

NORTH SLOPE
SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL
Meeting Minutes

Kaktovik City Hall, Kaktovik, Alaska
February 22-23, 2023

Invocation

Esther Hugo gave an invocation.

Call to Order, Roll Call and Quorum Establishment

Council members Steve Oomittuk and Esther Hugo were present at the meeting in-person. Council member Oomittuk acted as Chair. Council member Brower Frantz called in at 11:00am on the first day followed by Council members Wanda Kippi and Martha Itta at 1:30pm, establishing quorum. Council member Eddie Rexford called in at 3:35pm. With quorum, the Council elected Member Oomittuk as the Chair and voted or chose not to act on all but one action item. On day two of the meeting, only Chair Oomittuk and member Hugo were present for most of the meeting; the Council did not have quorum and was unable to vote on the one remaining action item, which was Member Hugo's reappointment to the Gates of the Arctic Subsistence Resource Commission.

Attendees participating:

Office of Subsistence Management (OSM): *Jessica Gill, Leigh Honig, Brent Vickers, Kendra Holman, Katya Wessels*, Karen Hyer*, Robbin La Vine*, Orville Lind*, Scott Ayers*, Nissa Bates-Pilcher*, and Liz Williams**

Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (NWR), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS): *Nathan Hawkaluk and Paul Leonard*

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service: *Cody Smith and Jill Klein**

Bureau of Land Management (BLM): *Beth Mikow* and Chris McKee*

Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA): *Glenn Chen*

National Park Service (NPS), Anchorage: *Eva Patton**

Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve, NPS: *Marcy Okada* and Kyle Joly**

Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G): *Helen Cold, Carmen Daggett, Mark Nelson, and Alex Hansen**

U.S. Forest Service (USFS): *Greg Risdahl**

Wildlife Conservation Society: *Taylor Stinchcomb and Rosemary McGuire*

University of Alaska Fairbanks: *Daniel Gonzales*

Inupiat Community of Arctic Slope: *Doreen Leavitt**

Kaktovik City Hall: *Frances Mongoyak*

The Wilderness Society: *Andrew Tooyak*

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Members of the public: *Fenton Rexford*

*Indicates participation via teleconference.

Review and Adopt Agenda

Motion by Member Hugo, seconded by Member Itta, to adopt the agenda. The motion passed unanimously.

Election of Officers

Steve Oomittuk was elected Chair.

Gordon Brower was elected Vice-Chair.

Brower Frantz was elected Secretary.

Review and Approve Previous Meeting Minutes

Motion by Member Hugo, seconded by Member Kippi, to approve the Fall 2022 meeting minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

Council Member Reports

Esther Hugo of Anaktuvuk Pass reported that the community has been successful in taking caribou and catching healthy looking cows. Young folks have been catching what they can for elders and those without snowmachines and other vehicles. There have been many predators, such as wolves and wolverines around the village, and people need to be careful. She is thankful for the caribou because people are hungry.

Steve Oomittuk of Point Hope reported that the winter has been cold. The Western Arctic Caribou Herd's population has been in decline. The people want younger generations to continue the lifestyle and continue using these animals – the animals are their identity. Climate change has been taking a big toll on the animals, which is impacting the people.

Wanda Kippi of Atqasuk reported that wolves were around during the late summer until way past freeze up. She went to camp in October and a wolf was nearby. One was caught that looked hungry. The wolves finally left in November. Caribou was ok, and the fishing was fine. There were not as many caribou around the camps as usual, and the wolves might be scaring them away. This is the first winter observed with thin ice and open water near the cabins.

Martha Itta of Nuiqsut reported that caribou and wolves have been around Nuiqsut and the pipeline, which is closed to hunting. The Colville River has been freezing and thawing making it very dangerous, but there are extra people around town in case of accidents. Burbot fishing is normally in November, but she was finally able to get out in February. Residents have not been catching enough food and going hungry. The animals are there, but not everyone has resources to access them. Store costs are very high.

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Health is tied to subsistence; 80% of their diet is subsistence and when they cannot go hunting, it weighs heavily on their minds and they we are.

Brower Frantz of Utqiagvik reported that caribou have been around the community, but not in abundance. He thinks there have been more predators caught this year. The winter has been warmer than usual with a late freeze. He wondered if the ice would start to break up in February or early March, as it has been lately. He hopes the ice stays long enough and the whalers have a nice season. He has observed more ducks around, maybe due to ice edge being closer to the community.

Ms. Carmen Daggett, wildlife biologist with Alaska Department of Fish and Game, asked if Member Frantz had been moose hunting on the Colville River and if the freeze-up happened at normal timing. Member Itta responded that the river freezes up around October but was later this year, which resulted in loss of fishing time. Member Frantz responded he couldn't go out hunting in the fall for the first time in 15 years due to work obligations. Member Itta noted that residents of Nuiqsut did catch three moose but that was less than the average five to six caught.

