

SEWARD PENINSULA SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes

Mini Convention Center

Nome, Alaska

October 22-23, 2019

Call to Order, Roll Call and Quorum Establishment:

The meeting was called to order on Tuesday, October 22, 2019 at 9:00 a.m. Council members Louis Green Jr., Elmer Seetot Jr., Charles Saccheus, Deahl Katchatag and Leland Oyoumick were present in person. Ronald Kirk participated telephonically. Tom Gray and Lloyd Kiyutelluk were not present and were excused. Brandon Ahmasuk was not present and was unexcused. A quorum was established with 6 of 9 seated Council members present or participating by phone. (The Council has one vacant seat.)

Attendees:

In person:

Karen Deatherage, Fairbanks, Office of Subsistence Management (OSM)
Suzanne Worker, Anchorage, OSM
Megan Klosterman, Anchorage, OSM
Hannah Voorhees, Anchorage, OSM
Jarred Stone, Anchorage, OSM
Ken Adkisson, Nome, Bering Land Bridge National Park and Preserve (BELA)
Nicole Braem, Nome, BELA
Letty Hughes, Nome, BELA
Rosalie Debenham, Juneau, Bureau of Indian Affairs

Tom Sparks, Nome, Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Walker Gusse, Fairbanks, BLM
Bill Dunker, Nome, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G)
Sarah Germain, Nome, ADF&G
Tony Gorn, Kotzebue, ADF&G
Luke Henslee, Fairbanks, ADF&G

Via teleconference:

Robbin LaVine, Anchorage OSM
Dan Sharp, Anchorage, BLM
Mark Burch, Palmer, ADF&G
Tyler Lewis, Anchorage, ADF&G

Review and Adopt Agenda:

Motion #1 made by Mr. Seetot, seconded by Mr. Katchatag, to adopt the agenda as read with the following changes:

- Add Fisheries and Partners Program under New Business, OSM
- Add Comprehensive Unit 22 Muskox Report under Agency Reports, NPS, ADF&G, BLM
- Add Emperor Goose Satellite Telemetry under Agency Reports, ADF&G

The motion #1 passed on a unanimous vote.

Review and Approve Previous Meeting Minutes:

Motion #2 by Mr. Seetot, seconded by Mr. Katchatag, to approve the winter 2019 meeting minutes.

The motion #2 passed on a unanimous vote.

Council Member and Chair Reports:

Charles Saccheus of Elim reported that the moose season was normal and everyone was satisfied with their catch. There were no caribou up north but lots of bears. Mr. Saccheus believes a bear took his nephew who was walking to Elim. His nephew was never found. There are lots of berries and fish in the area, and a lot of beluga whale from Cape Darby to Isaac Springs. Belugas feed on tomcod and shrimp as their main diet. Fishing was also very good in the area.

Leland Oyoumick of Unalakleet reported that subsistence activities were good this year and everyone got King Salmon. There were lots of Chum, Silver and Red Salmon. Lots of fish going belly-up on the river though and dead animals found along the coast from the top of the food chain down to the bottom. Mr. Oyoumick heard from scientists that it is caused by the warming of the waters due to climate change. Mr. Oyoumick also thinks it might be caused by radiation from Chernobyl or Fukushima. The local quota of 34 moose was met, and hunters are still seeing bulls up the river.

Elmer Seetot, Jr. of Brevig Mission reported that the ice went out in the Bering Sea so hunters were not able to get their walrus. They were able to get bearded seal for oil and blubber. The salmon came in early because of the ice going out. Mr. Seetot also shared that the weather has been too wet for berries. Beluga whales were caught at Cape Dirk during the spring harvest season for the first time since Mr. Seetot could remember. They had been feeding above Wales on cod. Mr. Seetot is very concerned about radioactive particles in the air coming from Russia.

