



U.S. FISH and WILDLIFE SERVICE
BUREAU of LAND MANAGEMENT
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Federal Subsistence Board

1011 E. Tudor Rd., MS 121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199



U.S. FOREST SERVICE

JAN 15 2014

FWS/OSM 13087.TE

The Honorable Sally Jewell
Secretary of the Interior
United States Department of the Interior
Office of the Secretary
1849 C Street N.W. Mail Stop 7229
Washington, DC 20240

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture
United States Department of Agriculture
Office of the Secretary
1400 Independence Ave. S.W. Room 200-A
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Jewell and Secretary Vilsack:

You have asked to be kept informed of issues and concerns that fall outside of the regulatory process that may affect subsistence users in Alaska. Your appointees to the Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils are raising concerns through the Federal Subsistence Board to you. These issues are being brought to your attention as they are outside of the jurisdiction of the Federal Subsistence Board.

The Board wants to make the Secretaries aware of three important issues that could affect the availability of wildlife and fishery resources for subsistence use. They are as follows:

- Impacts of proposed road developments in western Alaska on the migration of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd on subsistence users who depend on this resource (submitted by Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council).
- Impacts of the bycatch harvest of Chinook (King) and Chum (Dog) salmon during the offshore Pollock fishery in the Bering Sea on the escapement of these fish in the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers. The declining numbers and low escapement of Chinook salmon have direct effects on the local subsistence users and their livelihood (submitted by Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council).
- Impacts to the migration of Western Arctic, Teshepuk, and Central Arctic caribou herds and important subsistence fisheries from the proposed road project known as the "Road to Umiat." In addition to the potential disruption of the migration routes of these important subsistence species, there is also concern the road will increase the sport hunting pressure on subsistence resources (submitted by North Slope Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council).

We have attached the Board's annual report replies to the Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council and North Slope Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils for a complete description of the Councils' concerns and the Board's reply to those concerns. We thank you for your consideration of these issues and look forward to hearing from you. These matters are unique to Alaska and integral to many Alaskans that depend on subsistence resources.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tim Towarak". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Tim" being more prominent than the last name "Towarak".

Tim Towarak
Chairman

Enclosures

cc: Eugene R. Peltola, Jr., Assistant Regional Director, Office of Subsistence Management
Chuck Ardizzone, Wildlife Chief Division, Office of Subsistence Management
Jack L. Reakoff, Chair, Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Harry K. Brower, Jr., Chair, North Slope Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Federal Subsistence Board
Interagency Staff Committee
Administrative Record



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Federal Subsistence Board
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U.S. FOREST SERVICE

SEP 11 2013

Jack Reakoff, Chair
Western Interior Alaska Subsistence
Regional Advisory Council
c/o U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
1011 East Tudor Road MS 121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Dear Chairman Reakoff:

This letter responds to the Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council's (Council) 2012 Annual Report as approved at its winter 2013 meeting. The Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture have delegated the responsibility to respond to these reports to the Federal Subsistence Board (Board). The Board appreciates your effort in developing the Annual Report and values the opportunity to review the issues brought forward concerning your region. Annual Reports allow the Board to become more aware of the issues that fall outside of the regulatory process and affect subsistence users in your region.

The Board has reviewed your Annual Report and offers the following responses:

Issue 1: Lack of a rural subsistence representative on the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council

The Council is concerned about the lack of rural or subsistence representation on the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council (NPFMC). It was an appalling oversight that the management of salmon in maritime waters outside of Alaska was excluded from Title VIII of ANILCA and the Federal Subsistence Management Program. Even though the NPFMC is not part of the subsistence program, it needs to be responsive to the needs of Federal subsistence users in order for the mandates of Title VIII of ANILCA to be fulfilled.

The Pollock industry wields too much influence on appointments to the NPFMC, as illustrated by a recent incident where one of the Governor's appointees was replaced by a Pollock industry executive. This undue influence almost guarantees that the Pollock industry's adverse impacts on salmon will never be curtailed. The next time the Magnuson-Stevens Act is updated, the law needs to be amended in order to mandate that a seat be reserved on the NPFMC for a rural subsistence user. The Council therefore requests that the Board and its members take whatever steps are necessary to influence that outcome.

Response:

The Board understands the Council's viewpoint on the issue of having rural or subsistence representation on the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council (NPFMC). However, membership on the NPFMC is determined by Congress. It is not within the Board's scope of authority or responsibility to advocate for, or request changes to, laws passed by Congress. The Council is also prohibited by law from sending any correspondence to any member of Congress advocating for any such changes. However, individuals may send letters to their Congressional delegation requesting a change in the law, so long as they are submitting such comments as private citizens and not as members of the Council. Senator Mark Begich held a public hearing on July 3 related to the Magnuson-Stevens Act. The law is currently set to expire on September 30, 2013, so any individual comments should be submitted well before that time in order to be considered.

