

Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

c/o Office of Subsistence Management

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MAY 15 2020

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

Dear Chairman Christianson:

The Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council) submits this FY2019 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 Fairbanks, Alaska, on October 15-16, 2019, the Council identified concerns and recommendations for this report. The Council approved this annual report at its winter 2020 meeting in Fairbanks. The Council wishes to share information and raise a number of concerns aligned with the implementation of Title VIII of ANILCA and the continuation of subsistence uses in the Eastern Interior Alaska Region.

1. Documentation of and more information on climate change and historical comparison of climate change trends

The Council requests more information on climate change to help inform land management decisions affecting Federally qualified subsistence users in the Eastern Interior Region. During the Council's public meeting in Fairbanks on October 15-16, 2019, several Council members reported that significant changes in weather and climate have had a noticeable effect on fish, wildlife, and their habitat. Such things as high water temperatures visibly affected salmon runs and salmon die offs were reported. People are concerned how this is going to affect the fry in the river and what the long-term effects on the runs will be in the future. In some cases, the runs came in late, so fish wheels started to ice over before users were able to harvest enough of fish to satisfy their needs. Due to the high air temperatures, moose did not go into rut until the end of hunting season and many users were not able to harvest their meat until the season was over. The warm weather conditions made moose hunting and meat processing difficult. Declining winter ice, early, heavy, and wet snowfalls, and low water levels on some rivers during the summer season affected users' ability to use established transportation routes to the subsistence grounds. For example, you cannot go trapping until December near Tanana because the rivers are still open, or you cannot beaver trap or bird hunt in the spring because it is too warm. There

are changes in the abundance and distribution of fish and wildlife important to meet the food security needs of Federally qualified subsistence users.

The Council requests that it would like to see OSM social scientists conduct outreach, document issues, and make historical comparisons. The Council suggests that the Board direct OSM to collaborate with other agencies and nonprofit organizations to collect information and provide it to the Councils. The Council believes that more information will help manage resources better. Climate has a dramatic effect on resources in the future, and it is important to consider it in order to adapt.

More and up-to-date consistent information on climate change will assist the Council in being more adaptive to change, particularly when participating in the Federal subsistence regulatory process pursuant to Title VIII of ANILCA. The Council requests the Board figure out the ways to provide this information to the Council on a continuous basis.

2. Funding for small projects in the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program

The Council is concerned that there seems to be a preference for funding large Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program (FRMP) projects, which may limit the ability to fund equally important smaller projects. The Council wants the Board to ensure that both large and small FRMP projects in the region receive equal consideration when funding decisions are made. The Council suggests that investigators applying for FRMP project funding for larger projects should look for funding from other sources as well.

3. Request to include environmental monitoring component into FRMP

The Council suggests that in the future, the Board might want to consider expanding FRMP to include an environmental monitoring component because changes in the environment strongly impacts both fish and wildlife. The Council proposes that the FRMP be structured to support environmental monitoring and that partnerships with other agencies and nonprofit organizations be encouraged. The Council noted several examples where environmental monitoring could be helpful to land managers and Councils alike, including the impacts of fire on habitat and how changes affect moose and caribou. The Council emphasized that there have been severe fires over the past decade.

4. Analysis of biological impacts of hatchery production on Alaska's fisheries

Hatchery production is having tremendous biological impacts on all of Alaska's fisheries. The Council emphasized that fish hatcheries coupled with climate change have the potential to affect the region in profound and unknown ways. The Council appreciates the Board's response to the issue (topic #3) of the effects of releasing 1.6 billion hatchery salmon into the marine environment brought forward in Council's FY18 annual report; however, the Council feels that this reply did not provide an adequate answer to its concern.