Deahl Katchatag of Unalakleet reported that during the summer there were a lot of birds, seals and oogrik washing up to shore from the ocean, and floating fish coming down the river. He said scientists believe it is due to the warm water but they don't share information about the pollution in Norton Sound or the plastic from trash. Mr. Katchatag reported only one moose was caught during the August season due to really hot weather. There are lots of bears and the moose are still up in the hills. Climate change is causing lots of subsistence issues, and there is concern over what will come out of the melting ice, as things have been trapped in there for millions of years. There are no seals or oogrik in Unalakleet so local hunters have to go towards Elim to hunt. Mr. Katchatag shared that there was no ice near Unalakleet but high water in November and January. This has not been seen before in Unalakleet. Mr. Katchatag stated that the community was not getting any help, and would have to learn to live with the changes in order to survive.

Ron Kirk of Stebbins reported that it was a good fishing season but climate change affects are happening in Stebbins with seal and fish carcasses on the shoreline between Stebbins and the Yukon River. There was a good successful moose hunt and good berry picking in the area. Mr. Kirk stated that subsistence users are going to have to adapt and live with climate change. He shared concerns over the impacts on moose and caribou from melting permafrost.

Louis Green of Nome delivered the Chair's report. He stated that moose season in the area was only 6 days, and the season in Unit 22D was only 4 days. Mr. Green was happy to share that his 11 year-old son got his first moose. Sockeye Salmon are continuing to produce on the Pilgrim River but there are still way too many Pink Salmon. There are lots of bears and many complaints. Mr. Green observed that when there are bears there are no moose so predation must be an issue. Mr. Green reported that there were lots of swans and geese in Safety Sound but further away from the coast than usual. It was a very wet summer and difficult to dry fish. He said that there were lots of seal in the Nome area, particularly in the Snake River. Moose season went really well in Teller, Brevig Mission and Shaktoolik, and people were happy.

Public and Tribal Comments on Non-Agenda Items:

There were no public or Tribal comments on non-agenda items.

Old Business:

- Lisa Maas, OSM, provided updates on Wildlife Closure Reviews
- Karen Deatherage, OSM, presented the 805c Report from the Federal Subsistence Board

New Business:

Wildlife Proposals:

Regional Proposals:

WP20-39: Revise harvest limit for winter season for moose in Unit 22D, remainder

Motion #3 by Mr. Kirk, seconded by Mr. Seetot, to adopt WP20-39. The Council voted unanimously to Take no Action on WP20-39 due to action taken on WP20-38, which provided a comprehensive approach to moose management in Unit 22D, remainder, which would both protect the population and allow for subsistence use.

The Council took no action on the Motion #3.

WP20-40 Close Federal public lands to non-Federally qualified users for moose in Unit 22D, remainder.

Motion #4 by Mr. Seetot, seconded by Mr. Katchatag, to adopt WP20-40.

The Council had submitted this proposal to protect the moose population in Unit 22D, remainder, by eliminating non-local harvest while still allowing for harvest by Federally qualified users in the region. The moose density is very low in Unit 22D, remainder, and harvest should be limited to local subsistence users who need the meat. The Council noted that all subunits in Unit 22D, except Unit 22D, remainder, are currently closed to non-Federally qualified users.

Motion #5 for WP20-40 passed on a unanimous vote.

WP20-38: Revise seasons, harvest limits and permit requirements for moose in Unit 22D, remainder.

Motion #5 by Mr. Katchatag, seconded by Mr. Kirk, to adopt WP20-38 as amended.

The Council voted unanimously to support WP20-38 with amendment to modify the harvest limit for the *December 1 - January 31* season to 1 *antlered* bull in Unit 22D, remainder. The Council believes a may-be-announced system for a winter hunt would work best to protect the low moose population in Unit 22D, remainder, and allow for additional harvest during December-January only if the harvest quota was not met in the fall.

The Council was reluctant to eliminate the October 1-November 30 season but believed that some sacrifice was necessary on behalf of subsistence hunters to protect breeding bulls during the rut. Subsistence users will still have the opportunity to harvest moose during the August-September season (which is generally preferred due to meat condition) and possibly during a may-be-announced December-January season if the harvest quota was not met. The Council determined that a requirement for an antlered bull only during the December and January season was necessary to protect cow moose in Unit 22D, remainder. The Council also agreed that a registration permit is needed to capture actual moose harvest in Unit 22D, remainder.