Issue 2: Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group (WACHWG) April 2012 Letter
The WACHWG membership is comprised of individuals from a vast area, including Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Council members, as well as Federal and State agencies whose purpose is to ensure the conservation of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd. The Council wants to make the Board aware of some very important issues identified by the WACHWG in a recent letter to Alaska Governor Sean Parnell (enclosed). The letter outlined concerns regarding various proposed roads through herd migration routes, which could potentially be disruptive to caribou migration and negatively impact rural users who depend on this resource.

The WACHWG is requesting that the State of Alaska fund a Community Health Impacts Assessment to identify potential impacts of these proposed roads on people and their communities within the range of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd. The Council maintains that no decision should be made regarding whether or not to build these roads until that Assessment is completed with public input from affected communities, and the final results of the Assessment are provided to potentially affected communities.

Response:

The Board supports the Council's involvement in the Western Arctic Caribou Working Group, and appreciates you sharing your concerns regarding the potential impacts of proposed roads on the Western Arctic Caribou Herd and Federally qualified subsistence users. Your concerns will be brought to the attention of the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture under the direction provided in the Secretarial Review.

Issue 3: Chinook salmon

The Council is very concerned regarding the continued trend of Chinook salmon runs to meet escapement goals and subsistence needs on the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers. The Council encourages the Board to dialogue with NPFMC in order to develop specific strategies to protect Chinook and chum salmon passage in the Bering Sea. This Council firmly believes that

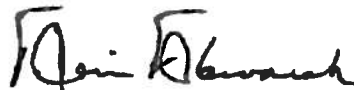
conservation methods of the in-river user groups have been exhausted and that further exploration of the bycatch harvest and activities on the Bering Sea must be discussed.

Response:

The Board and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Alaska Regional Director were fully engaged in the NPFMC regulatory process when Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands Chinook salmon bycatch limits were under consideration in 2007–2009, including the Board Chair testifying for a lower limit (29,323) than what was ultimately implemented (60,000) under Amendment 91. The Board often raises issues of concern to subsistence uses on Federal public lands with other Federal agencies during their regulatory processes. The Council may send a letter to the NPMFC expressing its concerns, with assistance by OSM staff. For your information, the Board has sent letters to the NPFMC regarding bycatch (enclosure). According to guidance by the Secretary of the Interior as part of the Secretarial Review, which directs the Board to inform the Secretaries when “non-Department rule-making entities develop regulations that may adversely affect subsistence users,” the Board will bring this issue to the attention of the Secretaries.

In closing, I want to thank you and your Council for their continued involvement and diligence in matters regarding the Federal Subsistence Management Program. I would also like to specifically thank Jack Reakoff and Raymond Collins for their 20 years of service to the Federal Subsistence Management Program as members of this Council. I speak for the entire Board in expressing our appreciation for your efforts and our confidence that the subsistence users of the Western Interior Region are well represented through your work.

Sincerely,



Tim Towarak
Chair

Enclosure

- cc. Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Federal Subsistence Board
Interagency Staff Committee
Gene Peltola, Jr., Assistant Regional Director, OSM
Kathleen M. O'Reilly-Doyle, Deputy Assistant Regional Director, OSM
Carl Johnson, Council Coordination Division Chief, OSM
Melinda Burke, Subsistence Council Coordinator, OSM
Administrative Record

Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group

Goal: To work together to ensure the long-term conservation of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd and the ecosystem on which it depends, to maintain traditional and other uses for the benefit of all people now and in the future.

Chair: Roy Ashenfelter

Vice-Chair: Phil Driver

April 20, 2012
Governor Sean Parnell
P.O. Box 110001
Juneau, AK 99811-0001

Dear Governor Parnell:

As the State of Alaska evaluates the feasibility of various "Roads to Resources" projects, I would like to submit the following request on behalf of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group (Working Group). The Working Group is a permanent organization of stakeholders that represent communities within the range of this herd, guides, transporters, environmentalists, nonlocal hunters and reindeer herders. The purpose of this group is to ensure the conservation of the Western Arctic Herd.

We request that:

1. The State of Alaska fund a Community Health Impacts Assessment to identify potential impacts of proposed roads on people and their communities within the range of the Western Arctic Herd. This project could be structured using the Technical Guidance for Health Impact Assessments in Alaska¹ report that identifies health effects categories relevant to Alaskan resource development projects. The Food, Nutrition and Subsistence Activity category (p. 29) appears to address the primary concerns of the Working Group, including:
 - a. How changes in wildlife habitat, hunting patterns and food choices will influence the diet and cultural practices of local communities; and
 - b. Project-specific impacts that may affect the availability of foods needed by local communities to survive in a mixed cash and subsistence economy in rural Alaska.
2. That no decision be made regarding whether or not to build these roads until the Community Health Impacts Assessment is completed with input from the communities, and the final results provided to potentially affected communities.

