Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Meeting Materials

October 24-26, 2023

Klawock, Alaska

What's Inside

On the cover...

A mountain goat overlooking a bluff in the Tongass National Forest.

Photo by USDA

What's Inside

SOUTHEAST SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Prince of Wales Vocational and Technical Education Center
6565 Boundary Road
Klawock, Alaska
October 24-26, 2023, convening at 8:30 a.m. daily

TELECONFERENCE: Call **833-436-1163** (toll free), when prompted, enter Conf ID: **782707840#**

PUBLIC COMMENTS: Public comments are welcome for each agenda item and for regional concerns not included on the agenda. The Council appreciates hearing your concerns and knowledge. Please fill out a comment form to be recognized by the Council chair. Time limits may be set to provide opportunity for all to testify and keep the meeting on schedule. Written comments may also be emailed to subsistence@fws.gov.

PLEASE NOTE: These are estimated times and the agenda is subject to change. Contact staff for the current schedule. Evening sessions are at the call of the chair.

AGENDA

*Asterisk identifies action item.

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(Time limit of 15 minutes unless approved in advance)

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- Tribal Relations (*USFS*)
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12. Closing Comments

13. Adjourn (*Chair*)

To call into the meeting, dial the toll free number: **833-436-1163 and then** when prompted, enter conference ID: **782707840#**

Reasonable Accommodations
The Federal Subsistence Board is committed to providing access to this meeting for all participants. Please direct all requests for sign language interpreting services, closed captioning, or other accommodation needs to DeAnna Perry, 907-209-7817, deanna.perry@usda.gov, or 800-877-8339 (TTY), by close of business on October 11, 2023.

REGION 1
Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

Seat	Years of Service Appointed/***Expires***	Member Name and Community	
1	2018-2019* *2022-**2025***	**Larry R. Bemis** *Yakutat*	
2	2004 ***2025***	**Frank G. Wright Jr.** *Hoonah*	**Secretary**
3	2021 ***2025***	**Calvin H. Casipit** *Gustavus*	
4	2000 ***2025***	**Michael A. Douville** *Craig*	
5	2021 ***2025***	**James C. Slater** *Pelican*	
6	2013-2020* *2021-**2023***	**Robert F. Schroeder** *Juneau*	
7	2014-2020* *2021-**2023***	**Albert H. Howard** *Angoon*	
8	2002-2020* *2021-**2023***	**Donald C. Hernandez** *Point Baker*	**Chair**
9	1993-2019* *2021-**2024***	**Patricia A. Phillips** *Pelican*	
10	2022 ***2024***	**Louie A. Wagner, Jr.** *Metlakatla*	
11	2002-2019* *2021-**2023***	**Harvey Kitka** *Sitka*	
12	2022 ***2024***	**John Smith, III** *Juneau*	
13	2009 ***2024***	**Cathy A. Needham** *Juneau*	**Vice-Chair**

**denotes break in service*

SOUTHEAST ALASKA SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes

Andrew P. Kashevaroff (APK Building)
Juneau, Alaska
February 28 – March 2, 2023

Call to Order, Roll Call, and Quorum Establishment:

The meeting was called to order Tuesday, February 28, at around 8:35 a.m. Council members Calvin Casipit, Michael Douville, Robert Schroeder, Harvey Kitka, Cathy Needham, Patricia Phillips, John Smith III, Louie Wagner Jr., and Frank Wright Jr. and Council Chair Donald Hernandez were present in person. Council members Larry Bemis, Albert Howard, and James Slater were not present and were excused. With 10 out of 13 seated Council members present, the quorum was established.

Attendees (in person or phone participation[1]):

- U.S. Forest Service (USFS): ***Dave Schmid, Chad VanOrmer, Frank Sherman, Greg Risdahl, DeAnna Perry, Rob Cross, Jacob Musslewhite, Andrew Sanders, Ph.D., Susan Oehlers, Kevin Hood, Bonnie Bennetsen, Barb Miranda, Jacob Hofman, Nicole Grewe, Kim Ramos***
- Office of Subsistence Management (OSM): ***Orville Lind*, Brent Vickers, Ph.D., Lisa Grediagin, Robbin La Vine*, Jason Roberts, Ph.D.***
- Tlingit Tribe - Juneau: ***Fran Houston, Aak'w Kwaan Tribal Spokesperson***
- Central Council Tlingit and Haida: ***Tony Christianson****
- Hoonah Indian Association: ***Ian Johnson****
- Ketchikan Indian Community (KIC): ***Judy Leask-Guthrie***
- Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA): ***Glenn Chen, Ph.D.****
- National Park Service (NPS): ***Eva Patton****
- U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS): ***Jill Klein*, Sara Markegard****
- Bureau of Land Management (BLM): ***LeeAnn McDonald*, Glennallen Field Office***
- Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G): ***Mark Burch*, Tom Schumacher, Robbin Dublin****
- Bureau of Reclamation: ***Melinda Hernandez-Burke****
- Members of the Public: ***Heather Bauscher* (Sitka Advisory Committee), Dan Strong****

Welcomes:

Fran Houston, Aak'w Kwaan Tribal Spokesperson, extended her welcome to her traditional territory and shared some history of the local Aak'w Village District.

[1] denoted by asterisk

Dave Schmid, Regional Forester, USFS, welcomed the Council to Juneau and the Tongass National Forest and acknowledged that the meeting was being held on ancestral lands of Tlingit/Haida/Tsimshian peoples. Mr. Schmid, as a Federal Subsistence Board (Board) member, praised the Council members for their service, active involvement, and the important work it does in representing all Southeast communities.

Review and Adopt Agenda:

Motion by Member Wright, seconded by Member Casipit, to adopt the agenda as a guide with the following revisions:

- Strike 805(c) report from Old Business (information will be included in another agenda item)
- Replace 12d from New Business with non-rural determination proposal update
- Add Southeast Alaska Sustainability Strategy update and Pacific Northwest Lab report under Forest Service Reports
- Follow-up on support for indigenous co-management activities
- Discussion on developing a policy statement on extraterritorial jurisdiction
- Several specific times were noted for agenda items based on speaker availability

The motion **passed** unanimously.

Election of Officers:

Mr. Donald Hernandez was re-elected the Council's Chair.
Ms. Cathy Needham was re-elected the Council's Vice Chair.
Mr. Frank Wright, Jr. was re-elected the Council's Secretary.

Review and Approve Previous Meeting Minutes:

Motion by Member Casipit, seconded by Member Needham, to approve the fall 2023 meeting minutes. The motion **passed** unanimously.

Council Member and Chair Reports:

Frank Wright, Jr. of Hoonah reported that there are many brown trees because of the bug infestations of last summer due to climate change and this has increased wildfire risks. There is no recycling program in Hoonah; however, Alaska Marine Highway takes aluminum cans that he and his wife collect, and they are then able to donate the money from those to local children's programs. He is worried about the effect of climate change to the future of young people. The salmon fishing forecast seems small, and he hopes for a better season than last. Mr. Wright gave specific examples of the high costs of living in his community.

Calvin Casipit of Gustavus reported that Gustavus didn't experience winter until the end of January. Deer hunting wasn't as good due to lack of snow, and he spent a lot of time looking for deer this season. His daughter was able to harvest a deer. Most people harvested the moose they needed, and fishing was good. He would like to see further discussions by the Council regarding providing a meaningful priority for federally qualified subsistence users.

Michael Douville of Craig reported that deer hunting was difficult this season. In fact, he's never hunted so hard with so little result. He believes the under-estimated wolf population over the last decade and the timber harvests have significantly impacted the deer population as hunter success rates have plummeted in the last few years. Local communities are concerned with old growth logging on the island. There is concern and resistance to the efforts by conservation groups who want to eliminate the trollers from the salmon fishery.

