



Southcentral Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
c/o Office of Subsistence Management
1011 East Tudor Road, MS 121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199
Phone: 907-786-3888 Fax: 907-786-3898
Toll Free: 1-800-478-1456

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MAY 04 2020

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

Dear Chairman Christianson:

The Southcentral Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council) submits this FY-2019 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 meeting in Seward, Alaska, on October 10-11, 2019, the Council identified concerns and recommendations for this report. The Council approved this annual report at its winter 2020 meeting in Anchorage. The Council wishes to share information and raise a number of concerns dealing with the implementation of Title VIII of ANILCA and the continuation of subsistence uses in the Southcentral Alaska Region.

1. Unit 13 Moose and Caribou

The Board has the authority to form a working group to research recurring issues related to hunting moose and caribou on Federal public lands in Unit 13. Over the last several years, the Board has been presented with wildlife proposals, special action requests, and public testimony regarding:

- Safety concerns resulting in local hunters being displaced
- Difficulty in passing on traditional hunting knowledge and customary practices to hunters' children due to safety concerns
- Difficulty in successfully harvesting moose and caribou on Federal public lands by Federally qualified subsistence users due to excessive competition from large numbers of non-local hunters
- Displacement of moose and caribou from traditional migration corridors
- Lack of enforcement
- Necessary restrictions to assure conservation of healthy populations

The conflict between local and non-local hunters has long been an issue in Unit 13 for both moose and caribou. Special action request (WSA19-03) sought to decrease competition between user groups by closing moose and caribou hunting on Unit 13 Federal public lands to non-Federally-qualified users. The Board discussed this special action request at its July 2019 work session. The Office of Subsistence Management supported the request, while the Interagency Staff Committee opposed it. There was extensive discussion concerning moose and caribou hunts in the area and the need for a caribou working group (FSB Transcript, July 19, 2019, pages 7-49). The formation of a working group would provide a forum for subsistence users and the State to come together to try to resolve recurring issues.

The Board rejected special action request WSA19-03. They reasoned that the special action would not solve issues on a permanent basis and wanted to avoid another ‘piecemeal approach’ to a very complex problem. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) committed to bringing interested groups and agencies together on a more frequent basis to ascertain if a proposal for the next regular wildlife cycle could result in a more holistic solution. It is the Council’s understanding that Board member Dave Schmid recently visited the area to gather additional information on the problem. The Council would like the Board to keep up this momentum in pursuing a solution.

The Council requests organization of a formal working group to develop a wildlife proposal(s) during the next wildlife regulatory cycle. This multi-dimensional effort will attempt to provide a lasting solution to concerns heard for years over hunting caribou and moose in Unit 13.

2. Fisheries Resource Monitoring Project Additions – Copper River Coho Salmon

The Council is pleased to see proposals for monitoring Copper River Sockeye and Chinook Salmon stocks submitted to the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program for the 2020 cycle. However, the Council noted that there is a need for Copper River Coho Salmon research, and would like to see project proposals for monitoring stock specific escapement and/or run timing.

3. Climate Change

Fisheries:

The Council shared its observations and heard public testimony, which included traditional ecological knowledge, about climate change in the region and its effects on fisheries and shellfish. The Council would like to see research carried out that analyzes the impacts to fish and shellfish as a result of climate change and ocean acidification. This would include identifying the cause(s) of stress in salmon and how the fish deal with this stress. Additionally, the Council is interested in identifying the causes of the pathogenic exposure in shellfish (toxic shellfish poisoning). The Council is interested in having presented what, if anything can be done to mitigate the above effects on fish and shellfish stocks.

Specifically, the Council feels that monitoring fish mortality due to heat and the resulting increased water temperature, the rate of streams drying, run timing, and the depths at which fish are active, are extremely important to gauge the effects of climate change and ocean acidification. The Council thinks this kind of information would be best gained through a

Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program project. The Council believes it is imperative to collect baseline information to understand the issues and then be able to adjust fisheries management in response to the changing environment. The Council requests that the program focus on impacts to both salmon and shellfish that are harvested for subsistence and to explore the impacts of climate change and ocean acidification on the overall food web.

Wildlife:

The Council is concerned about the effect of parasites on wildlife populations. The types and numbers of parasites have increased in recent years as the climate continues to change. The Council requests more information on current effects of parasites on wildlife populations and wants to be informed of any management options that may be available to help contain or curtail parasite infestations in the future for those wildlife species abundant in Southcentral Alaska.

4. Nonrural Determinations Process

The Council received an update on a rural proposal RP19-01 to change Moose Pass, Alaska, from nonrural to rural status. The proposal is currently moving through the regulatory process. The Council understands that the Board made some changes recently to the nonrural determination process. The Council requests to be informed of the steps the Board expects to take regarding these types of proposals in the future. Currently, the process for nonrural determination takes four years. The Council, as well as members of the public, want to know if there is a faster and more efficient way to process these nonrural determination proposals. Communities deserve a decision on these proposals more quickly than the current four-year determination process provides.

5. Executive Order on FACA Committees

The Council was recently provided a copy of the Executive Order on Evaluating and Improving the Utility of Federal Advisory Committees, dated June 14, 2019. The Council is seriously concerned about the impact of this Executive Order on the Program. Although the Council's charter still provides for a 13 member council, the Council fears that this Executive Order has been used to decrease the number of seats on the subsistence Regional Advisory Councils (Councils), based on the reduction seen in the recent appointment/reappointment process. The Councils have lost vital representation across their regions and this Council is anxious that the loss of representation may continue into the future. This Council would like the Board to send a letter to the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture regarding this Council's concern about this matter. It is this Council's understanding that all Councils across the State experienced a significant decrease in representation; the Secretaries should be advised of the substantial impact this loss of members will have on the ability of the Councils to accomplish their work. The Councils are statutorily mandated under Title VIII of ANILCA and this Council believes that a lack of representation on the Councils is detrimental to the intent of ANILCA.

The Southcentral Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council appreciates the Board's attention to these matters and the opportunity to assist the Federal Subsistence Management Program to meet 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 of the Southcentral Alaska Region. If you have questions about this report, please contact me via DeAnna Perry, Subsistence Council Coordinator with Forest Service, at 907-586-7918 or deanna.perry@usda.gov.

Sincerely,



Richard Greg Encelewski
Chair

cc: Federal Subsistence Board
Southcentral Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Susan Detwiler, Assistant Regional Director, Office of Subsistence Management
Thomas Doolittle, Deputy Assistant Regional Director,
Office of Subsistence Management
Suzanne Worker, Acting Subsistence Policy Coordinator,
Office of Subsistence Management
Chris McKee, Wildlife Division Supervisor, Office of Subsistence Management
Greg Risdahl, Fisheries Division Supervisor, Office of Subsistence Management
George Pappas, State Liaison, Office of Subsistence Management
Tom Kron, Acting Coordination Division Chief, Office of Subsistence Management
Tom Whitford, U.S. Forest Service
DeAnna Perry, Subsistence Council Coordinator, U.S. Forest Service
Benjamin Mulligan, Deputy Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish & Game
Mark Burch, Wildlife Biologist, Alaska Department of Fish & Game
Interagency Staff Committee
Administrative Record