Working Group members feel that it is important that the State of Alaska consider projected impacts of new roads on this herd as well as the people who depend upon it. This includes the Ambler Mining District Access Project, the Foothills West Transportation Access project (Umiat) and the Western Alaska Access Planning Study (Nome). The following topics are of primary concern:

1. Road impacts on the Western Arctic Herd, including changes in movements, distribution, and population size in response to infrastructure, disturbance and hunting pressure.
2. Impacts of roads on hunting access for local residents as well as visiting hunters, including anticipated changes in harvest levels and the complexity of hunting regulations.
3. Social and economic costs/benefits of road access on previously roadless communities, addressing projected changes in reliance on and costs of commercial goods including foods and fuels compared to costs associated with subsistence based culture and economy.
4. We feel that the cumulative effects of all road and development projects within the range of the Western Arctic Herd should be considered in these analyses.

The herd peaked around 2003 at a population size of 490,000 caribou and has since begun to steadily decline. Low population levels, could significantly impact the communities that harvest caribou from this herd. Increased access bringing greater numbers of hunters into traditional subsistence hunting areas could greatly compound the effects of natural fluctuations in caribou abundance.

Working Group members from rural communities want to know how their subsistence activities will be changed if roads are established through their hunting areas. The concerns we have identified in #2 and #3 above are important in determining the social and economic costs of roads on communities. Studies by ADFG on the Nelchina Caribou Herd regulations and harvest history² illustrate the challenges of managing hunting in areas that have supported rural subsistence hunters/communities and become accessible to large populations by roads. Restrictions associated with hunting near industrial developments are also a concern. Increased off-road access, including ORVs, boats and snowmachines, may also impact the behavior of the Western Arctic Herd and other species, and make it more difficult for local hunters to obtain the meat they need.

The Working Group is not requesting that a social study be conducted to merely document the effects of roads on subsistence users. That was done long ago³. Our objectives are to: 1) attempt to predict specific impacts of the proposed roads on local residents; 2) provide this information to affected communities to allow them to make informed decisions regarding whether or not to build these roads; and 3) decide how to proceed. If it is decided to establish these roads, the information from this project could be used to minimize or mitigate likely impacts. In order to complete this process, the Working Group requests that no decision be made regarding whether to establish these roads until the requested project be completed and its results provided to potentially affected communities.

Thank you for your consideration of our request. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Roy Ashenfelter, Chair

CC:

Cora Campbell, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Marc Luiken, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities
William Streur, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Health and Social Services
Jeff Haskett, Alaska Regional Director, US Fish and Wildlife Service
Sue Masica, Alaska Regional Director, National Park Service
Bud Cribley, Alaska State Director, Bureau of Land Management
Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group Members & Alternates

¹ State of Alaska HIA Program, Department of Health and Social Services. July 2011. Technical Guidance for Health Impact Assessment (HIA) in Alaska, v 1.0.

² Fall, J.A and W.E. Simeone. 2010. Overview of Nelchina Caribou Herd Regulation and Harvest History. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Special Publication No. BOG 2010-05.

³ Wolf, R.J. and R.J. Walker. 1987. Subsistence economies in Alaska: Productivity, geography, and development Impacts. Arctic Anthropology 24(2):56-81.

Please Reply To: Caribou Working Group, P.O. Box 175, Nome, AK 99762
With copy of reply sent to 114 S. Franklin St., Ste. 203, Juneau, AK 99801



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Federal Subsistence Board
1011 E. Tudor Rd., MS 121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199



U.S. FOREST SERVICE

AUG 19 2013

Harry Brower, Jr., Chair
North Slope Alaska Subsistence
Regional Advisory Council
c/o U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
1011 East Tudor Road, MS 121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Dear Chairman Brower:

This letter responds to the North Slope Subsistence Regional Advisory Council's (Council) 2012 Annual Report as approved at its winter 2013 meeting. The Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture have delegated the responsibility to respond to these reports to the Federal Subsistence Board (Board). The Board appreciates your effort in developing the Annual Report and values the opportunity to review the issues brought forward concerning your region. Annual Reports allow the Board to become more aware of the issues that fall outside of the regulatory process and affect subsistence users in your region.