Robert Schroeder of Juneau reflected on some of the accomplishments of this Council since the passage of ANILCA, such as: Federal and State's recognition of customary trade to recognize designated hunter programs, revised customary and traditional use finding for all qualified users of all subsistence species in all of Southeast, recommendations of restrictions on non-subsistence uses to provide a significant priority to rural residents, support of Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program that has empowered communities and tribes, engagement to help direct forest management; and its support of Indigenous co-management of resources.

Donald Hernandez of Point Baker reported that his area experienced bitter cold temperatures with no snowpack in December, and he is worried that spawning beds might be frozen in the absence of snow protection on some of the streams. The lack of snowpack made for better browse conditions for deer. January and February brought lots of rain, and there were concerns about spawning beds getting washed out by heavy rains. Deer hunting was not good this fall. Gasoline prices are $8 per gallon, and it is very expensive and burdensome for people to make multiple trips to try to harvest deer.

Patty Phillips of Pelican reported the impact that seiners have on fish resources, such as those in Klag Bay. Seiners place their nets right at the gates and this interception, along with sea lion predation, are having a significant impact on Coho and Sockeye salmon at Klag Bay. Perhaps markers need to be moved back so that some fish can get past seiners. Heavy torrential rains are resulting in stream scouring, which in turn damages spawning habitat, has downstream effects, and influences the ecosystem web. She shared specific data regarding the effects of unguided non-resident sportfishing: 1) in inclement weather, these fishermen fish in inlets instead of the ocean, which has localized direct negative adverse impacts and reduces subsistence opportunities to local residents; 2) disproportionate negative impact on the ability to harvest locally further depletes the fish populations causing localized conservation concerns; 3) it poses a public safety risk as the subsistence harvester has to travel further away and in smaller boats to successfully harvest salmon; and 4) wanton waste occurs, especially with rockfish. Unguided fishermen and climate change have caused subsistence users to lose access to important subsistence resources and although the Board has made determinations that restrict non-federally qualified users when appropriate, the issue is more than reducing competition, it is about providing a meaningful subsistence priority while dealing with localized depletion.

Louie Wagner, Jr. of Metlakatla reported that there are two successful trappers in Metlakatla that are targeting wolves around beaver ponds. He is looking forward to seeing more deer soon and commented on the travel pattern of deer, presumably to avoid wolves. Three pet dogs have been lost to wolves

recently and he shared his observations about how the wolves travel around and between islands. He represents his community on the Southeast Alaska Indigenous Transboundary Mining Commission, and they have been having monthly meetings with Canadians to discuss the mining issues (watershed threat). He expressed his frustration with the one-bucket limit for Eulachon and explained how the trips upriver are quite costly for the amount of fish they are able to harvest. Eulachon are important and a big part of the Indigenous culture.

Harvey Kitka of Sitka reported that his community was concerned about the smaller King (Chinook) salmon being taken and the talk of changing the harvest size from 28 inches to 26 inches. The price of fuel has made it difficult for people to travel to Redout Lake to get their Sockeye Salmon. The run size for Klag Bay has shrunk and there isn't much escapement on this system for Sockeye Salmon. He is concerned about the dispersal of fisheries because although the total biomass is taken from three different areas, fishing is occurring in only one area. He would like to see people's ability to meet their subsistence needs considered separate from the issue of conservation concerns regarding subsistence harvests.

John Smith, III. of Juneau reminded the Council that he attended the Board of Game meeting in January 2023 to represent the Council and give the Council's comments on various wildlife proposals. He will be providing a full report during the upcoming agenda items. He mentioned it was good to see everyone.

Cathy Needham of Juneau reported on the Board meeting since she represented the Council in place of the Council's chair at that meeting. She informed the Council of highlights, such as: 1) delegation of authority change so that both temporary and emergency special actions can be made for fisheries, 2) Board's actions on Southeast fishery proposals and the deferred wildlife proposals, and 3) the briefing for the Tongass submerged lands issue. She stated she appreciated the opportunity to attend the Board meeting and appreciated just how much work goes into the Chair's participation at the Board meetings.

Old Business:

A video documenting the engagement by the University of Alaska Southeast's Policies and Procedures Practicum class at the fall 2023 regional advisory council and Board meetings was shown to the Council. In addition to the following agenda items, the Council received information on the following topics: Special Actions update, information on the eulachon monitoring on the Unuk River, and a map resource[2] that is now available for the submerged lands on the Tongass National Forest listed in a recent Federal Register notice.

Alaska Roadless Rulemaking Update:

Dave Schmid, Regional Forester, USFS, informed the Council that the most recent Alaska Roadless Rule was repealed and replaced with the previous 2001 Roadless Rule, which restored all previous protections. He then fielded questions by members regarding Forest Service contracts with tribes and co-management

[2] Tongass National Forest Submerged Lands Proposed Rule Draft Location Reference Maps can be found at: TNF_SubmergedLandsReferenceMap_23Feb2023.pdf | Powered by Box

opportunities. He also heard about the need for additional data for the Council's work in making recommendations on Federal and State subsistence issues.

Alaska Board of Game – Wildlife Meeting Debrief:
Member John Smith reflected on his attendance and representation at the January 2023 Alaska Board of Game meeting on behalf of the Council. He provided the Council with a brief overview of the Board of Game's actions taken on the specific 24 proposals of interest to the Council[3].

North American Caribou Workshop and Arctic Ungulate Conference Update:
Lisa Grediagin, Wildlife Division Supervisor, OSM, reminded the Council of the upcoming caribou workshop/arctic ungulate conference coming up in May 2023. The Council previously voted to send Member Casipit to this workshop on its behalf. The Council will provide feedback on the cursory list of potential workshop topics to Member Casipit in preparation for his attendance.

Southeast Alaska Sustainability Strategy – Forest Management Update:
Frank Sherman, Acting Forest Supervisor – Tongass NF, USFS, provided details relating to the forest management component of the Southeast Alaska Sustainability Strategy. As the large-scale old growth timber harvests end, the focus of resources will be on forest restoration, recreation, climate resiliency, and building up a sustainable young growth timber program. In the future, there will be a public input initiative, which will include Tribal consultations to be considered for a 10-year prioritized body of work across the Tongass National Forest. Mr. Sherman took comments and answered questions from the Council.

Unit 2 Wolf Update:
Sarah Markegard, biologist with USFWS, provided a status update on the petition to list the Alexander Archipelago wolf under the Endangered Species Act. The 12-month finding (species status assessment) is expected to be transmitted to USFWS Headquarters by March 3, 2023. USFWS Headquarters is expected to publish its findings concurrently with the assessment in the Federal Register no later than September 2023.

Tom Schumacher, ADF&G Regional Supervisor, provided the season's Unit 2 wolf harvest: 64 wolves were sealed. He also explained ADF&G's efforts in analyzing DNA data. The Council had several questions/comments about the information provided by both Ms. Markegard and Mr. Schumacher.

New Business:

In addition to the topics below, the Council received a brief overview of the pending changes to the current Board's Council Correspondence Policy.

[3] Preliminary Summary of Board of Game actions can be found at http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/regulations/regprocess/gameboard/pdfs/2022-2023/se/pre-summary_1-23-23.pdf; the Council's public comment letter on certain proposals can be found as PC151 at http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/static/regulations/regprocess/gameboard/pdfs/2022-2023/se/pc_151-188.pdf

Wildlife Management Reports:

Andrew Sanders, Ph.D., biologist, USFS, provided a Federal Subsistence Wildlife Update for the Southeast Region to the Council. He presented information and data regarding the harvests of deer, moose, mountain goat, elk, and wolves and fielded questions from the Council about Unit 4 deer harvest and Unit 1C goat harvest. There was discussion of harvests by communities within the wildlife management units.

