The cooperating agencies
7 have been identified and I believe everyone except
8 potentially one has signed onto the MOU, the memorandum
9 of understanding, for the document. We developed
10 existing baseline data from research from existing
11 literature, existing fieldwork, et cetera.

12

13 The EIS scope and scope of analysis has
14 been generically defined, interagency review of data
15 gaps with the cooperators, Federal and State agencies,
16 et cetera, has been completed and we're in the process
17 of filling in some of those data gaps with additional
18 field work, research, et cetera.

19

20 Scoping meetings, as you're aware, have
21 been concluded. Chapters one and two, the purpose of
22 need and the draft alternatives have been drafted for
23 the preliminary draft EIS. As I noted, the preliminary
24 draft EIS will go to the agencies and cooperators for
25 review followed by the draft EIS, which will go out for
26 public comment, followed by the final EIS, which will
27 go out for public comment.

28

29 Chapters three and four are currently
30 being drafted. The preliminary draft EIS reviewing
31 comment is expected, as the schedule exists today, to
32 conclude in July of 2014, after which time the draft
33 EIS will be drafted, published, receive public comment,
34 comments will be responded to and is expected to
35 conclude in October of 2014, followed by whatever
36 rewrites, additional research analysis, et cetera, is
37 required based on public and agency comment.

38

39 The final EIS will be drafted,
40 published, go out for public comment and responses to
41 comments. The current schedule says that the final EIS
42 for the project will be published December 2015.
43 Realistically, that date is going to get bumped back a
44 little bit. We don't know how much at this point.

45

46 Within the EIS process -- I've been
47 talking about the NEPA process to date, but, as you're
48 all aware from what you've seen in the past, the EIS
49 process will include every other law we have to deal
50 with, whether it's Federal, State, et cetera. It will

1 deal with the Clean Water Act 401, the water quality
2 standards that have to be met if the project is
3 permitted and goes forward.

4
5 It will deal with any endangered
6 species impacts, it will deal with Section 106,
7 National Historic Preservation Act, concerns and
8 regulations regarding protection of cultural resources,
9 et cetera.

10
11 It will deal with environmental justice
12 concerns, Marine Mammal Protection Act concerns for
13 potential impacts to marine mammals at the mouth of the
14 Kuskokwim, in the Kuskokwim and from the Kuskokwim to
15 Seattle potentially, but at least from the Kuskokwim to
16 Dutch Harbor.

17
18 It deals with the Clean Water Act
19 404(b)(1) guidelines. Those are the guidelines that
20 say that the Army Corps of Engineers, if we permit an
21 alternative, that alternative has to be what's referred
22 to as the least environmentally damaging correctable
23 alternative unless there is some specific exception
24 that allows us to go with an alternative that isn't the
25 least environmentally damaging and those are fairly
26 tight constraints.

27
28 Basically what it says is if we're
29 going to permit something, we have to have the greatest
30 degree of assurance that we're permitting the right
31 thing. Then we also deal with Section 10 of 404.
32 Those are the Corps of Engineers regulations that deal
33 with effects of wetlands, other waters of the U.S.,
34 aquatic resources, et cetera.

35
36 MR. BRELSFORD: Keith, let us take just
37 a second and see where we are on the microphone. We
38 may have some spillover on the signal.

39
40 MR. GORDON: That's a radio or
41 something. So I'll basically try to talk loud enough
42 to cover the radio. We'd also be dealing with Section
43 10 impacts, which is Army Corps of Engineers
44 regulations dealing with potential impacts to navigable
45 waters. Also any mitigation that needed to be
46 developed for the project, et cetera, and all of this,
47 as we noted, is to inform the public, the tribal
48 governments, the Federal government, the State
49 governments, all the cooperators on the project of
50 anything and everything they need to know to make

1 permitting and authorizing decisions if the project was
2 permitted and determinations of what's applicable
3 mitigation and reclamation.

4
5 MR. BRELSFORD: Where do you want to go
6 from here.

7
8 MR. GORDON: Why don't we go to the
9 last slide that shows where they can go to the website.

10
11 MR. BRELSFORD: Not talk about examples
12 of alternatives? We'll just go to the end?