The Board has reviewed your Annual Report and offers the following responses:

Issue 1: Potential impacts to caribou and fish from the proposed "Road to Umiat"

The Council would like to see a full subsistence impacts investigation and review of the Foothills West Transportation Access Project (locally referred to as the "Road to Umiat"). While the Council recognizes that this is a project proposed by the State of Alaska (Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities) and is primarily on State lands, there will likely be Federal involvement with the project in the form of permitting or other authorizations. Caribou and fish that are essential for subsistence have migratory pathways that cross the area where the road is projected to be located. The proposed road will cross the foothills north of the Brooks Range for approximately 110 miles in a northwest direction, from approximately Milepost 278 of the Dalton Highway to Umiat, Alaska. The purpose of the proposed road is to promote oil and gas exploration and development within the Western Foothills Province including the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR-A), and will cross State, Federal and Arctic Slope Regional Corporation (ASRC) land with extensive wetland areas and four major rivers; the Itkillik, Anaktuvuk, Chandler, and Colville.

The Council views the engagement of the Federal Subsistence Management Program and the Federal Subsistence Board as essential in this review since the Western Arctic, Teshepuk, and Central Arctic Caribou herds use some portion of the proposed road development region. The Council is concerned the road will bisect and disrupt caribou migratory routes and also cross major rivers important to subsistence fisheries. The Council would also like the Board to consider the impacts of the potential for increased sport hunting pressures on subsistence harvests, if the road opens up vehicle access to the region. There is historical evidence that increased hunting pressure will likely occur, from the Dalton Highway (which was asserted would forever remain closed to the public) and the Hickel Highway (which so increased sport hunting pressure, the community of Anaktuvuk Pass joined in a lawsuit to close it).

Response:

The Federal Subsistence Board (Board) recognizes the Council's concerns on the potential effects of the proposed road from the Dalton Highway to Umiat could have on the caribou populations, which migrate throughout the area. However, this issue is outside the authority of the Board.

Several State and Federal permitting agencies are responsible for determining the impact to wildlife by the "Road to Umiat." Each Federal agency is required to conduct an analysis under Section 810 of ANILCA as to the potential impacts to subsistence uses and resources prior to authorizing certain activities on land. As part of that analysis, the Federal agency must notify the Regional Advisory Council if the activity "would significantly restrict subsistence uses." The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) and the State of Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT) are the respective lead Federal and State agencies for this project. Additional partnering agencies for this project include the Bureau of Land Management and the Alaska Department of Natural Resources.

The Corps is the lead Federal agency for conducting an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), which will address the potential impacts to natural resources, such as, river and stream flows and the effects on fish populations, caribou migrations, and subsistence hunting. In addition, the Draft EIS will analyze the effects on: fish and wildlife including endangered species; effects on subsistence activities; hydrology and wetlands; noise, air and water quality; socioeconomics; cultural resources; secondary and cumulative impacts; climate change; and other significant issues raised by the public and agencies during the comment periods. The initial scoping/comment period has closed and the permitting agencies are in the process of drafting the EIS. The Draft EIS is scheduled to be available during the summer of 2014, and this Council will have the opportunity to comment on it. Following this will be a public comment period and the Board encourages the Council to address specific concerns during the public comment period, including at the public hearings. The Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) will

facilitate updates to the Council on the status of this proposed development. The following links provide additional information on the process:

<http://www.foothillswesteis.com/faq-eis-process>
http://foothillsroad.alaska.gov/field_studies.shtml
http://foothillsroad.alaska.gov/public_involvement.shtml
<http://foothillsroad.alaska.gov/contact.shtml>

With that said, however, consistent with the Federal Subsistence Management Program Secretarial Review, your concerns will be forwarded to the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture.

Issue 2: Review of Dalton Highway hunting access impacts to Caribou

The Council would like to see an evaluation of the Dalton Highway road access and increased hunting pressures on the caribou herds. The Council is concerned that migratory caribou important to subsistence that originate on Federal lands are impacted by increasing disturbance and hunting pressures along the Dalton Highway. Hunter education should be conducted to limit harassment and harm from bow hunters, citing observations of caribou wounded but not killed by arrows. The Council would also like to see education of all hunters on the local etiquette of "letting the leaders pass" referring to their own indigenous knowledge that the lead caribou at the head of the migration play a critical role in guiding the herd to good feeding, calving, and wintering grounds.

Additionally, the Council is very concerned about increasing traffic and access to waterways of the Dalton Highway since its designation as a Scenic Byway. Council members and members of the public feel they did not have adequate opportunity to provide input on the public process in the Scenic Byways designation, and stress that the program of encouraging use of the highway as an access route to remote lands and rivers in the region do have a direct impact on subsistence by increasing hunting pressure and disturbance of wildlife.