Motion #5 for WP20-38 *as amended* passed on a unanimous vote.

WP20-41: Rescind closure to non-Federally qualified users for moose in northern portion of Unit 22A.

Motion #6 by Mr. Oyoumick, seconded by Mr. Kirk, to adopt WP20-41.

There continues to be minimal or extrapolated information on moose populations in portions of Unit 22A. Easy access by non-local or guided airplane hunters to moose could negatively impact subsistence users. Some Council members stated that habitat where moose populations go for protection from harvest are frequently accessed by non-locals in aircraft. Harvest in these areas could impair the herd's opportunity to grow

Motion #6 for WP20-41 failed on a unanimous vote.

WP20-42: Rescind closure to non-Federally qualified users for moose in Unit 22A, remainder.

Motion #7 by Mr. Seetot, seconded by Mr. Katchatag, to adopt WP20-42.

Moose density in this area is unclear and it is not currently known how additional harvest could impact moose populations. The Council also agrees with the OSM conclusion that this proposal would only benefit non-local hunters and could negatively affect subsistence users.

Motion #7 for WP20-42 failed on a unanimous vote.

Crossover Proposals:

WP20-43/44/45/46: Eliminate bull closure and prohibition on calf harvest for caribou in Unit 23.

Motion #8 by Mr. Oyoumick, seconded by Mr. Kirk to adopt WP20-43/44/45/46.

The Council voted unanimously to support WP20-46 and take no action on WP20-43/44/45. These actions were consistent with the Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) conclusion. The Council agreed with OSM that adopting WP20-46 “increases harvest opportunity for Federally qualified subsistence users. Eliminating the bull closure may help grow the WACH by reducing harvest pressure on cows. As most people do not target calves, calf harvest is expected to be very low and should not affect the conservation of the herd. Additionally, allowing calf harvest may reduce wanton waste by allowing mistakenly shot calves to be legally salvaged, and would permit harvest of orphaned calves.”

Motion #8 for WP20-46 passed on a unanimous vote. The Council took no action on WP20-43/44/45.

Statewide Proposals:

WP20-09: Require traps or snares to be marked with name or State identification number for all furbearers in all units.

Motion #9 by Mr. Oyoumick, seconded by Mr. Seetot, to adopt WP20-08. Council members did not believe this proposal would have any beneficial effect on trapping in the Seward Peninsula region. Some Council members thought tagging traps might deter animals and therefore be injurious to subsistence opportunity.

Motion #9 for WP20-08 failed on a unanimous vote.

WP20-34: Extend trapping season for mink and weasel in Unit 18.

Motion #10 by Mr. Seetot, seconded by Mr. Katchatag to adopt WP20-34. The opportunity to trap weasel during the proposed dates currently exists under State regulations. Therefore, no additional harvest is expected. This proposal would also reduce confusion by aligning Federal and State regulations.

Motion #10 for WP20-34 passed on a unanimous vote.

2020 Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program:

Council members discussed areas of concern, including the Pilgrim River salmon escapement, the impacts of increasing beaver dams, warm and shallow water, dead fresh salmon on the riverbanks, and increased algae blooms. Mr. Kirk asked that monitoring of the Pikmiktalik and Niukluk Rivers be considered as Priority Information Needs for the Council.

Identify Issues for FY2019 Annual Report:

The Council did not identify any items for the draft FY2019 Annual Report.

Agency Reports:

- Comprehensive Muskox Report for the Seward Peninsula presented by Letty Hughes, BELA Tom Sparks, BLM and Bill Dunker, ADF&G.
- Unit 22 Wildlife Population and Status Update presented by Bill Dunker, ADF&G and Tony Gorn, ADF&G.
- Emperor Goose Update presented by Tyler Lewis, ADF&G.
- National Park Service BELA Update presented by Nicole Braem, BELA and Letty Hughes, BELA.
- BLM Update presented by Tom Sparks, BLM.
- ADF&G Fisheries Update presented by Luke Henslee, ADF&G.
- Board of Game Proposals presented by Bill Dunker, ADF&G and Sarah Germain, ADF&G.
 - The Council heard but did not move to take action on Proposals 31, 32, 35, 36, 37, 38, 43.
 - *Proposal 30: Include muskox on the list of species that can be taken under a proxy permit in Unit 22.* Motion #11 by Mr. Seetot, seconded by Mr. Oyounick, to adopt Proposal 30. Council members highlighted that muskox hunters in the region are well known and very proficient. It is a traditional practice for those with the means and hunting expertise to help those who are in need. Muskox should not be treated any differently than other species that are shared with those community members who are either physically or economically unable to participate in this important subsistence activity. Motion #11 for Proposal 30 passed on a unanimous vote.

