

SEWARD PENINSULA SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes

Via Teleconference Due to Covid-19
March 11, 2021

*These minutes are an abbreviated record of the business conducted at this meeting.
For full details, transcripts of this three day meeting are available at:
<https://www.doi.gov/subsistence/library/transcripts/7-seward-peninsula>*

Invocation

Elmer Seetot, Jr. gave an invocation.

Call to Order, Roll Call and Quorum Establishment

The meeting was called to order Thursday, March 11, 2021 at 9:04 a.m. Council members Louis Green, Jr., Tom Gray, Elmer Seetot, Jr., Leland Oyoumick, Deahl Katchatag, Lloyd Kiyutelluk and Martin Aukongak, were present via teleconference. Ron Kirk (excused) and Charles Saccheus (excused) were absent. The Council has one vacant seat. A quorum was established with seven of the nine seated Council members present.

Attendees:

Via teleconference

- Karen Deatherage, Office of Subsistence Management (OSM), Fairbanks
- Brent Vickers, Karen Hyer, Hannah Voorhees, Tom Kron, OSM, Anchorage
- Glenn Chen, Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Anchorage
- Jeanette Koelsch, Ken Adkisson, Nicole Braem, Letty Hughes, Bering Land Bridge National Preserve (BELA), Nome
- Kim Jochum, Victoria Florey, National Park Service (NPS), Anchorage
- Tom Sparks, Brian Uberlaker, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Nome
- Chris McKee, Bruce Seppi, Bonnie Million, Walker Gusse, BLM, Anchorage
- Diana Stram, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
- Jim Menard, Kevin Clark, Bill Dunker, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), Nome
- Sabrina Garcia, ADF&G, Anchorage
- Mark Burch, ADF&G, Palmer
- Charlie Lean, Northern Norton Sound Advisory Committee, Nome
- Austin Ahmasuk, Nome

Review and Adopt Agenda

Motion by Mr. Gray, seconded by Mr. Seetot, to adopt the agenda as read with the following changes:

- Move Red King Crab issue under New Business
- Add BLM Anchorage Field Office Update
- Add NPS Individual Customary and Traditional Permit Update
- Add Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program (FRMP) Call for Funding Opportunity

The motion passed unanimously.

Elections

Louis Green, Jr. was elected Chair by a unanimous vote

Tom Gray was elected Vice-Chair by a unanimous vote

Elmer Seetot, Jr. was elected Secretary by a unanimous vote

Review and Approve Previous Meeting Minutes

Motion by Mr. Seetot, seconded by Mr. Aukongak, to approve the fall 2020 meeting minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

Council Member and Chair Reports

Mr. Seetot of Brevig Mission reported that snow has been minimal up to this point. There is patchy open tundra, with recent fresh snow on the ground. Caribou were harvested at Kougarok Mountain and Davidson Landing, northeasterly of Brevig Mission. There were prevailing eastern winds all winter. Mr. Seetot stressed that the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) and OSM give residents the opportunities to participate in Regional Council meetings. It's difficult to recruit people to serve on the Councils. He asked to keep the pressure up through the media to encourage participation so that the Councils can continue to give guidance to the Board.

Mr. Oyoumick of Unalakleet reported lots of snow and cold, though the weather was variable with big warm-ups. He stated you never know what is going to happen with the weather anymore. Some Unalakleet residents went north for caribou but had mixed results. Moose season was good. Mr. Oyoumick said he finally got some smelt, but when the ice blows away, the smelt goes away. People have been getting trout and whitefish.

Mr. Kiyutelluk of Shishmaref reported good caribou and moose hunting. There were quite a few wolves catching moose this year. *Oogruk* hunting was limited because of ice conditions. There were seventeen boats hunting *oogruk* in a 5-mile radius until the ice broke up. After Mr. Kiyutelluk got his walrus, he enjoyed a good berry picking season.

Mr. Aukongak of Golovin reported that there was very little snow last winter so there were hardly any berries. There have been plenty of bears; however, since the mid-nineties. Mr. Aukongak believes the wildfires in the south caused the bears to move into his area and now they have a bear problem. Mr. Aukongak would like to get rid of the bears to help the moose and caribou. There's beluga whales and plenty of wolves as well. Mr. Aukongak was recently appointed to the Council and believes that community members need to adapt by understanding regulations. He believes that people are getting loans to get crab boats and other equipment, and it is hurting the crab population. When he was growing up there were plenty of crabs for everyone. Mr. Aukongak expressed his appreciation for getting on the Council.

Mr. Gray of Nome reported that salmon berries were terrible in the Nome area, and even blueberries had a tough year. All of the ocean weather has changed spring and fall hunts. While freezers are getting filled, it is a challenge to get a beluga whale or *oogruk* landed in current conditions. The moose populations seem to be increasing, but the moose hunts happen so fast because there are only so many animals they can take. If you blink your eye, moose season is over. A two week moose hunting season now only lasts five days. Everyone is having to go a long way to Buckland or Serpentine Hot Springs for caribou. We are in changing times. Mr. Gray spoke to the issue of Red King Crab in Norton Sound. He said that in 2020, subsistence crabbing was a total waste of time. After spending four or five days checking pots, there would only be 1-3 crabs. Mr. Gray grew up on crab and caught huge crabs in the winter. Commercial fishing came in and changed what subsistence users are now catching. Locals were used to a certain class of crabs, and over the past few years they haven't got them. Mr. Gray responded to Mr. Aukongak's discussion on bears and wolves. Mr. Gray believes wolves are doing more to impact the moose populations than bears. He believes they cause moose to move around.