The Council is also concerned that the pipeline is exposed to open public access all along the highway and not monitored for safety. The Council would like to see a monitoring program in place to detect any potential problems or leaks and prevent any direct acts of vandalism. Any spills resulting from accidental or intentional breaches of the pipeline would be detrimental to caribou, rivers, and other important subsistence resources and should be monitored on a regular basis to prevent any such harm from occurring.

Response:

The Board recognizes the Council's concerns about hunter conduct in the Dalton Highway corridor, but this issue is outside the authority of the Board. There are a couple of options available to the Council that could address the issue of hunter education in the Dalton Highway

corridor. Federal Scenic Highway grant funding could possibly be used to include educational signs along the highway. The Council could draft specific educational recommendations and provide suggested language for how to convey local knowledge and concerns for caribou disturbance and hunting etiquette along the Dalton Highway. A "let the leaders pass" educational initiative for hunting of Porcupine Caribou along the Dempster Highway in Canada has been in place for many years. A similar initiative utilizing strategic placement of signs at pullouts and spotting sites along the road known to be used by bow hunters would be one avenue for educational outreach. In addition, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Central Yukon Field Office is initiating a new Resource Management Plan for the Central Yukon Planning Area which includes the Dalton Highway. BLM will provide the Council with information and ways to participate in this planning process at the August 2013 meeting. The Council can submit recommendations on the Dalton Highway management through this planning process.

The public has been able to access the Dalton Highway to Deadhorse, Alaska since 1994. Other than reviewing registration and harvest data, it would be difficult to evaluate the specific adverse impacts the road has had on caribou herds after it has been open to the public for nearly 20 years. The Dalton Highway Corridor Management Area (DHCMA) currently has specific restrictions for individuals hunting under State regulations, specifically restrictions regarding firearms and the use of motorized vehicles off of the main road surface. These restrictions extend for 5 miles on each side of the Dalton Highway from the Yukon River to the Arctic Ocean and undoubtedly serve as a disincentive for many out-of-area hunters. Bow hunters in the corridor are required under State of Alaska regulations to obtain a certification through the International Bow hunters Educational Program (IBEP). The IBEP class teaches ethical techniques for hunting with archery equipment.

The Dalton Highway's 1998 scenic byway designation is a State designation. In 2008, a Dalton Highway Corridor Partnership Plan (CPP) planning process was initiated. The plan, completed in 2010, is a comprehensive evaluation of the byway's intrinsic qualities and serves as a guide for management, protection, and enhancement of those qualities over time. The CPP is viewed as an expression of local desires, written in cooperation with local communities, organizations, businesses and public agencies. The plan addresses many of the concerns raised by the Council: hunting, off-road-vehicles, security of the pipeline, public safety, impacts to the natural and cultural resources, and diminished subsistence hunting opportunities. Additionally, the plan also offered possible solutions to the recognized concerns. Completion of the CPP made the Dalton Highway eligible for Federal scenic highway grant funding, which could include educational signage that targets these local concerns. Due to low stakeholder participation at the time, a local Dalton Highway Scenic Byway organization was not formed to help reach the stated vision, goals, and objectives of the CPP following its publication.

The plan can be found at:

<http://dnr.alaska.gov/parks/interp/pdf/daltonhwyscenisbywaycorridor.pdf>

Issue 3: Establishment of safety cabins for subsistence activities in remote access areas

The Council would like to see consideration for the building of "safety cabins" for remote access areas in predominantly Bureau of Land Management lands typically utilized for subsistence hunting and fishing activities.

Changing weather conditions in recent years have brought about increasingly frequent and severe storms as well as changing land and water/ice conditions, making travel more hazardous during times when subsistence harvests are normally conducted. Strategic placement of such public use safety cabins could assist local hunters in conducting normal seasonal subsistence activities with some opportunity for safety during increasingly unpredictable and inclement weather. The Council also seeks suggestions for possible sources of funding to build such cabins.

Response:

This issue is beyond the authority of the Board. The Board recognizes that changing weather conditions in recent years have made travel on land, water, and ice for subsistence activities more hazardous. The establishment of a network of safety cabins could provide hunters with safe locations to wait out storms or unsafe travel conditions. The Council could contact the appropriate land owners and land management agencies (Federal, State, Native Communities, Native Corporations, and Private inholdings) where such cabins would be helpful and explore ways with that agency or owner to install such cabins. Federal public lands in the North Slope Region include the National Petroleum Preserve-Alaska (BLM), the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (USFWS), and Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve (NPS).

For example, within the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR-A), the BLM coordinates with the North Slope Borough (Borough), which maintains a list of subsistence related cabins and structures and their locations throughout the NPR-A. The Borough also coordinates with oil and gas developers and others to minimize, to the extent practicable, development activities that might interfere with local subsistence related activities and structures.