The Council requests an evaluation of the effects of the Alaska salmon hatchery program on Bering Sea salmon production and Alaska's fisheries. The Council requests that the Board direct

OSM staff to compile the information from the available research and present it to the Council, similar to what was done with “Domino” effect issue. For example, the Council would like to have an overview presentation of the research conducted by the University of Washington; University of Hokkaido; University of Alaska Fairbanks; Oregon State University; National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; State of Alaska, and others on this issue. This Council believes that other Councils will be interested in this presentation since there are similar concerns statewide. If there is a possibility of inviting a research specialist from one of these universities or organizations to present, the Council would welcome this opportunity.

The Council stressed that the information they are requesting is important to understand the current biological impacts. The Council also pointed out that this information will help to hold the hatcheries to commitments that they made in 2001 and 2002. In January 2001, at the Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF) meeting hatcheries’ managers promised to reduce hatchery production volume by 25 percent. Then, on June 28, 2002, hatcheries’ managers entered into a *Joint Protocol on Salmon Enhancement* (#2002-FB-215) with the BOF. The Council believes that understanding biological impacts is the key to restoring some of the fisheries.

5. Continuation of the hunter ethics and education initiative and dialog with rural communities

The Council is aware of the current staff shortages at OSM; however, the Council would like to emphasize to the Board that it wishes to continue work on developing the hunter ethics and education initiative in the year ahead. There is a need for increased cultural awareness and respect for people that live in the rural Alaska. The Council would like to engage in a direct dialogue with the communities like Arctic Village. For example, the Council wants to create a subcommittee to find mutually beneficial solutions to the situation in the Arctic Village Sheep Management Area. The Council voted on the record during its fall 2019 meeting to send a letter to the Board requesting permission to create a subcommittee that will engage all stakeholders. The letter was sent on October 28, 2019 (see enclosure), but the Council had not received a reply yet. The Council asks the Board to provide direction on appropriate ways to engage in a two-way dialogue with rural communities about subsistence issues at stake.

6. Greater geographical and wide range of age representation on the Council

The Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council alerts the Board to the need for greater geographical and wide age representation on the Council. Specifically, the Council wants to see representation from Arctic Village, or Chalkyitsik.

7. Training needs and request for another All-Council Meeting

The Council notes that useful training and knowledge was gained at the All-Council meeting in 2016. The Council also expressed the desire for another All-Council meeting. The Council emphasized that the leadership training and instruction provided on Indian law during 2016 All-Council meeting were particularly meaningful. Meeting other Council members across the State brings more understanding to each region.

8. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game Advisory Committees (ACs) information sharing and participation

The Council requests that the Board relay to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) the Council's need for better information sharing and participation from the ADF&G's ACs. There has been a big void in receiving ACs materials from the State in time for the Council meetings. The current protocol is not working. Minutes and letters from the ACs should be able to go directly to the Councils to receive timely input. The ACs spend a great deal of time on Federal proposals, as well as the State proposals. Many Council members are on ACs, but the minutes are not always provided at Council meetings, causing a missing link. The Council requests timely response not only from the ACs, but also from Councils to the ACs.

The Eastern Interior Alaska 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 from the Eastern Interior Region. If you have questions about this report, please contact me via Zach Stevenson, Subsistence Council Coordinator with the Office of Subsistence Management at 1-800-478-1456 or 907-786-3676, or email at zachary_stevenson@fws.gov.

Sincerely,



Susan Entsminger
Chair

Enclosure

cc: Federal Subsistence Board
Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Susan Detwiler, Assistant Regional Director, Office of Subsistence Management
Tom Doolittle, Deputy Assistant Regional Director, Office of Subsistence Management
Suzanne Worker, Acting Policy Coordinator, Office of Subsistence Management
Chris McKee, Wildlife Division Supervisor, Office of Subsistence Management
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Tom Kron, Acting Council Coordination Division Supervisor,
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Pippa Kenner, Anthropologist, Office of Subsistence Management
Zachary Stevenson, Subsistence Council Coordinator,
Office of Subsistence Management
Benjamin Mulligan, Deputy Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish & Game
Mark Burch, Special Projects Coordinator, Alaska Department of Fish & Game
Interagency Staff Committee
Administrative Record