

**North Slope Subsistence Regional Advisory Council**

c/o Office of Subsistence Management  
1011 East Tudor Road, MS 121  
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199  
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In Reply Refer to:  
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FEB 22, 2023

Anthony Christianson, Chair  
Federal Subsistence Board  
c/o Office of Subsistence Management  
1011 E. Tudor Road, MS 121  
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199

Dear Chairman Christianson,

The North Slope Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council) appreciates the opportunity to submit its FY-2022 annual report to the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) under the provisions of Section 805(a)(3)(D) of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). At its public meetings held in Utqiagvik on October 13-14, 2022, the Council identified concerns and recommendations for this report. The Council approved this annual report at its February 22-23, 2023, meeting. The Council wishes to share information and raise concerns dealing with implementation of Title VIII of ANILCA and the continuation of subsistence uses in the North Slope Region.

**1. Food security and preservation methods, particularly the freezing and thawing of ice throughout the season.**

The Council has expressed concerns about losing the ability to use traditional practices for preserving food due to changing weather conditions. Harvested fish are traditionally preserved through natural freezing immediately after harvest, and whale meat is stored in underground cellars dug into the permafrost, which keeps the meat frozen. However, warmer conditions preclude freezing fish naturally, and the permafrost has been thawing, spoiling whale meat in cellars. Council members voiced concerns about not being able to harvest large quantities of fish for fear of the catch spoiling before getting eaten. Because of this, there is less food available to community members for sharing and consumption, contributing to higher levels of food insecurity. Council members also voiced concerns about thawed whale meat creating food poisoning issues. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game has been funding projects to buffer traditional ice cellars from thawing and the Council expressed interest in receiving updates about this research.

**2. Request to improve management and research of sport hunting and effects on caribou migration near Anaktuvuk Pass.**

The Council expressed concern about sport hunting for caribou near Anaktuvuk Pass. The Council strongly supports research on caribou migration patterns. The Council suggested comparing radio collar data from Alaska Department of Fish and Game and the North Slope Borough's Wildlife Division and dates and locations of hunters with migration patterns to see if there is deflection of traditional migration routes. The Dalton Highway is flooded with caribou sport hunters in August and September as well as fly-in hunters, but the areas where they are hunting have minimal enforcement. The Council inquired about implementing time and area closures during the caribou harvest, as is done for bowhead whales. Industrial activities can cause localized resource depletions by deflection. The Council suggested closures on the lands and waters immediately outside village boundaries that fall under federal jurisdiction during peak subsistence activities. The Council expressed interest in learning more about requesting rezoning around villages to reclassify an area into subsistence activity areas, similar to reclassifying zones for oil and gas development.

**3. Effects of contaminants on fish health and food safety in Anaktuvuk Pass.**

The Council was concerned with the quality of fish and the ability to safely harvest them in Anaktuvuk Pass. Council members noted that biologists are rarely in the Anaktuvuk Pass region to investigate issues of fish contamination. The Council noted an instance where a fish was harvested, but the stomach was the consistency of milk. The Council voiced concerns about the pipeline and buried corroded equipment leaching iron into the soil and surrounding sloughs and contaminating fish stocks. The Council is also concerned about population structure, abundance, and health of Lake Trout and Arctic Grayling in the area. This concern is reflected in the Priority Information Needs for the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program.

**4. Update on Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission cooperative management agreement with U.S. Department of the Interior.**

The Council requests a presentation on the cooperative management agreement between Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission and the U.S. Department of the Interior. The Council wants to know the Ahtna people successfully managed their own quotas for moose and other resources and wants to learn from Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission's experiences.

During the discussion, the Council asked that the Board elevate the concerns noted in the FY2022 Annual Report if the Board cannot directly address them.

The North Slope Subsistence Regional Advisory Council appreciates the Board's attention to these matters and the opportunity to assist the Federal Subsistence Management Program in meeting its charge of protecting subsistence resources and uses of these resources on Federal public lands and waters. The Council looks forward to continuing discussions about the issues and concerns of subsistence users in the North Slope Region. If you have any questions regarding this report, please contact me via Jessica Gill, Council Coordinator, Office of Subsistence Management, at [jessica\\_gill@fws.gov](mailto:jessica_gill@fws.gov), or 1-800-478-1456 or 1-907-310-6129.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "A. S. Oomittuk", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Alzred Steve Oomittuk  
Chair Regional Advisory Council  
North Slope Region

cc: Federal Subsistence Board  
North Slope Subsistence Regional Advisory Council  
Office of Subsistence Management  
Interagency Staff Committee  
Benjamin Mulligan, Deputy Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
Mark Burch, Special Projects Coordinator, Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
Administrative Record