I hope this answer is responsive to the Council's questions and concerns about safety cabins. If needed, your Council Coordinator or other Office of Subsistence Management staff could assist in making the necessary contacts with these agencies in order to pursue this matter.


In closing, I want to thank you and your Council for their continued involvement and diligence in matters regarding the Federal Subsistence Management Program. I would particularly like to thank Harry Brower, Jr., for his 20 years of service to the Federal Subsistence Management Program as a member of this Council. I speak for the entire Board in expressing our appreciation

Chairman Brower

6

for your efforts and our confidence that the subsistence users of the North Slope Region are well represented through your work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Towarak', written in a cursive style.

Tim Towarak
Chair

cc. North Slope Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Federal Subsistence Board
Interagency Staff Committee
Gene Peltola, Assistant Regional Director, OSM
Kathleen O'Reilly-Doyle, Deputy Assistant Regional Director, OSM
Carl Johnson, Council Coordination Division Chief, OSM
Eva Patton, Subsistence Council Coordinator, OSM
Administrative Record



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U.S. FOREST SERVICE

FWS/OSM11057/TT

Eric Olson, Chair
North Pacific Fishery Management Council
605 W. 4th Avenue, Suite 306
Anchorage, Alaska 99501-2252

MAY 20 2011

Dear Mr. Olson:

The Federal Subsistence Board (Board) appreciates the opportunity to provide its comments on the initial review draft of the *Environmental Assessment/ Regulatory Impact Review/ Initial Regulatory Flexibility Analysis for Amendment 90 to the Fishery Management Plan for Groundfish of the Gulf of Alaska, Chinook Salmon Bycatch in the Gulf of Alaska pollock Fishery (EA)*, dated March 2011, and the North Pacific Fishery Management Council's (NPFMC) preliminary preferred alternative. The Board, comprised of the Regional Directors of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the National Park Service, the Bureau of Land Management and the USDA Forest Service, and a Chair appointed by the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture, provides subsistence fishing opportunities in Federal public waters in Alaska under Title VIII of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA).

Bycatch is of concern to the Board and the affected Regional Advisory Councils because the Chinook salmon stocks listed in Table 63, page 124 of the EA, are important subsistence resources for Federally-qualified subsistence users in several areas of the state, including Southeast Alaska, Prince William Sound, Cook Inlet and Kodiak Island.

The Board urges the National Marine Fisheries Service and North Pacific Fishery Management Council to significantly reduce the amount of Chinook salmon bycatch in the GOA pollock fishery. Several Chinook salmon runs, most likely impacted by the GOA pollock fishery, were rated as "poor" to "below average" in 2010, as pointed out in Table 63, page 124 of the EA. The Chinook salmon runs on Kodiak Island are of particular concern. In 2010, Chinook salmon escapement in the Karluk River was below the escapement goal range for the fourth consecutive year and the subsistence fishery was closed the entire season. This was the third consecutive year that restrictions to the Chinook salmon subsistence fishery were necessary. In January 2011, the Alaska Board of Fisheries designated Karluk River Chinook salmon a stock of concern. In the nearby Ayakulik River, the lower end of the Chinook salmon escapement goal was achieved in 2010, however escapement goals were not met in 2006-2009.

The Board believes that the proposed hard cap of 22,500 in the Preliminary Preferred Alternative does not represent a meaningful reduction in Chinook salmon bycatch, as it is higher than the 2003-2010 bycatch average of approximately 19,000 Chinook shown in Table 4, page 21.

Therefore, **the Board recommends that a hard cap of 15,000 be adopted.** This alternative would provide a better opportunity for increased numbers of Chinook salmon to reach affected rivers to help achieve escapement goals and provide for subsistence uses. In addition, the option of allowing a 25% "overage provision" one out of every three years should be eliminated, as it appears to be incongruent with the Council's stated goal to reduce bycatch. The Board also recommends that the NPFMC recognize the importance of subsistence in the Problem Statement and more fully discuss the status of the Chinook salmon stocks most likely impacted by the GOA pollock fishery.

Thank you for this opportunity to provide our comments and recommendations on this important subsistence issue. If the Board can be of further assistance, please contact Peter J. Probasco, Assistant Regional Director, Office of Subsistence Management, at (907) 786-3888. The Board will continue to monitor developments on this issue and looks forward to the results of your efforts to significantly reduce Chinook salmon bycatch in the GOA pollock fishery.