13
14 MR. GORDON: No, if you want to --
15 Taylor is suggesting some of the alternatives, which is
16 certainly something we can address, but as I was typing
17 up the presentation this afternoon I didn't get to that
18 part yet.

19
20 MR. BRELSFORD: Can I take a crack at
21 this?

22
23 MR. GORDON: Go right ahead.

24
25 MR. BRELSFORD: So I think Keith has
26 actually -- it's so rich in his mind and thinking, that
27 he's sort of told the story, the detailed story of the
28 full development of the EIS, like all of the milestones
29 from now to conclusion. We were focusing it a little
30 more big milestones. So the scoping meetings through
31 the winter. Now we're in the middle of alternatives.
32 That was kind of what I thought might be high points
33 for right now. What I'd like to do is to talk about
34 the importance of alternatives that we're working on
35 right now.

36
37 You'll see on the slide that NEPA
38 requires comparisons. You don't just take the word of
39 a mine developer, the proponent, that this is the best
40 or the only way to produce a mine. You look for
41 alternatives. The law requires us to look for
42 alternatives that might achieve the same goal but with
43 lesser environmental impacts. So that's referred to as
44 a reasonable range of alternatives.

45
46 We say that when people told us in
47 scoping meetings about environmental issues, we ought
48 to see if there's a better way to develop the mine that
49 would reduce concerns about those environmental issues.
50 So scoping comments are the starting point for looking

1 for reasonable alternatives.

2

3 Then we look for differences, different
4 designs that could reduce impacts and then the EIS puts
5 them side by side and says if the government permitting
6 agencies were to adopt this approach, this alternative,
7 this would be the mix of impacts and potential
8 benefits. If they went with alternative B, there might
9 be a slightly different mix, so it gives the government
10 agencies choices in reaching a final decision at the
11 end of the EIS process.

12

13 It starts with the environmental
14 concerns raised by people. The technical staff go to
15 work and look for alternative designs or rerouting of a
16 pipeline, things like that that could reduce impacts.
17 Then we put it all on the table for comparison and
18 review by the public.

19

20 So, as an example, we started a minute
21 ago saying that among the public comments barge impacts
22 was a very big deal. It was potentially the single
23 largest concern raised again and again and again in the
24 communities with many facets, many dimensions the way
25 Keith was saying.

26

27 As an example of design alternatives,
28 if the barge routing was shortened, if the barge trips
29 concluded at Birch Tree Crossing below Aniak between
30 Aniak and Kalskag, that would reduce the amount of
31 barging above Birch Tree Crossing where the river
32 narrows greater yet, a longer road, it's 69 miles
33 instead of 30 miles, but quite a bit less barge traffic
34 in that Central Kuskokwim region.

35

36 If you look at the bottom, we're trying
37 to examine very carefully an alternative technology.
38 The 40 million gallons of diesel per year used at the
39 proposed Donlin mine is largely to power the trucks,
40 the huge trucks that carry ore out of the bottom of the
41 pit and up to the conveyor belt and into the mill.
42 There is, we think, a pretty good chance -- we were
43 asked to examine whether those trucks could operate on
44 L&G coming from that natural gas pipeline and,
45 therefore, reducing the need, almost eliminating the
46 need for half of the barge traffic, the diesel barge 40
47 millions gallons of diesel. So this would be an
48 example of a different technology that might allow us
49 to reduce some impacts in a big way.

50

1 There are many, many other issues and
2 design alternatives that are under discussion, but just
3 to have the idea that NEPA says look for alternatives
4 that reduce impacts. These are examples that focus on
5 barge traffic.

6
7 Now we're at the final slide that about
8 come and talk with us on our website. Go ahead, Keith.
9

10 MR. GORDON: URS has developed for the
11 Corps of Engineers a website. There's actually a
12 couple of websites out there. There's the Corps
13 website, which URS constantly updates with project
14 information, background information, status, et cetera
15 and so on. Then there's Donlin's website, which I
16 don't believe we have on the screen, which also
17 provides project information.

18
19 URS is also developing regularly
20 newsletters that define the status of the project and
21 those are regularly sent out to the communities, I
22 believe 66 communities.