Deer Research:

Bonnie Bennetsen, Wildlife Program Manager, Tongass NF, gave a presentation to the Council, explaining how the USFS is using Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) to study winter habitat for deer modeling. This will help prioritize forest and deer habitat restoration work in the future. The Council had questions and comments about timber regimes and the impact to deer habitat.

Regional Wildlife Proposals:

The Council voted to form a working group to identify matters to be addressed by federal wildlife proposal(s).
Motion by Member Needham, seconded by Member Casipit, to establish a working group to address wildlife proposal issues, to be comprised of Member Douville, Member Phillips, and Member Wright. Motion **passed** unanimously.

The Council learned that there were no wildlife closures for Southeast for this Council to consider during this cycle. Ms. Grediagin provided a summary of four potential wildlife proposals drafted by the working group for the Council's consideration. The Council discussed the issues addressed by the proposals and submitted the following Federal wildlife proposals for the current regulatory cycle:

- **Unit 4 Deer - Hoonah: Close the Northeast Chichagof Controlled Use Area (NECCUA) to deer hunting by non-federally qualified users from Nov. 1-15.**

  Motion by Member Needham, seconded by Member Casipit, to submit a proposal to establish a meaningful preference for the continuation of subsistence uses of deer and for public safety.

  Hoonah residents depend on deer and are experiencing difficulty meeting their subsistence needs for several reasons, including competition and user conflicts with non-federally qualified users. This two-week closure would allow for the continuation of subsistence uses and provide a meaningful subsistence priority: enhancing opportunity for subsistence users, eliminating competition, and improving access to hunting areas during the most efficient hunting period. The proposed closure area is limited in scope and will have an overall small effect on non-subsistence hunters, but it will have huge, inordinate benefits to the local subsistence users. The motion **passed** on a unanimous vote.

- **Unit 4 Deer - Pelican: Close a portion of Chichagof Island around Pelican to deer hunting by non-federally qualified users from November 1-15.**

  Motion by Member Phillips, seconded by Member Needham, to submit a proposal to close a portion of Chichagof Island around Pelican *(*specifically, the Federal public lands within drainages flowing into Lisianski Inlet, Lisianski Strait, and Stag Bay south of a line connecting Soapstone and Column points and north of a line connecting Point Theodore and Point Uray) to deer hunting by non-Federally-qualified users from November 1 – 15 to establish a meaningful preference for the continuation of subsistence uses of deer.

Pelican residents depend on deer and find it difficult to meet their subsistence needs for several reasons, including competition and user conflicts with non-federally qualified users. The proposed two-week closure window in early November is the most efficient time for subsistence deer hunting in Unit 4. This two-week closure would allow for the continuation of subsistence uses and provide a meaningful subsistence priority, enhancing opportunity for subsistence users and helping them meet their subsistence needs by eliminating competition and improving access to hunting areas during the most efficient hunting period. The proposed closure area is limited in scope but represents the area most hunted by Pelican residents. This closure will have an overall small effect on non-subsistence hunters who will still have a lot of time and area to hunt deer in Unit 4, but it will have huge, inordinate benefits to the local subsistence users. The motion **passed** on a unanimous vote.

- **Unit 4 Deer - Angoon: Close a portion of Admiralty Island to deer hunting by non-federally qualified users from Nov. 1-15.**

  Motion by Member Phillips, seconded by Member Casipit, to submit a proposal closing a portion of Admiralty Island (specifically, Wildlife Analysis Areas 4042, 4055, and 4041), to establish a meaningful preference for the continuation of subsistence uses of deer.

  Angoon residents depend on deer and are having difficulty meeting their subsistence needs for several reasons, including competition and user conflicts with non-Federally qualified users. High fuel costs, depressed economies, small boats, and inclement weather also affect the ability of Angoon residents to meet their subsistence needs. Non-federally qualified users exacerbate these concerns by obstructing access, competing for deer, and potentially altering deer behavior, all of which decrease chances of successful subsistence hunts and hinder the continuation of subsistence uses. The proposed two-week closure window in early November is the most efficient time for subsistence deer hunting in Unit 4. This would allow for the continuation of subsistence uses and provide a meaningful subsistence priority by enhancing opportunity for subsistence users. It will help them meet their subsistence needs by eliminating competition and improving access to hunting areas during the most efficient hunting period. The proposed closure area is limited in scope but represents the area most hunted by Angoon residents. This closure will have an overall small effect on non-subsistence hunters who will still have a lot of time and area to hunt deer in Unit 4, but it will have huge, inordinate benefits to the local subsistence users.

The motion **passed** on a unanimous vote.

- **Unit 1C Goat: Close a portion of Unit 1C, remainder (RG015 permit area) to goat hunting by non-federally qualified users from Aug. 1-31.**

Motion by Member Phillips, seconded by Member Casipit, to submit a proposal closing a portion of Unit 1C Remainder, RG015 permit area (specifically, Federal public lands within the drainages of Chilkat range south of south bank of the Endicott River) to goat hunting by non-federally qualified users from August 1 to August 31 to establish a meaningful preference for the continuation of subsistence uses of goat.

The Alaska Board of Game recently adopted a state proposal to extend the resident goat season in the southern end of the Chilkat Range in Unit 1C that effectively eliminated the federal subsistence priority. Previously, federally qualified subsistence users had the month of August to hunt goats in this area without competition from non-federally qualified users. There has been an increase of off-road vehicles at the boat dock and camping that blocks the roads up to the alpine, which prevents access to the best areas to hunt goats. The earlier Federal goat season will provide opportunity for federally qualified subsistence users to access this hunt area without competition from non-federally qualified users, especially before the state moose season opens on September 15 when the area gets even more crowded.
The motion **passed** on a unanimous vote.

Review of Issues for FY-2022 Annual Report:

Motion by Member Schroeder, seconded by Member Casipit, to approve the draft FY-2022 Annual Report to the Board with some verbiage edits and additional topic. Motion **passed** unanimously.
The final topics approved to be sent to the Board were:

- Transboundary mining potential impacts to resources and users; letter to the Board with requests to further concerns to the U.S. Department of State and the Alaska Lieutenant Governor, et al.
- Unguided sports fishermen issues resulting in impacts to subsistence resources
- Support awareness for bycatch issues; request to forward Council's letter in support of four Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils' bycatch letter to NOAA-NMFS
- Youth input/representation on Regional Advisory Councils; request to consider placing a non-voting youth member on the Council and fund student groups interested in the work of Federal Subsistence Management Program
- Commercial fisheries impact to subsistence fisheries and perceived reallocation of resources from subsistence harvester to the commercial industry; research is needed to document this impact

Informational Topics (no specific request for action by the Board):

- Meaningful Priority and the Interpretation of ANILCA §804 and §815(3); Council may develop a position paper on this issue
- Adaptive management techniques to be used for young growth harvests
- Council continues to support indigenous co-management of resources

- Lack of law enforcement for fisheries
- Suggestions to improve the content featured in analyses
- Climate change effects on subsistence resources and the environment
- Current status of fish and wildlife resources throughout Southeast Alaska

Nonrural Determination Proposal for Ketchikan (NDP25-01):

Jason Roberts, Ph.D., OSM, provided a status update on NDP25-01. The Board recently found that the proposal met the threshold requirements. This initiated a full analysis of the proposal. OSM is collecting data, which will include input from public meetings to be held in the future. The Board will make its final determination on NDP25-01 at its meeting in the winter of 2025. The Council requested that public meetings be held in some of the communities that may be impacted, in addition to a meeting in Ketchikan, the area proposed to be deemed nonrural.

Council Charter Review:

DeAnna Perry, Council Coordinator, provided background information for the Council in its regular review of the Council Charter. The Council discussed its desire to create a youth representation seat on the Council.