Sincerely,



Tim Towarak
Chair, Federal Subsistence Board

cc: Federal Subsistence Board members

Gene Virden, Acting Regional Director - Bureau of Indian Affairs

Bud Cribley, State Director - Bureau of Land Management

Sue Masica, Regional Director - National Park Service

Geoff Haskett, Regional Director - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Beth Pendleton, Regional Forester - USDA Forest Service

Pat Pourchot, Department of the Interior, Alaska

Peter J. Probasco, Office of Subsistence Management

Speridon Simeonoff, Chair, Kodiak/Aleutians Regional Advisory Council

Ralph Lohse, Chair, Southcentral Alaska Regional Advisory Council

Bert Adams, Chair, Southeast Alaska Regional Advisory Council

Cora J. Campbell, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game

James W. Balsiger, Administrator, Alaska Region, National Marine Fisheries Service

Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

c/o U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

1011 East Tudor Road, MS 121

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Toll Free: 1-800-478-1456

RAC WI13039.MH

AUG 06 2013

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

Dear Mr. Towarak:

The Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council) appreciates the opportunity to submit this annual report to the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) under the provisions of Section 805(a)(3)(D) and Section 805(c) of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). At its public meeting in Holy Cross, Alaska, in October 2012, the Council identified concerns and recommendations for its FY2012 report, then finalized and approved the report at its March 2013 meeting in Galena.

1. Lack of a rural subsistence representative on the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council

The Council is concerned about the lack of rural or subsistence representation on the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council (NPFMC). It was an appalling oversight that the management of salmon in maritime waters outside of Alaska was excluded from Title VIII of ANILCA and the Federal Subsistence Management Program. Even though the NPFMC is not part of the subsistence program, it needs to be responsive to the needs of Federal subsistence users in order for the mandates of Title VIII of ANILCA to be fulfilled.

The Pollock industry wields too much influence on appointments to the NPFMC, as illustrated by a recent incident where one of the Governor's appointees was replaced by a Pollock industry executive. This undue influence almost guarantees that the Pollock industry's

adverse impacts on salmon will never be curtailed. The next time the Magnuson-Stevens Act is updated, the law needs to be amended in order to mandate that a seat be reserved on the NPFMC for a rural subsistence user. The Council therefore requests that the Board and its members take whatever steps are necessary to influence that outcome.

2. Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group (WACHWG) April 2012 Letter

The WACHWG membership is comprised of individuals from a vast area, including Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Council members, as well as Federal and State agencies whose purpose is to ensure the conservation of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd. The Council wants to make the Board aware of some very important issues identified by the WACHWG in a recent letter to Alaska Governor Sean Parnell (enclosed). The letter outlined concerns regarding various proposed roads through herd migration routes, which could potentially be disruptive to caribou migration and negatively impact rural users who depend on this resource.

The WACHWG is requesting that the State of Alaska fund a Community Health Impacts Assessment to identify potential impacts of these proposed roads on people and their communities within the range of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd. The Council maintains that no decision should be made regarding whether or not to build these roads until that Assessment is completed with public input from affected communities, and the final results of the Assessment are provided to potentially affected communities.

3. Chinook salmon

The Council is very concerned regarding the continued trend of Chinook salmon runs to meet escapement goals and subsistence needs on the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers. The Council encourages the Board to dialogue with NPFMC in order to develop specific strategies to protect Chinook and chum salmon passage in the Bering Sea. This Council firmly believes that conservation methods of the in-river user groups have been exhausted and that further exploration of the bycatch harvest and activities on the Bearing Sea must be discussed.

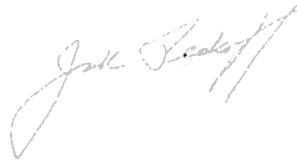
Thank you for the opportunity for this Council to assist the Federal Subsistence Program to meet its charge of protecting subsistence resources and uses of these resources on Federal Public lands and waters. We look forward to continuing discussions about the issues and concerns of subsistence users of the Western Interior Region. If you have questions about this report, please

Tim Towarak

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contact me via Melinda Hernandez, Council Coordinator, with the Office of Subsistence Management at 1-800-478-1456 or (907) 786-3885.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Jack Reakoff", written in a cursive style.

Jack Reakoff
Chair

Enclosure

cc: Federal Subsistence Board Members
Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Kathleen M. O'Reilly-Doyle, Acting Assistant Regional Director, OSM
David Jenkins, Acting Deputy Assistant Regional Director, OSM
Carl Johnson, Council Coordination Division Chief, OSM
Interagency Staff Committee
Administrative Record

North Slope Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

c/o U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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JUL 29 2013

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

Dear Tim Towarak:

The North Slope Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council) appreciates the opportunity to submit this annual report to the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) under the provisions of Section 805(a)(3)(D) and section 805(c) of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). At its public meeting on August 14, 2012, in Barrow, the Council identified concerns and recommendations for its FY 2012 report. The Council approved this letter at its February 26-27, 2013 public meeting in Barrow. The Council understands and supports the importance of addressing fish and wildlife resource topics annually, expressing its concerns, and addressing long term planning needs that are not addressed through the regulatory cycles throughout the year. The Council looks forward to your continued guidance and support on the issues listed below.