23
24 MR. BRELSFORD: About 8,500 copies of
25 the newsletters go out at each time.

26
27 MR. GORDON: Which includes the
28 cooperators, of course, et cetera. The Corps of
29 Engineers Alaska District regulatory program project
30 manager for the project is Mr. Don Kuhle. Don will be
31 the project manager on the project until approximately
32 July and then I will probably be the project manager
33 after that point in time.

34
35 As I said, we're probably looking at
36 post December 2015 before the Corps of Engineers makes
37 a decision on whether or not we would permit this
38 project. That assumes that the project continues to go
39 forward. As we've seen, some projects don't always go
40 forward as planned. We have no indication for this
41 project that it isn't going to go through the EIS and
42 permitting process as they're currently proposing.
43 We'll just have to see what alternatives we come up
44 with.

45
46 Does anybody have any questions?
47

48 MR. CEBRIAN: Mr. Chair. Members of
49 the Council. Just to add a little bit to this, the BLM
50 is a cooperating agency to the plan because the

1 pipeline, the proposed natural gas pipeline runs
2 through BLM land as of the current planning. What the
3 BLM wants to do is cooperate with URS through Taylor
4 and Keith here, Corps of Engineers, in writing the
5 ANILCA Section .810 analysis. That's another layer of
6 document wherein villages in this area that are
7 potentially affected by this project can bring up
8 subsistence concerns.

9
10 A project of this size is likely to
11 have a positive effect, how is it said, likely to have
12 a significant effect.....

13
14 MR. BRELSFORD: Significant restrict.
15 The test in ANILCA .810 is would the project
16 significantly restrict subsistence resources.

17
18 MR. CEBRIAN: Subsistence uses and
19 needs, then there would likely be scoping. There would
20 have to be scoping in villages if the findings of the
21 ANILCA .810 states that there is likely a significant
22 restriction in subsistence uses and needs.

23
24 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Any other questions.

25
26 Mr. Roczicka.

27
28 MR. ROCZICKA: Mr. Chairman and Mr.
29 Gordon, Taylor. I was contacted by a fellow here a
30 couple weeks ago who has quite a history of involvement
31 with the mining industry and he pointed out a red flag
32 to me he said at the next opportunity we're at a
33 meeting like this he suggested I bring forward. His
34 concern was that the 14-inch line that they've got
35 coming in for the natural gas is over double the
36 capacity of what they would need actually to operate.
37 He figured they could operate on a 6 to 8-inch line.

38
39 I know they've put forward the possible
40 benefit of sending more of that gas on, you know,
41 having that extra capacity to send down to villages,
42 help reduce fuel costs or heating costs there.
43 Possibly going to the trucks for natural gas. Again,
44 what he saw as a red flag was that the exploration that
45 took place there stopped at 32 million ounces.

46
47 Looking at the geology of the area and
48 that there was more search done, as large as this
49 project is, with a 14-inch line, maybe you're not
50 getting the whole story here and we may be looking at a

1 mine development that's possibly twice or even three
2 times the level of what it currently is. His
3 suggestion was that you guys should really be taking
4 that into consideration and taking a real hard look at
5 that as you're working through this first year.

6
7 MR. GORDON: Thank you. Those concerns
8 have been raised and we're aware of them. You make at
9 least three very good points. First of all, there is
10 entirely the potential that the proposed 27.5 year life
11 of this mine will be exceeded simply because 20 years
12 from now technology to recover gold from previously
13 mined rock may be such that some of that rock that is
14 considered waste rock can then be mined, therefore
15 extending the life of the project.

16
17 We are aware that the capacity of the
18 14-inch line exceeds what the mine needs. There's a
19 requirement -- I can't cite the law, but there's a
20 requirement in what's referred to as common carrier
21 pipelines that they have additional capacity so that if
22 someone in the area, one of the communities, et cetera,
23 wanted to utilize the capacity of that line to supply
24 gas to their community, to another facility, et cetera,
25 that the capacity is there. So the pipeline is
26 deliberately oversized in part due to those
27 requirement.