Motion by Member Needham, seconded by Member Wagner, to add an option to the Council's charter for one additional non-voting representative[4] between the ages of 18 and 25 who is knowledgeable and experienced in matters relating to subsistence uses of fish and wildlife and who is a resident of the region represented by the Council. This optional representative seat would be beneficial in understanding the younger generation's reliance on resources and would help predict future needs for subsistence users, as well as provide an opportunity to teach and mentor the next group of leaders in the processes and complexities of resource management and subsistence uses. Motion **passed** unanimously.

Motion by Member Needham, seconded by Member Smith, to approve the Council charter with the addition of the youth representative option. Motion **passed** unanimously.

Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program (FRMP) & Partners for Fisheries Monitoring Program; Fisheries Cycle

Rob Cross, USFS, answered FRMP/fisheries issue questions and provided updates on:

- FRMP: 7 projects will be funded through 2025
- Partners for Fisheries Monitoring Program: 15 proposals received for approximately one million dollars (yearly) to strengthen Alaska Native and rural development in federal subsistence management; news release coming to announce the funded proposals
- Board actions on Southeast Alaska proposals/closures for the recent fisheries regulatory cycle

[4] By unanimous consent, the Council approved an amendment to change the word 'member' with the word 'representative' to keep Council membership of 13 voting **members** and recognize that the **representative seat** would be advisory only and would not have the ability to vote.

Harvest of Wildlife for Sport Purposes in National Preserves

Eva Patton, Subsistence Program Manager, NPS, informed the Council that the proposed wildlife rule to reconsider factual, legal, policy conclusions associated with bear baiting on National Preserves lands is open for public comment. Lands affected in Southeast, if passed, would include Glacier Bay National Preserve, Dry Bay, and Wrangell-St. Elias National Preserve in Yakutat Bay.

Testimony at North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) Meeting

Heather Bauscher, Sitka Advisory Committee, informed the Council of the efforts being made to make the NPFMC aware of the issue of unguided non-resident sportfishermen impacts to subsistence resources.

Motion by Member Needham, seconded by Member Douville, to nominate Member Cal Casipit to give testimony on behalf of the Council regarding its past work and attempts to address this issue at the NPFMC Advisory Panel meeting. Motion **passed** unanimously.

Policy Statement on ANILCA, meaningful priority, and continuation of subsistence uses:

The Council voted on March 1, 2023, to form a working group to work on language for a potential policy statement on the Council's position regarding the meanings of certain articles in ANILCA (Sections .804 and .815), "meaningful priority," and the "continuation of subsistence uses."

Motion by Member Needham, seconded by Member Casipit, to establish a working group to address ANILCA priority issues, to be comprised of Member Casipit, Member Schroeder, Member Phillips (reviewing), Member Kitka, Member Smith, and Member Hernandez. Motion **passed** unanimously.

The workgroup brought information back to the Council on March 2, and the Council had a robust discussion. Motion by Member Casipit, seconded by Patty Phillips, to task the workgroup to complete a writing of a letter/position statement to the Board on topics of continuation of subsistence uses and clarifications on meaningful preference with help from federal staff. Motion **passed** unanimously.

Agency Reports:

Tlingit & Haida: Tony Christianson, Food Security Senior Coordinator, Food Security Effort Report

Hoonah Indian Association: Ian Johnson, Unit 4 Deer Strategy Update

U.S. Forest Service

- Greg Risdahl, Regional Subsistence Program Manager, Regional Subsistence Program report
- Rob Cross, Tongass Subsistence Program Manager, Tongass National Forest Subsistence report
- Jacob Musslewhite, North Zone Subsistence Biologist, Fisheries report
- Kevin Hood, Regional Tribal Relations Specialist, Tribal Relations report
- Barb Miranda, Southeast Alaska Sustainability Strategy status report
- Chad VanOrmer, Deputy Regional Forester, USFS Co-stewardship/Co-management efforts

- Nicole Grewe, Program Manager, Pacific Northwest Research Station (PNW) Juneau, Social Science and Economic Update on PNW projects

Melinda Hernandez-Burke, Native American Affairs Program Coordinator, Bureau of Reclamation WaterSmart Program Funding Opportunity Report

ADF&G: Robin Dublin, Southern Region Program Manager for Subsistence, ADF&G Subsistence Division Report

OSM: Lisa Grediagin, Wildlife Division Supervisor, OSM Agency Report

Future Meeting Dates:

The Council voted to have its fall 2023 meeting October 24 – 26, 2023, in Klawock or Craig as an alternative if challenges in logistics prevent a meeting in Klawock.
The Council voted to have the All Council meeting the week of March 4, 2024 (Anchorage).
The Council voted to have its fall 2024 meeting October 22-24, 2024, in Ketchikan.

_____

DeAnna Perry, Designated Federal Officer
USDA – United States Forest Service

_____

Don Hernandez, Chair
Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

These minutes will be reviewed for approval at the Fall 2023 Meeting of the Southeast Subsistence Regional Advisory Council.

A more detailed report of this meeting, copies of the transcript, and meeting handouts are available upon request. Call Office of Subsistence Management at 1-800-478-1456 or Council Coordinator, DeAnna Perry at 907-209-7817 or email deanna.perry@usda.gov.

Attendance Report Presented to the Southeast Subsistence Regional Advisory Council for their Fall 2023 meeting.

2023 North American Caribou Workshop & Arctic Ungulate Conference

May 8-12, 2023 in Anchorage, AK.

Prepared by Cal Casipit

This joint conference's theme was “Crossing Boundaries". Attendees came from 20 different countries, and over 200 indigenous groups were represented at this conference. The symposium topics were grouped by topic rather then by species such as nutrition and foraging ecology and integrating indigenous and western knowledge. At least 1/3 of the presentations were given by indigenous principle investigators. It was inspiring for an old biologist like me to see and hear of the new cutting edge science being accomplished by these new young indigenous leaders.

The most common concern raised in almost every session was climate change. Its effects are currently being felt throughout the Arctic. The Boreal woodland Caribou, are particularly under threat because of clearcutting, roadbuilding, tar sand extraction, and the resulting forest fragmentation. Moose populations increase as a result of such human activities, the wolves follow the moose, and the wolves find the remaining Caribou easier to hunt than the moose.

The wild / feral Reindeer of Svalbard appear to be changing their diets. Their winter diet in 2022 are similar to their summer diets from 1990 to 2010. Rain on snow events with sub zero temperatures immediately afterwards seem to be more frequent, and cause stress on the population due to their forage hard frozen into ice. It appears that the longer growing season seems to compensate through increased calf survival.

The use of video camera collars on ungulates for various purposes seem to be on the increase. One investigator cautions their use for forage studies. Using tame ungulates with collar cameras, the investigators closely observed them and noted what they were eating. The videos were then given to 4 groups of people (2 groups of undergrads, a group of wildlife biologists, and a group of botanists) to record what was being eaten as recorded by the collar cameras. The principle investigator hypothesized that that the experiment wouldn’t work well, she was surprised at how badly it failed. Observer variation was huge both within and between groups. Lots of information was missed such as number of bites (especially moose – average of 80% of bites missed) and mis-identification of plants being eaten. Applications for the use of video camera collars could be used for habitat selection, behavior, and caving success, but forage studies using them is a challenge.

I participated in an open forum that OSM organized on ungulate management on the final day of the conference. I spoke about some of the challenges that SERAC is dealing with in SE Alaska, that we’ll be talking about tater in this meeting.