- *Proposal 33: Modify hunting seasons and require a registration for moose hunting in Unit 22D Remainder.* Motion #12 by Mr. Kirk, seconded by Mr. Oyoumick, to adopt Proposal 33. The Council believes this proposal is similar in nature to WP20-38 and will help to conserve moose in Unit 22D, remainder, while still allowing for a subsistence harvest. Motion #12 for Proposal 33 passed by a unanimous vote.
- *Proposal 34: Open a nonresident drawing hunt for moose in Unit 22D Remainder.* Motion #13 by Mr. Seetot, seconded by Mr. Oyoumick, to adopt Proposal 34. Council members discussed the low-density moose population in Unit 22D Remainder. Opening up non-resident hunt in this region would negatively impact subsistence uses and threaten an already low density moose population. Motion #13 for Proposal 34 failed on a unanimous vote.
- *Proposal 39: Extend the hunting season for brown bear in Unit 22D and 22E, and increase the resident bag limit.* Motion #14 by Mr. Oyoumick, seconded by Mr. Seetot, to adopt Proposal 39. Council members heard from ADF&G that they are continuing to monitor the impacts of previous regulatory changes in these units, but are neutral on this proposal. The Council, however, supports giving hunters more opportunity to take bears and does not believe it will negatively impact the population. The Council also believes that hunters would take two versus one bear if given the opportunity. Motion #14 for Proposal 39 passed by a unanimous vote.
- *Proposal 40: Require a registration permit for brown bear hunting in Unit 22C.* Motion #15 by Mr. Katchatag, seconded by Mr. Oyoumick, to adopt Proposal 40. The Council believes requiring a registration permit would be burdensome to hunters in an area where local subsistence users believe the brown bear population is high and resulting in unsustainable predation on moose and conflicts at fish camps. Motion #15 for Proposal #40 passed by unanimous vote.
- *Proposal 41: Extend the season date for brown bear hunting in Unit 22B and 22C.* Motion #16 by Mr. Kirk, seconded by Mr. Seetot, to adopt Proposal 41. Council members support extending and aligning the season closing dates in Units 22B and 22C with the closing dates in the adjacent Unit of 22A. This would reduce regulatory complexity and provide additional opportunities to hunt brown bears in the region. Motion #16 for Proposal 41 passed by a unanimous vote.
- *Proposal 42: Allow the use of snowmachines to position brown bears for harvest in Unit 22.* Motion #17 by Mr. Kirk, seconded by Mr. Oyoumick, to adopt Proposal 42. Council members noted that the use of snowmachines to position caribou, wolves or wolverine is currently permitted in Unit 22. These species may also be shot from a stationary snowmachine. Therefore, allowing the use of snowmachines to position bears would be consistent with current methods and means in the region. Permitting the use of snowmachines to position brown bears would be especially helpful during the spring months when access is difficult. Motion #17 for Proposal 42 passed by a unanimous vote.

Future Meeting Dates:


March 11-12, 2020 in Nome, Alaska

October 28-29, 2020 in Nome, Alaska



Karen Deatherage, DFO

USFWS Office of Subsistence Management



Louis Green, Jr., Chair

Seward Peninsula Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

These minutes will be formally considered by the Seward Peninsula Subsistence Regional Advisory Council at its March 11-12, 2020 meeting in Nome, Alaska, and any corrections or notations will be incorporated in the minutes at that meeting.

For a more detailed report of this meeting, copies of the transcript and meeting handouts are available upon request. Call Karen Deatherage at 907-474-2270, email karen_deatherage@fws.gov.