28
29 Taylor, I'm drawing a blank on the
30 third point.

31
32 MR. BRELSFORD: I hope you were going
33 to talk about cumulative effects analysis.

34
35 MR. GORDON: Go ahead. That is the
36 next thing.

37
38 MR. BRELSFORD: In the EIS, we try to
39 understand what would happen if the proposed action and
40 the alternatives went forward. They're referred to as
41 direct and indirect effects, kind of during the life of
42 the mine. But then NEPA recognizes that a project can
43 kick off or interact with other things going into the
44 region over time. So if it were to trigger new
45 exploration and development -- as an example, like Greg
46 is referring to, that would be a cumulative effect, so
47 there will be a whole -- under each resource we will
48 try and identify potential future projects and what the
49 combined effect this proposal plus reasonably
50 foreseeable additional projects might look like.

1 NEPA requires a disclosure of
2 interactions with other projects that may come along
3 while this one is underway or afterwards, the so-called
4 reasonably foreseeable future actions. That's called
5 the cumulative effects analysis. There's a legal
6 standard that we have to do a pretty careful job about
7 that.

8
9 MR. GORDON: And the level of detail
10 that we go into, not only in relation to NEPA but in
11 relation to other Federal entities' roles in the
12 project, for instance, if someone came in and said,
13 okay, they have -- it's a 14-inch line, it has this
14 total capacity, they're going to use, for example, 75
15 percent of that capacity, we want to use 20 percent of
16 the remaining capacity and we're going to develop the
17 facility to use that within X number of years.

18
19 In other words, they've got plans on
20 the table, we would consider that a reasonably
21 foreseeable impact and then we would be in a position
22 where we would be saying, wait a minute, we've just
23 expanded the scope of the analysis in the EIS and,
24 therefore, the information we need to include in it
25 because that's a reasonably foreseeable project. Now,
26 while it's not part of this project, it doesn't occur
27 but for this project and the but for cast is coming
28 from the Army Corps of Engineers program versus just
29 NEPA itself.

30
31 So, yeah, if somebody comes in with
32 those types of proposals, they can potentially be
33 included in this project, in the analysis, et cetera
34 and so on.

35
36 MR. ROCZICKA: That might be something
37 that could give cause to stop the clock delay until
38 that's satisfactorily addressed.

39
40 MR. GORDON: Correct. It can extend
41 the length of time we go through the process of
42 developing alternatives. It can change alternatives,
43 et cetera and so on. It can change the whole scope of
44 the project to a degree.

45
46 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Are there any further
47 questions for Mr. Gordon or Mr. Brelsford.

48
49
50 (No comments)

1 MR. BRELSFORD: Mr. Chairman. Could we
2 just again extend our appreciation. This is late in
3 the day, an awful lot of detail. Thank you very much
4 for fitting us in. We hope this is important in your
5 eyes and useful information. I think Keith and I will
6 both be here tomorrow if there are questions on the
7 discussion, but I believe you have an evening session
8 again, so we better wrap up as quick as we can.

9

10 Thank you again, Mr. Chairman.

11

12 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you both. Any
13 further questions.

14

15

16 (No comments)

17

18 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you very much.
19 There being no questions we're going to recess for
20 lunch -- dinner, I'm sorry. Remember at 7:00 we're
21 going to be coming back in for a public hearing, at
22 which time the rural determination issue will be
23 briefed to the Council and to the public.

24

25 MR. LORRIGAN: Mr. Chairman. We'd like
26 to encourage any Council members that are calling in to
27 also call into that this evening.

28

29 CHAIRMAN WILDE: If there are any
30 Council members that are on the call in, we'd
31 appreciate for you to also call in at that time. Mr.
32 Nick, do you have any announcements.

33

34 MR. NICK: Thank you Mr. Chair. I just
35 received a call from one of the Council members. He's
36 going to be airborne momentarily coming to Bethel, so
37 in the morning you should be able to establish a
38 quorum.

39

40 CHAIRMAN WILDE: Thank you. We'll
41 recess until 7:00 this evening.

42

43 Thank you.

44

45 (Off record)

46

47 (PROCEEDINGS TO BE CONTINUED)