One last suggestion was made in this conference that bears repeating: Government and management reports should use the indigenous vocabulary in addition to western names for animals, fish, and place names. This will help open the doors to more TEK. I am heartened to see that some agencies have already started to do this. (Ashley from the Tongass NF in this summer's weekly fisheries reports)

Federal Subsistence Board

1011 East Tudor Road, MS 121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503 - 6199

FISH and WILDLIFE SERVICE
BUREAU of LAND MANAGEMENT
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
BUREAU of INDIAN AFFAIRS

FOREST SERVICE

AUG 21 2023

In Reply Refer To
OSM.23104

Donald Hernandez, Chair
Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
c/o Office of Subsistence Management
1011 E. Tudor Road, M/S 121
Anchorage, AK 99503-6199

Dear Chair Hernandez:

The Federal Subsistence Board (Board) met on January 31–February 3, 2023, in Anchorage, Alaska, to consider fisheries closure reviews and proposed changes to Federal subsistence management regulations for the harvest of fish, shellfish, and wildlife in Federal public lands and waters in Alaska. This letter provides a report on the actions taken by the Board on proposals and closure reviews affecting federally qualified subsistence users.

Section 805(c) of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) provides that the Board will accept the recommendations of a Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council) regarding take unless, (1) the recommendation is not supported by substantial evidence, (2) the recommendation violates recognized principles of fish and wildlife management, or (3) adopting the recommendation would be detrimental to the satisfaction of subsistence needs. When a Council's recommendation is not adopted, the Board is required by Secretarial regulations to set forth the factual basis and reasons for the decision.

The Board acted on 16 fisheries proposals and 19 fisheries closure reviews during the 2023–25 fisheries regulatory cycle, four deferred wildlife proposals WP22-07, WP22-08, WP22-10, and WP22-40 from the 2022–2024 wildlife regulatory cycle, and a threshold assessment of proposal NDP25-01 for rescinding a nonrural determination. The Board agreed with the recommendations of the Regional Advisory Councils (Councils), in whole or with modifications, on all 16 fisheries proposals. The Board accepted the recommendations of the Councils on 17 of 19 fisheries closure reviews. The Board also agreed with the affected Council's recommendations and adopted deferred wildlife proposal WP22-40. Lastly, the Board agreed with the affected Council's recommendation to move forward with a full analysis of the nonrural determination proposal NDP25-01.

Donald Hernandez, Chair

Details of these actions and the Board's deliberations are contained in the meeting transcriptions. Copies of the transcripts may be obtained by calling the toll-free number 1-800-478-1456 and are available online at the Federal Subsistence Management Program website, https://www.doi.gov/subsistence/library/transcripts/federal-subsistence-board.

The Board uses a consensus agenda on those proposals and closure reviews where there is agreement among the affected Council(s), a majority of the Interagency Staff Committee, and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game concerning a proposed regulatory action. These proposals and closure reviews were deemed non-controversial and did not require a separate discussion. The consensus agenda contained one proposal **FP23-20** affecting the Southeast Alaska Region, on which the Board deferred to the Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Southeast Alaska Council) recommendation to support the modification of the customary and traditional use determination for shellfish in the Southeastern and Yakutat Areas to include all residents of Southeast Alaska. The Board adopted **FP23-20**.

The remaining proposals and closures affecting the Southeast Alaska Region appeared on the non-consensus agenda. However, for three of the proposals, the Board took action consistent with the Southeast Alaska Council's recommendations. The Board adopted proposal **FP23-21**, as modified by OSM, to close Kah Sheets Creek to non-federally qualified users from July 1 to July 31, while leaving Kah Sheets Lake open to all users. The Board adopted **FCR23-23** to rescind the closure to subsistence harvest of salmon in the Taku River. The Board's tie vote on **FCR23-24** resulted in retaining the status quo of the closure to non-federally qualified users for Sockeye Salmon in Neva Lake, Neva Creek, and South Creek.

The Board's action differed from the Southeast Alaska Council's recommendations on the following previously-deferred wildlife proposals: **WP22-07**, closing an area on Admiralty Island to non-federally qualified users to the harvest of deer; **WP22-08**, placing restrictions on non-federally qualified users for the harvest of deer in an area in Northeast Chichagof Island; and **WP22-10**, closing an area near Lisianski Strait to the harvest of deer by non-federally qualified users. The Board's actions on these proposals are outlined in the enclosed report.

The Board appreciates your Council's active involvement in and diligence with the regulatory process. The ten Regional Advisory Councils continue to be the foundation of the Federal Subsistence Management Program, and the stewardship shown by the Council Chairs and their representatives at the Board meeting was noteworthy.

If you have any questions regarding the summary of the Board's actions, please contact DeAnna Perry, Council Coordinator, at 907-209-7817 or deanna.perry@usda.gov.

Sincerely,

Anthony Christianson
Chair

Donald Hernandez, Chair

Enclosure

cc: Federal Subsistence Board
Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council members
Office of Subsistence Management
Interagency Staff Committee
Administrative Record

FEDERAL SUBSISTENCE BOARD 805(c) REPORT
January 31–February 3, 2023
Anchorage, AK

Section 805(c) of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act provides that the "Secretary … shall consider the report and recommendations of the regional advisory councils [Councils] concerning the taking of fish and wildlife on the public lands within their respective regions for subsistence uses." The Secretary has delegated authority to issue regulations for the take of fish and wildlife to the Federal Subsistence Board (Board). Pursuant to this language in Section 805(c), the Board defers to the Council's recommendations. However, Section 805(c) also provides that the Board "may choose not to follow any recommendations which [it] determines is not supported by substantial evidence, violates recognized principles of fish and wildlife conservation, or would be detrimental to the satisfaction of subsistence needs." The purpose of this report is to detail how the Board's action differed from the Council's recommendations based on these criteria.

SOUTHEAST AREA FISHERIES PROPOSALS

Regional Proposals

Wildlife Proposal WP22-07—Reduce the harvest limit to 2 bucks to non-federally qualified users on Federal public lands of Admiralty Island draining into Chatham Strait between Point Marsden and Point Gardner

DESCRIPTION: WP22-07 requested that the Federal public lands of Admiralty Island draining into Chatham Strait between Pt. Marsden and Pt. Gardner in Unit 4 be closed to deer hunting Sep. 15-Nov. 30, except to federally qualified subsistence users.

SOUTHEAST ALASKA REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS:

Fall 2021—SUPPORTED WP22-07 WITH MODIFICATION to remove wildlife analysis areas 4044 and 4043 from the proposed closure area.
Fall 2022—SUPPORTED WITH MODIFICATION to remove wildlife analysis areas 4043, 4044, and 4054 from the proposal area and to reduce the harvest limit for non-federally qualified users to two bucks within the remaining area (WAAs 4042, 4055, and 4041).

BOARD ACTION: **REJECTED**

JUSTIFICATION: The Board recognized all the effort that the Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council put into trying to address the concerns of the federally qualified subsistence users in the Southeast Region and to come up with a meaningful priority. The Board acknowledged how geographic isolation, unemployment, high gasoline prices, empty store shelves, and lack of ferry service have had an effect on food security for people living in smaller, more isolated Southeast Alaska communities like Angoon. However, the proposed regulation change does not meet the criteria for a closure or restriction to non-subsistence uses because the existing deer population and harvest survey data shows that:

- (1) The deer population in Unit 4 has remained stable, is the highest in the state, and there are no conservation concerns;
- (2) Subsistence users have been able continue to harvest deer at approximately the same level over the past 20 years; and
- (3) The amount of time it takes for federally qualified subsistence users to harvest deer has not changed.

Wildlife Proposal WP22-08—Reduce the harvest limit for non-federally qualified users to 2 male deer in the Northeast Chichagof Controlled Use Area in Unit 4.

DESCRIPTION: WP22-08 requested that the Northeast Chichagof Controlled Use Area annual deer harvest limit for non-federally qualified users be reduced to two male deer.

SOUTHEAST ALASKA REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS:

Fall 2021—COUNCIL SUPPORTED
Fall 2022—COUNCIL TOOK NO ACTION, maintaining the fall 2021 recommendation**.**

BOARD ACTION: **REJECTED**

JUSTIFICATION: The Board rejected WP22-08 for the same reasons stated for the rejection of WP22-07.