Old Business

The Council received presentations on the following topics:

- Western Arctic Caribou Herd by Mr. Alex Hansen, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
- North American Caribou Workshop and Arctic Ungulate Conference in May 2023 by Ms. Kendra Holman, Office of Subsistence Management

New Business

Wildlife Closure Reviews

The Council reviewed one regional wildlife closure and one crossover wildlife closure. Ms. Holman presented the analysis for regional closure review, WCR24-31 (Unit 26B, remainder and Unit 26C closed to moose hunting except by Kaktovik residents). Dr. Brent Vickers presented the analysis for crossover closure review, WCR24-21 (Unit 25A, Arctic Village Sheep Management Area closed to sheep hunting by Non-Federally Qualified Subsistence Users).

Call for Federal Wildlife Proposals

Ms. Holman reviewed the call for Federal wildlife proposals. The Council voted to submit the following two wildlife proposals to the Federal Subsistence Board within the 2024-2026 wildlife regulatory cycle:

- Unit 25A sheep, rescind the customary and traditional use determination for residents of Kaktovik.
- Unit 23 caribou, close to hunting by non-federally qualified subsistence users, August 1-October 31.

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2021 Council Charter Review

Ms. Jessica Gill reviewed the North Slope Regional Advisory Council charter. Member Hugo motioned to approve the 2021 Council Charter with no changes. Member Frantz seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Review and approve FY2022 Annual Report

Member Hugo motioned to adopt the FY2022 Annual Report as written. Member Rexford seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Federal Subsistence Board Updated Draft Council Correspondence Policy

Dr. Vickers reviewed the updated Council Correspondence Policy. Member Frantz motioned to forward the draft Council Correspondence Policy as written to the Board and Member Kippi seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program Update

Dr. Vickers presented an update on the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program. No North Slope projects were submitted for the 2024 funding cycle.

Partners for Fisheries Monitoring Program Update

Dr. Vickers presented an update on the Partners for Fisheries Monitoring Program. No North Slope partners proposals were submitted for the 2024 funding cycle.

Regulatory Cycle Update

Dr. Vickers updated the Council on the fisheries regulatory cycle.

NPS seeks input on proposed changes to 2020 Hunting and Trapping regulations on national preserves in Alaska

Ms. Marcy Okada, Subsistence Coordinator with Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve, updated the Council on the proposed rule for sport hunting on national preserves. The Council did not act on this item.

Public Testimony (for complete testimony, please review transcripts for February 22-23, 2023)

Andrew Tooyak, Point Hope resident, asked about the Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group's proposed harvest limit cuts to four caribou per season. Mr. Hansen, wildlife biologist with Alaska Department of Fish and Game, informed Mr. Tooyak and the Council that the proposal from the Working Group will be submitted to the Alaska Board of Game and to the Federal Subsistence Board in April.

Fenton Rexford, Kaktovik resident, asked about hunting with ATVs and 4-wheeler access for residents of Kaktovik, which is closed in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. Mr. Nathan Hawkaluk, acting Arctic

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National Wildlife Refuge manager, noted that the refuge is working with Kaktovik to develop an off-road vehicle plan, and noted that folks can access Native allotments with ATVs.

Agency Reports:

- Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group update presented by Mr. Hansen, Wildlife Biologist, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
- Wildlife Conservation Society project on Northern Alaska carnivores presented by Taylor Stinchcomb and Rosemary McGuire
- Arctic National Wildlife Refuge update presented by Mr. Hawkaluk, Acting Refuge Manager, and Dr. Paul Leonard, Ecologist, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve update provided by Ms. Okada, Subsistence Coordinator. The Council was unable to vote on Member Hugo's reappointment to the Gates of the Arctic Subsistence Resource Commission. Member Hugo can continue to serve on the Subsistence Resource Commission until the Council can vote on her reappointment at the next Council meeting.
- Bureau of Land Management update presented by Ms. Beth Mikow, Anthropologist
- Alaska Department of Fish and Game update Unit 26B and 26C caribou, moose, and musk ox presented by Mr. Mark Nelson, Wildlife Biologist
- Alaska Department of Fish and Game update Unit 26A caribou, moose, and musk ox presented by Ms. Daggett, Wildlife Biologist
- Alaska Department of Fish and Game Division of Subsistence update presented by Ms. Helen Cold, Subsistence Resource Specialist
- Office of Subsistence Management update presented by Dr. Vickers, OSM Anthropology Division Supervisor

Future Meeting Dates:

Fall 2023 meeting to be held October 31-November 1, 2023 in Utqiagvik.

Winter 2024 All Council meeting preferred date is March 4-8, 2024 in Anchorage.

Fall 2024 meeting to be held August 19-20, 2024 in Utqiagvik.

Jessica Gill, Designated Federal Officer

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Office of Subsistence Management

Steve Oomittuk, Chair

North Slope Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

These minutes will be formally considered by the North Slope Subsistence Regional Advisory Council at its Fall 2023 meeting, and any corrections or notations will be incorporated in the minutes at that meeting.

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A more detailed report of this meeting, copies of the transcript, and meeting handouts are available upon request. Contact Jessica Gill at 1-800-478-1456 (toll free) or 907-310-6129, or by email at jessica_gill@fws.gov.

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