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North Unit 4 Deer Working Group May 2023 Meeting

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North Unit 4 Deer
Working Group
May 2023 Update



In attendance: Ian Johnson, Phillip Sharclane, James Jack Jr, Jeremy Johnson (Hoonah), Jermaine Johnson (Hoonah), Jeromy Grant (Hoonah), Jason Roberts (OSM, Anchorage), Cody Mosley (Fish and Wildlife Sitka), Cal Casipit (Gutavus), Ashley Bolerk (Sitka, Subsistence), Bob Christensen (Icy Strait), Cathy Needham (Juneau), Dan Eacker (ADFG, Southeast Deer), Lauren Sill (Subsistence, Juneau), Larry Landry (Gustavus), Patricia Phillips (Pelican), Paul Johnson (Gull Cove, Klag Bay), Phil Manlick (Juneau, PNW), Roy Churchwell (Area Bio Juneau), Steve Bethune (Area bio, GMU 4, Sitka), Neal Schoenfelder (Hoonah USFS), Lisa Gredigan (Wildlife Division OSM Anchorage), Norm Carson (Pelican)

The goal this meeting was to [review the current proposals](#) by the Southeast Subsistence RAC that would limit deer hunting to federally qualified subsistence users (rural users) from Nov 1 – 15 in

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Hoonah, Angoon, and Pelican and to develop ideas for outreach materials around deer and user conflict issues. The notes below are reported almost verbatim with very little summary or interpretation.

If you are a member of Hoonah, Pelican, Gustavus, or Angoon who would like to be in on these meetings in the future please call or email Ian Johnson. ian.johnson@hiatribe.org, 907 802 3200

Federal Proposal Review

Ashley Bolwerk led a presentation about the federal process. The federal proposal process is a way to change federal regulations for harvest on federal lands. As rural “subsistence users” we can have special federal regulations for harvest outside of the State of Alaska regulations. These proposals are made if there’s a conservation concern for the resource, to ensure the continuance of subsistence use, or for public safety. Proposals are submitted from the public or by the Regional Advisory Committee (RAC). Each proposal goes through a public comment period, an analysis by Office of Subsistence Management, and then goes to public testimony and then goes to the Subsistence Board to be made into regulation or not. Opportunities for public comment are open until June 30th, 2023 and then will be open again this fall at the Southeast RAC meeting.

Community Question : What makes a community rural? Answer : This was based on population in the past, but now has many factors such as how many stores a community has and how well connected to other communities they are. The only two communities in SE that are not rural are Ketchikan and Juneau. Ketchikan is petitioning to be rural right now.

Community Question : Can we view public comments prior to SERAC? Answer : unsure, need to follow up on that.

Federal Proposal Discussion

Discussion began about the proposals in Hoonah, Pelican and Angoon to now allow hunting for deer for non-rural users (urban users) from Nov 1-15 in Hoonah on federal lands. We asked for clarifying questions, community context, and any direct comments about these proposals.

Community Question : Where in Pelican is competition coming from? Pelican User : some on the ferry, some is from other rural users, but not via road system. Another Pelican User : hasn’t seen competition as a big issue

Community Comment from Hoonah : concerned about the amount of traffic in Hoonah. Sometimes is a lot of pressure

Community Comment : Enforcement of this is difficult. What would the penalty be? Recommend donating the meat. Community Follow-up : Yes, agree, would we even see enforcement of these on Federal lands?

- USFS : Hoonah Ranger District would benefit from more enforcement and would like to hear that from community members. Call the office to file that request.
- Hoonah Community comment : More USFS enforcement on federal lands would be helpful
- Sitka Response : Law enforcement office is coming online in Sitka. Could call the Sitka Ranger District offices to cover Pelican

Community Comment from Juneau : The harvest permit asks for how many days you hunted, but this is not a clear number for subsistence users

- Follow-up – How are effort data used in decision making?

Comment from Ian Hoonah: We have been working on collecting social data about use and concerns in Gustavus, Pelican, and Hoonah this winter. I’ll be providing that data back to the communities and to USFS, OSM, ADF&G for use in the analysis of these proposals.

Questions about survey data : When are surveys conducted? How is the survey data used? Answer : the state shares a memo internally and will look at whether those memos can be shared. In terms of survey frequency it depends on the year. State has personnel and time limitations.

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The group spent quite a bit of time discussing what topics community outreach could focus on related to deer or deer management. Topics discussed include:

- How do we get more engagement in reporting with the goal of increasing reporting accuracy?
 - State added a comment that Hoonah harvest report response rate was 41% and they brought that up to 55% through phone surveys. Angoon report rate is 35%. That is one of lowest reporting rates in the State. The goal is 60% report rate.
- How can outreach allow us to integrate local knowledge into the federal process?
- How can outreach guide research – for instance locals identifying where key winter mortality areas are for surveys
- Outreach on education on what makes a resident – concern about cabin owners using residency
- Outreach on how deer may be changing forest habitats. There was a comment that heavily browsed areas were converting shrubs from “huckleberry to buck brush”
- How to do your own biological monitoring with cameras
- Outreach to increase trust. **Comment** : some people are worried surveys will reduce bag limits
Comment : right now the tool we have is a bag limit restriction.

Report Outs

State Report

- Will have 2022 harvest data by mid June
- there was an 84% response rate in Pelican
- They did body condition surveys this year. Was hard this year because not a lot of snow on the beach and deer were in timber. Only saw 5 deer in 125 miles of survey from South Baranof to Hoonah Sound
- Populations seem high – no indication of significant overwinter mortality
- Did mortality surveys in Pelican areas in 2022 – 2.5 miles of beach mortality surveys
- Question : what did is used for management? Answer : we always use harvest data and then supplement with biological surveys
- 12 deer cameras deployed in Sitka area
- Will be flying NE Chichagof aerial surveys in July
- Community Question : do you collect information on rut timing? Rut timing has changed on Lemesieur Island. Answer : They do not but you may get this from the cameras

USFS Report

- Pacific Northwest Research Station is starting pellet surveys with HIA in 2023 to do forage/browse analysis
- Hoping to get information on winter range from the careams. What can we use from the data to improve young growth conditions for deer?



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