Wildlife Proposal WP22-10—Reduce the deer harvest limit to 4 deer for non-federally qualified users in Lisianski Inlet and Lisianski Strait from Aug. 1-Jan. 31.

DESCRIPTION: WP22-10 requested that the deer harvest limit for non-federally qualified users in Lisianski Inlet and Lisianski Strait be reduced to 4 deer.

SOUTHEAST ALASKA REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS:

Fall 2021—COUNCIL SUPPORTED WITH MODIFICATION to add language "On Federal public lands within drainages flowing into Lisianski Inlet, Lisianski Strait, and Stag Bay south of a line connecting Soapstone and Column points and north of a line connecting Point Theodore and Point Uray, non-federally qualified users may harvest up to 3 bucks."
Fall 2022—COUNCIL SUPPORTED WITH MODIFICATION to reduce the harvest limit for non-federally qualified users to two bucks (from 3) (and maintain the area recommended in Fall 2021).

BOARD ACTION: **REJECTED**

JUSTIFICATION: The Board rejected WP22-10 for the same reasons stated for the rejection of WP22-07.

Federal Subsistence Board
Meeting Advisory

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Bureau of Land Management
National Park Service
Bureau of Indian Affairs

Forest Service

For Immediate Release:
August 3, 2023

Contact: Robbin La Vine
(907) 786-3353 or (800) 478-1456
robbin_lavine@fws.gov

Results from the Federal Subsistence Board Work Session

During its August 2-3, 2023, work session, the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) discussed and approved responses to Regional Advisory Council (Councils) FY22 annual reports, reviewed Council recommendations for changes to Council charters, and received briefings on updates to the Regional Advisory Council Correspondence Policy and a letter from the Southeast Council to the Board on transboundary river watersheds.

The Board voted to recommend the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture (Secretaries) adopt the Councils' requests to modify their Council charters s to add language authorizing a non-voting young leader seat to the Membership and Designation Section of all ten Councils' charters. The Board also voted to recommend that the Secretaries adopt charter language submitted by the Northwest Arctic Council to improve geographic representation on the Council. The Board also approved individual customary and traditional use determination proposals ICTP23-01 and ICTP23-02 pertaining to areas managed by the National Park Service in Unit 13.

In addition to the public work session, the Board held an executive session on Thursday, August 3, 2023. The purpose of this meeting was to develop recommendations to the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture for appointments to the Regional Advisory Councils. A summary of the executive session will be made available to the Councils and, upon request, to the public.

Information about the Federal Subsistence Management Program may be found on the web at www.doi.gov/subsistence or by visiting www.facebook.com/subsistencealaska.

Missing out on the latest Federal subsistence issues? If you'd like to receive emails and notifications on the Federal Subsistence Management Program, you may subscribe for regular updates by emailing fws-fsb-subsistence-request@lists.fws.gov.

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This document has been cleared for public release #3103022023.

Federal Subsistence Board

1011 East Tudor Road, MS 121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503 - 6199

FISH and WILDLIFE SERVICE
BUREAU of LAND MANAGEMENT
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AUG 02 2023

OSM 23072

Donald Hernandez, Chair
Southeast Alaska Subsistence
Regional Advisory Council
c/o Office of Subsistence Management
1011 East Tudor Road, MS 121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199

Dear Chair Hernandez:

This letter responds to the Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council's (Council) fiscal year 2022 Annual Report. The Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture have delegated to the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) the responsibility to respond to these reports. The Board appreciates your effort in developing the Annual Report. Annual Reports allow the Board to become aware of the issues outside of the regulatory process that affect subsistence users in your region. We value this opportunity to review the issues concerning your region.

1. Transboundary River Mining – Impacts to Subsistence Users

a. Communication to Alaska Lt. Governor and Secretary of State:

The Board in its FY2021 Annual Report Reply requested that the Council resubmit their concerns on transboundary mining in a new letter to the Board, which will then elevate the letter to the U.S. Department of State. The letter contains a request that the U.S. Department of State and the Alaska Lieutenant Governor take the lead in collaborating with Canada to address the impacts of transboundary mining on the Taku, Stikine, and Unuk rivers. The Council continues to receive new information on the impacts of mining on resources utilized by subsistence users, and the Council anticipates that this issue will become more complex in the future. The Council has submitted a follow-up letter to once again voice concerns to those who have the authority to take the action needed to protect the rivers that Southeast coastal communities rely on for sustainable resources.

b. Support of Salmon Beyond Borders Effort:

Most recently, the Council received notification of an effort by Salmon Beyond Borders to ask the current Biden Administration, United State government, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, and the Canadian government for action on this issue. The Salmon Beyond Borders representative shared resolutions passed in communities across Southeast Alaska over the last year, including Pelican, Petersburg, Sitka, Craig, Wrangell, and Ketchikan. It is a concern for all of Southeast Alaska. In addition to the steps this Council has taken in the past to advocate for protection of Southeast fish and wildlife resources from the negative impacts of largescale mining in the transboundary rivers area, the Council would like to also add its voice to support this movement by Salmon Beyond Border and bring more attention to this crucial issue.

Request to the Board:

1) *Please keep this Council informed of any responses to the Council's letter to the Board regarding its request that the U.S. Department of State and the Alaska Lieutenant Governor take the lead in collaborating with Canada to address the transboundary mining issue.*
2) *Advise how the Council may proceed in its support of the efforts of Salmon Beyond Borders, within the correspondence policy, with forwarding the transboundary mining concerns to other entities, such as:*
   - *Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture*
   - *U.S. Department of State:*
     - *Assistant Secretary of State, Oceans and International Environmental Scientific Affairs and Special Envoy for Biodiversity and Water Resources*
     - *Director, Office of Canadian Affairs*
     - *U.S. International Joint Commission Members (Messrs. Sisson, Yohe, and Corwin)*

Response:

Thank you for persevering in your efforts to address the potential impacts of transboundary mining on the Taku, Stikine, and Unuk rivers in Southeast Alaska. Unfortunately, as you know, the Board did not receive a response from our January 2017 letters to Lieutenant Governor Byron Mallott or the U.S. Department of State, asking them to take the lead in collaborating with Canada to address the transboundary mining issue. At the time of this reply, the Board will be taking up your letter expressing concern on the transboundary mining issue at the summer 2023 work session, and we will let your Council know the results of this discussion at your fall 2023 meeting.

Regarding your question about how to support the efforts of Salmon Beyond Borders, according to the Board's Council Correspondence Policy, the Council may write letters of support, resolutions, letters offering comment or recommendations, ANILCA §810 comments (subsistence and land use decisions), and any other correspondence to any government agency or any Tribal or private organization or individual within the United States. If you wish to write to any elected or politically appointed person in Federal agencies, you must request that the Board forward your concerns.

Specific to your support for Salmon Beyond Borders, you have a number of options available for action. Your Council is a public forum for the expression of opinions and recommendations on any matter that relates to subsistence use of fish and wildlife in your region. You may continue to invite Salmon Beyond Borders to your meetings to learn more about their reports, actions, and resources. You may also forward information shared during your meetings, through the Board, to the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture and to all the positions you have listed in this report.

2. <u>Support awareness for bycatch issues</u>

The Council is aware of the controversial issue surrounding bycatch and is distressed because this issue affects the salmon that our communities depend upon for food, their livelihood, and cultural significance. The Council received testimony at its fall 2022 meeting regarding the inaction by the North Pacific Fishery Management Council (NPFMC) this past June, regarding the bycatch issue. The Council was informed that after days of public testimony at the NPFMC meeting, ultimately there was no additional reduction to the bycatch limits of the trawl fleet and no effort was made to reduce interception. The Council also received a copy of the letter from four other Regional Advisory Councils requesting reduction in Chinook and Chum salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Island commercial fishery and representation of subsistence resource users on the NPFMC. The Southeast Council would like to lend its support to their fellow Regional Advisory Councils for their specific bycatch concerns and to recognize that, although the problem may vary from region to region, this is a statewide issue.

