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Forest Service

Federal Subsistence Board Meeting Advisory

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Federal Subsistence Board to Hold Public Hearing on the Rural Determination Process in Fairbanks

The Federal Subsistence Board will hold a public hearing to accept public testimony and written comments on the Federal Subsistence Management Program's rural determination process. The hearing will be held on November 7, 2013, in Fairbanks at the Alpine Lodge from 7:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. The public is welcome to attend in person or telephonically (1-877-638-8165, passcode: 9060609). All testimony presented at these meetings will be recorded for the public record. Written comments received, including any personal information provided, will be available to the public.

Title VIII of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) provides a subsistence priority for rural Alaska residents for harvesting fish and wildlife resources on Federal public lands. Only residents of communities or areas determined to be rural are eligible under Federal subsistence regulations for the subsistence priority.

The Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture are responsible for the process by which the rural determinations are made. The Federal Subsistence Board uses the Secretaries' process to make the rural determinations.

In 2009, the Secretary of the Interior called for a review of the Federal Subsistence Management Program to "ensure that the program is best serving rural Alaskans and that the letter and spirit of Title VIII [of ANILCA] are being met." As a result of the review, the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture directed the Federal Subsistence Board to conduct a review of the rural determination process and develop recommendations for the Secretaries on how to improve the process.

The Federal Subsistence Board initiated a review of the rural determination process on December 31, 2012 with the publication of a Federal Register Notice requesting comments on the following components of the process: population thresholds, rural characteristics, aggregation of communities, timelines and information sources. The deadline to submit comments is December 2, 2013.

The Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council will be meeting November 6-8, 2013, in Fairbanks at the same location. On November 6, beginning at 1:00 p.m., the Council will discuss the rural determination process and develop recommendations to the Federal Subsistence Board on how to improve the process. The Thursday and Friday meetings both begin at 8:30 a.m. Public testimony and written comments will also be accepted at this meeting.

The Federal Subsistence Board plans to meet April 15–17, 2014 in Anchorage to review all the comments it received during the public comment period. The Board may then make recommendations to the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture on possible changes to improve the process. These recommendations would be based on the Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils' recommendations, results of Tribal and ANCSA corporation consultations, and public comments.

If the Secretaries make changes to the rural determination process, a proposed rule will be published in the Federal Register as required by the Administrative Procedure Act.

Meeting dates and locations are subject to change, please check before you go. For updated public hearing information, visit the Federal Subsistence Management Program website, <http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/index.cfm>, or contact the Office of Subsistence Management at 800-478-1456, (907) 786-3888 or by e-mail: subsistence@fws.gov.

Additional information on the Federal Subsistence Management Program and on the rural determination process is available on the Federal Subsistence Management Program's website.

If you need special accommodations for disabilities, please contact the council coordinator Melinda Burke, (907) 786-3885, 1-800-478-1456, melinda_burke@fws.gov, or the Office of Subsistence Management approximately one-week prior to the meeting.

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