Mr. Green of Nome shared that he was unable to go marine mammal hunting this past spring because of boat motor issues. During the summer months, he picked up some Pink Salmon, but heard a lot of complaints about the lack of Silver and Chum Salmon. Subsistence users are trying to target Chum Salmon and throwing Pink Salmon back into the water. Mr. Green agreed that there are only so many moose in Unit 22 and the hunting season is over in a flash. He believes you have to have certain equipment to be able to access the moose. He reported that his family had a successful moose hunt this year, but there were a lot of hunters who did without. Mr. Green was glad to hear that hunters are targeting bears and wolves, as predation on moose is high. Beluga whales were present, and his family was fortunate to get two. Mr. Green took his son hunting for seal but they were not successful. He also spent days targeting whitefish on the Kuzitrin River, which seem to have up and down cycles these days. Growing up in the old days, Mr. Green could sit by the river and listen to the whitefish jump. Mr. Green is hoping to do a snowmachine trip from Big Lake to Nome. He thinks the wood bison would be something to see along the way. Mr. Green is hearing that subsistence crabbers are not very successful. Before commercial fishing started, you would have to check your lines quick enough or you would lose your crabs. You didn't have time to sit around, and Mr. Green only spent a few hours getting what he needed. Mr. Green believes that Bering Sea fishers really slammed populations down and the crabs have never recovered. Hopefully the Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF) will take action to turn things around. After commercial fishing started, subsistence has had a tough time getting crabs.

10. Public and Tribal Comment on Non-Agenda Items (available each morning)

Austin Ahmasuk of Nome spoke on the Norton Sound Red King Crab issue. Mr. Ahmasuk shared about approaching the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council (NPFMC) with concerns for the Norton Sound Red King Crab fishery. The NPFMC establishes the Allowable Biological Catch for this region. Mr. Ahmasuk believes that the NPMFC has the most unfriendly public process in the State of Alaska. The public is frustrated with how the NPMFC works, and believes they do not care about local subsistence users. Mr. Ahmasuk was at the last NPFMC meeting where they instructed subsistence users to go to BOF with problems. Mr. Ahmasuk believes that the NPFMC is very commercial fishery oriented, and that it does not question data from the State of Alaska. He noted that motions pass the NPFMC with very little discussion.

New Business.

ADF&G Reports

- Jim Menard, Kevin Clark, ADF&G, 1) Norton Sound Red King Crab Update, 2) Emergency Order Petition to BOF requesting Red King Crab Fishery 2021 Season Closure and 3) Unit 22 Salmon Updates.
- Bill Dunker, ADF&G, Unit 22 Wildlife Updates
- Rick Merizon, ADF&G, Small Game Updates

(ADF&G was asked to report under New Business due to the Call for Wildlife Proposals and a Council member's schedule)

Call for Wildlife Proposals

Hannah Voorhees, OSM, presented the Call for Wildlife Proposals. The Council did not have any proposals to submit, but did remark they would be making recommendations on proposals submitted by other proponents.

Council Charter Review and Approval

Karen Deatherage, OSM, presented the Council Charter for review and/or amendment.

Motion by Mr. Aukongak, seconded by Mr. Katchatag, to add the following language to the Council's Charter: "Any member of this Advisory Council may serve after the expiration of the member's term until a successor is appointed." The motion passed unanimously.

Finalize FY2020 Annual Report

Karen Deatherage, OSM, presented the Council's draft FY2020 Annual Report.

Motion by Mr. Katchatag, seconded by Mr. Seetot, to finalize the Annual Report as written.

The motion passed unanimously.

Agency/Tribal/Organization Reports:

- Diana Stram, NOAA Bycatch Update
- Sabrina Garcia, ADF&G, Bering Sea Juvenile Salmon Ecology
- Letty Hughes, BELA, Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program (FRMP) Project and BELA Updates
- Victoria Florey, NPS, Individual Customary and Traditional Use Permit Update
- Bonnie Million, BLM, Bering Sea Western Interior Resource Management Plan and Anchorage Field Office Updates
- Tom Sparks, BLM, Veterans Land Act and Big Game Hunting Guide Permit Updates
- Brent Vickers, OSM, Staff/Activity Update and FRMP Notice of Funding Opportunity

Future Meeting Dates:

Fall 2021 meeting to be held October 26-27 in Nome

Winter 2022 meeting to be held March 3-4 in Nome

_____/signature on the original/
Karen Deatherage, Designated Federal Officer
USFWS Office of Subsistence Management

_____/signature on the original/
Louis Green, Jr., Chair
Seward Peninsula Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

These minutes were formally considered and approved by the Seward Peninsula Subsistence Regional Advisory Council at its fall 2021 meeting.

A more detailed report of this meeting, copies of the transcript, and meeting handouts are available upon request. Call Karen Deatherage at 1-800-478-1456 or 907-474-2203, email karen_deatherage@fws.gov