For Southeast Alaska, one of the bycatch concerns revolves around transboundary mining and the trawl interception of Chinook Salmon in the Gulf of Alaska (of which 45% is believed by some to be Canada fish). It is anticipated that during North Pacific Salmon Treaty discussions, Canada may demand an increase in fish. The Council would also like to see information shared with National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration – National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA-NMFS). Even though the management of Halibut does not fall under the jurisdiction of the Board, subsistence users depend on Halibut to supplement their subsistence lifestyle and it would help spotlight the issue of bycatch across all agencies involved in the management of resources, specifically Chinook Salmon and Halibut.

Lastly, the Council wholeheartedly feels that subsistence representation on the NPFMC is vital to ensuring subsistence needs are explicitly considered in the management of commercial fisheries where management actions impact subsistence resources.

<u>Request to the Board</u>: The Council asks the Board to forward the Council's letter in support of the other four Councils' bycatch letter to NOAA-NMFS.

Response:

The Board appreciates the Council's concern over salmon bycatch in Gulf of Alaska fisheries. The Board is encouraged by the recent addition of a designated Tribal seat on the NPFMC Advisory Panel, which should improve representation for the concerns of subsistence users in

NPFMC-managed fisheries. The Advisory Panel's tribal seat is held by Shawaan Jackson-Gamble of Kake, a rural community within the Southeast region. We encourage you to communicate your concerns to Mr. Jackson-Gamble so that he may bring them forward to the NPFMC. The Council may work with your Coordinator to ensure your letter is forwarded. The letter was instructional for us, and we are certain that it will be useful to NOAA-NMFS.

3. <u>Unguided sports fishermen issues</u>

The Council continues to receive information and testimony about the harmful consequences regarding unguided sport fishing. This issue is of such importance that the Council recently recommended that fisheries closures for some Southeast waters (Neva, Kah Sheets Creek) remain in place because of the increased competition with unguided sport fishing. The Council recommendation was based on the years of public testimony that unguided sport fishing is having a significant impact on resources that are used by subsistence users; however, assessing these impacts is difficult.

Through authorities given by the Board, this Council, through its local and regional participation authority in ANILCA §805, has made multiple attempts to address unguided sports fishermen issues through the Alaska Board of Fisheries process, including but not limited to:

a. *2014: Submitted two State proposals (one for freshwater, one for marine waters) to address abuses to sport fishing bag and possession limits by nonresident anglers and the fear that this is contributing to conservation issues on some streams.*
b. *2017: Submitted two State proposals (#195 & #196) to establish nonresident annual limits for Sockeye Salmon in Southeast Alaska salt and freshwaters and to mandate recording of annual limits (mail-out statewide harvest survey is inadequate)*
c. *2018: Submitted comments on its 2017 State proposals, stating "with the growing number [of] lodges and the 'unguided' skiff rentals, the non-resident angler is taking unaccounted salmon from our streams . . . non-resident anglers have no obligation to report any amount of take . . . the Council feels strongly about this problem and would like the Alaska Board of Fisheries to address this to help make accountability more accurate."*
d. *2019: Comment letter sent to Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) in opposition to the State's proposed elimination of the freshwater sport fish guide logbooks program in 2019, stressing the importance of gathering information and monitoring angler activity and fish harvests. The lack of data will be detrimental to management of these resources.*
e. *2020: Submitted State proposal (#143, covering both fresh and marine waters) requesting that all non-resident sport fishermen in Southeast/Yakutat areas be required to complete and submit a logbook of all fish and shellfish harvested with an evaluation of harvest data after six years to determine if the perceived increase in competition or use exists.*
f. *2021: Council's Vice Chair attended Alaska Board of Fisheries meeting to deliver in-person comments on 20 State fish proposals, including the five fish proposals submitted initially by the Council (including #143 mentioned above).*

The Council has participated numerous times in the public process to effectuate change, however, the actions of the Alaska Board of Fisheries have not addressed these concerns. The Council remains concerned about the lack of data available to accurately ascertain the impacts to subsistence resources by unguided fishermen. Established limits and improved recordkeeping are sound fish and wildlife management practices and are consistent with ANILCA Title VIII. The Council feels that absent adequate reporting, the current process of obtaining limited data from unguided fishermen is making resources vulnerable to overharvest by this user group.

Request to the Board: The Council wants to know what other mechanisms could be taken to elevate this important issue. What procedures can the Council take to address sportfishing bag and possession limits and implement harvest data log books? The Council requests the Board's help in identifying other means to collect crucial data required to accurately assess the impact of unguided sport fishing on the resources throughout Southeast Alaska.

Response:

Thank you for elevating the concern about nonresident anglers in Southeast Alaska through both the State and Federal regulatory processes. The categories of proposals submitted to restrict non-resident angler daily, weekly, or annual harvest limits, or to require additional accounting and reporting through logbooks, creel surveys, self-reporting, check stations, airport inspections, etc., has been in front of the Alaska Board of Fisheries (BOF) in most regions of Alaska at some point in time and multiple times in certain regions. The BOF has disagreed with the concerns of the Council through their opposition to all proposals for waters outside Federal subsistence fisheries management jurisdiction. The ADF&G comments on these types of proposals indicate they too disagree with the Council on these issues.

The only mechanism to govern a nonresident sport fishery in waters outside the jurisdiction of the Board is through the regulatory body that governs those waters, which is the BOF. The Board supports your Council's efforts and encourages you to continue to seek changes to State managed fisheries outside of Federal subsistence fisheries jurisdiction, where the Board can only make recommendations. The Council may wish to keep in mind when submitting future BOF proposals that proposals submitted with conservation concerns as justification are evaluated by the BOF and Board, but if there is a commercial fishery that targets the same stocks that nonresident anglers pursue, then fisheries managers and regulatory boards are very unlikely to believe that there is a conservation concern.

The Council could update their priority information needs for the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program to highlight conducting creel surveys in the freshwaters of U.S. Forest Service lands in Southeast Alaska, specifically where testimony received by the Council has identified systems of concern due to nonresident angler activities. The Council meeting transcripts would help develop a list of systems under federal subsistence jurisdiction that have received complaints on record from federally qualified subsistence users and the public. Another option would be to request funding to send Council members to local State Advisory Committees (ACs) to present the Council's case and build support. Your Council could encourage the local ACs submit or

cosponsor a proposal to the BOF to restrict or monitor nonresident anglers in the State's sport fisheries of concern in Southeast Alaska.

4. Commercial fisheries impacts to subsistence fisheries

Council Engagement: *The Council remains concerned about limitations on shrimp harvesting set by the State of Alaska under the guise of 'conservation concerns.' The actions by the State in recent years, such as the limit of two five-gallon buckets of shrimp per trip placed on subsistence harvesters, is negatively impacting subsistence users. As mentioned in its FY-2018 Annual Report, there seems to be a reallocation of resources from the subsistence harvester to the commercial industry. This is contrary to Tier II of the State subsistence regulations, which provides that if there is not enough resource to meet everyone's needs, then elimination/restriction starts with other user groups before the subsistence harvest is restricted. Instead of enforcing laws that prohibits illegal use of subsistence harvest, additional restrictions have been placed on the legitimate or legal subsistence harvesters in recent years, making it difficult to meet their subsistence needs.*

Impacts created by commercial fisheries on subsistence shrimp continue, and the State should recognize shrimp as a subsistence resource when managing it. This Council continues to support proposals submitted by Southeast communities for commercial closures of shellfish to help protect access to resources vital to subsistence users. The Council has submitted and commented on State proposals and has sent representatives to Alaska Board of Fisheries meetings to deliver the Council's perspective on numerous issues regarding State management in hopes that the State would appreciate the relationship between users and resources. This approach resulted in successful outcome, as mostly recently, the Alaska Board of Fisheries adopted one of the proposals supported by the Council.