1) Potential impacts to caribou and fish from the proposed "Road to Umiat"

The Council would like to see a full subsistence impacts investigation and review of the Foothills West Transportation Access Project (locally referred to as the "Road to Umiat"). While the Council recognizes that this is a project proposed by the State of Alaska (Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities) and is primarily on State lands, there will likely be Federal involvement with the project in the form of permitting or other authorizations. Caribou and fish that are essential for subsistence have migratory pathways that cross the area where the road is projected to be located. The proposed road will cross the foothills north of the Brooks Range for approximately 110 miles in a northwest direction, from approximately Milepost 278 of the Dalton Highway to Umiat, Alaska. The purpose of the proposed road is to promote oil and gas exploration and development within the Western Foothills Province including the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR-A), and will cross State, Federal and Arctic Slope Regional

Corporation (ASRC) land with extensive wetland areas and four major rivers; the Itkillik, Anaktuvuk, Chandler, and Colville.

The Council views the engagement of the Federal Subsistence Management Program and the Federal Subsistence Board as essential in this review since the Western Arctic, Teshepuk, and Central Arctic Caribou herds use some portion of the proposed road development region. The Council is concerned the road will bisect and disrupt caribou migratory routes and also cross major rivers important to subsistence fisheries. The Council would also like the Board to consider the impacts of the potential for increased sport hunting pressures on subsistence harvests, if the road opens up vehicle access to the region. There is historical evidence that increased hunting pressure will likely occur, from the Dalton Highway (which was asserted would forever remain closed to the public) and the Hickel Highway (which so increased sport hunting pressure, the community of Anaktuvuk Pass joined in a lawsuit to close it).

2) Review of haul road (Dalton Highway) hunting access impacts to Caribou.

The Council would like to see an evaluation of the Dalton Highway road access and increased hunting pressures on the caribou herds. The Council is concerned that migratory caribou important to subsistence that originate on Federal lands are impacted by increasing disturbance and hunting pressures along the Dalton Highway. Hunter education should be conducted to limit harassment and harm from bow hunters, citing observations of caribou wounded but not killed by arrows. The Council would also like to see education of all hunters on the local etiquette of "letting the leaders pass" referring to their own indigenous knowledge that the lead caribou at the head of the migration play a critical role in guiding the herd to good feeding, calving, and wintering grounds.

Additionally, the Council is very concerned about increasing traffic and access to waterways of the Dalton Highway since its designation as a Scenic Byway. Council members and members of the public feel they did not have adequate opportunity to provide input on the public process in the Scenic Byways designation, and stress that the program of encouraging use of the highway as an access route to remote lands and rivers in the region does have a direct impact on subsistence by increasing hunting pressure and disturbance of wildlife.

The Council is also concerned that the pipeline is exposed to open public access all along the highway and not monitored for safety. The Council would like to see a monitoring program in place to detect any potential problems or leaks and prevent any direct acts of vandalism. Any spills resulting from accidental or intentional breaches of the pipeline would be detrimental to caribou, rivers, and other important subsistence resources and should be monitored on a regular basis to prevent any such harm from occurring.

3) Establishment of safety cabins for subsistence activities in remote access areas

The Council would like to see consideration for the building of "safety cabins" for remote access

areas in predominantly Bureau of Land Management lands typically utilized for subsistence hunting and fishing activities.

Changing weather conditions in recent years have brought about increasingly frequent and severe storms as well as changing land and water/ice conditions, making travel more hazardous during times when subsistence harvests are normally conducted. Strategic placement of such public use safety cabins could assist local hunters in conducting normal seasonal subsistence activities with some opportunity for safety during increasingly unpredictable and inclement weather. The Council also seeks suggestions for possible sources of funding to build such cabins.

Thank you for the continued opportunity to assist the Federal Subsistence Management Program in meeting its obligations to protect subsistence uses of fish and wildlife resources on Federal lands in our region. The Council looks forward to continued discussions about the issues and concerns of subsistence stakeholders of the North Slope region. If you have any questions regarding this correspondence, please contact Eva Patton, Subsistence Council Coordinator, Office of Subsistence Management at 1-800-478-1456 or (907) 786-3358.

Sincerely,


Harry K. Brower
Chair

cc: Federal Subsistence Board
North Slope Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Kathleen M. O'Reilly-Doyle, Acting Assistant Regional Director, OSM
David Jenkins, Acting Deputy Assistant Regional Director, OSM
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