Request to the Board: The Council asks the Board to continue its support and funding for the Council's engagement in the State regulatory process, including attendance at Alaska Board of Fisheries/Game meetings.

Research Needed to Document Commercial Fishery Impacts to Subsistence Resources: *The Council heard testimony about commercial boats setting crab pots in bays, which negatively affect the amount of crab available for subsistence. According to anecdotal evidence, this practice has been ongoing for several years. The Council would like to know if research can be done to document effects of the commercial fishing fleets on key subsistence resources. It would be helpful to identify the user groups that are is setting pots and how much is being harvested so that there can be effective management of the resource. As mentioned previously in this report, the Council has spent a lot of time supporting proposals for commercial closures for shellfish around communities to protect Federally qualified subsistence users' access to subsistence resources; however, further action needs to be taken to document perceived impacts. Additional studies and research may be the only way to gather this data.*

Request to the Board: The Council would like to learn of any opportunities through the Federal Subsistence Management Program (FSMP) to document the commercial fishery impacts on

subsistence resources and identify available means to gather the data and vital information necessary to effectively manage these resources for all user groups.

Response:

Council Engagement: The Board recognizes the concern with the allocation of shrimp in Southeast Alaska, especially in areas where their abundance is declining. Currently, there is no closed season and no limit on subsistence and personal use harvest of shrimp throughout most of Southeast Alaska. The exception is in the Sitka management area of District 13, where the limit is ten gallons of shrimp. However, there are several areas where subsistence and personal use harvest are closed due to low abundance and recruitment of shrimp. Many of these areas, such as Hoonah Sound and Tenakee Inlet, have historically been important sources of shrimp for subsistence users. Currently, all areas closed to subsistence and personal use of shrimp are also closed to commercial harvest, but stocks in some areas have been slow to recover.

As the Council notes, changes in the management of the shrimp fishery must occur through the Alaska Board of Fisheries regulatory process. The Board encourages the Council to continue to take an active role representing subsistence users in the State regulatory process and believes that it is an integral part of its role. Council requests for travel to attend Alaska Board of Fisheries and Board of Game meetings should be submitted with justification to OSM Assistant Regional Director (ARD) with the assistance of your Council Coordinator. Support for Council members' travel will have to be determined by OSM ARD on a case-by-case basis.

Research Needed to Document Commercial Fishery Impacts to Subsistence Resources: Typically, any such assessment would be performed in the context of other Program activities, such as an analysis of a regulatory proposal. However, it may be possible to seek the assistance of Program staff if the Council has concerns about a specific area, resource, or issue. Staff can request data from the State, such as harvest and effort information, population surveys, etc.

Conducting original research or studies of commercial harvest in marine waters is usually beyond the scope of the Program's mission and funding, so opportunities to do so are very limited. However, the Council may want to consider writing to organizations who do conduct research, such as Alaska Department of Fish and Game or University of Alaska Southeast, to communicate your concerns about data gaps and your desire to see research projects developed that address them.

5. <u>Youth input/representation on Regional Advisory Councils</u>

The Council has raised the subject of youth engagement with FSMP in its FY-2018 and FY-2019 Annual Reports and would like to reiterate its importance once again. This Council has received public testimony from young people at its meetings for years. Students from the University of Alaska Southeast Procedures and Practicum Class from Sitka have attended the Council meetings for several years and also attended Board meetings to better understand the role that the public has in the FSMP. The Council has enjoyed engaging with these young people and have benefited from their insight on a variety of subsistence, resource, and climate crisis matters. The Council feels it is essential for younger subsistence users to learn about the Federal regulatory process so that this new generation of emerging leaders can understand and

participate in the public decision-making process effectively. The Council would like funding to be set aside to support groups of youth, such as the Sitka students, for continued travel and attendance to FSMP meetings.

Further, the Council would like to advocate for a 'youth representative seat' on Regional Advisory Councils. This would allow an interested student to participate in the work of his/her Regional Advisory Council. Currently, well-qualified applicants who may, because of their age, have fewer years of experience so far in his/her career/leadership, are unable to compete with the older candidates for a seat on the Councils. Are we ignoring an opportunity to add more generational diversity on the Council, which would help train the next group of leaders and provide additional perspectives? The current Council member selection criteria may be a hurdle for achieving age diversity on the Council, and the Council would like FSMP to remove barriers, as appropriate, to allow for youth engagement in the Regional Advisory Council work.

1) *<u>Request to the Board</u>: Please explore and identify sources for funding student groups to participate in the work of the FSMP, including but not limited to travel and associated costs to attend subject-specific subsistence meetings (such as special actions, etc.), Regional Advisory Council meetings, and Board meetings*
2) *Please explore options for younger people to serve as Council members and/or consider allowing them to participate in a non-voting, developmental position on the Council*
3) *Advise the Council how they may implement youth representation on the Council*

Response:

The Board commends the Council for continuous advocacy for youth engagement with Federal Subsistence Management Program. Over the years the Board has been supportive of youth participation in Board and Council meetings and has been interested in hearing their experiences, perspectives, and opinions on various subsistence topics. As we resume in-person meetings after the pandemic and OSM continues to restore and build its capacity, the Board will continue to support youth engagement in subsistence issues, projects, and meetings. However, funding a youth program or committing funding to support travel of youth groups is not a part of the Federal Subsistence Management Program operations or budget. The main responsibility of the Board and Federal Subsistence Management Program is to administer the subsistence taking and uses of fish and wildlife on public lands and promulgating related regulations.

One of the avenues for local, rural students to engage with subsistence resource monitoring and management is through science camps and paid internships funded by the Federal Subsistence Management Program's Partners for Fisheries Monitoring Program.

Additionally, the local Tribes and non-profit organization that would like to sponsor youth travelling to meetings and learning about the regulatory process can apply for various grants, such as:

- Rural Alaska Community Action Program, Inc. Youth Development and Culture Grant Program
- Alaska Conservation Foundation grantmaking program

The Board shares the Council's desire to have age diversity on all Councils. The Board accepts applications from the rural users to serve on the Councils including young adults. If an applicant has been involved in subsistence and/or commercial/sport activities and has a knowledge of regional fish and wildlife resources, as well as shows the qualities of an emerging leader and good communicator, then they can be appointed to serve on a Council as long as they are 18 or older. There are already some examples within the Federal Subsistence Management Program when a 19-year-old and a 22-year-old had been appointed by the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture to serve on a Council.

This fiscal year (FY-2023), several Councils across Alaska put forward a request to establish a non-voting "youth representative seat" or "a young adult developmental seat" on their Councils and to add corresponding language to their charters. The Board will review the Councils' charter change requests at its August 2023 meeting and, if it finds them justifiable and with merit, will forward these requests to the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture for further consideration and decision.

Additionally, the Board appreciates the Council sharing information in your FY 2022 Annual Report on other issues significant to the Council: (6) meaningful priority and the interpretation of ANILCA §804 and §815(3); (7) indigenous co-management of resources; (8) adaptive management techniques to be used for young growth harvests; (9) lack of law enforcement for fisheries; (10) analyses content – improvement suggestions; and (11) climate change. The Board is also thankful to the Council for providing regional information on the fish and wildlife populations and the harvests in the Southeast Alaska Region (12). We recognize that you are uniquely positioned to offer first alerts to changing conditions and important trends that impact subsistence in your region. The Board appreciates and values the traditional knowledge, observations, and expertise you share and will direct staff to track this issue in the future. With this information, the Board is better prepared to make informed decisions.

In closing, I want to thank you and your Council for your continued involvement and diligence in matters regarding the Federal Subsistence Management Program. I speak for the entire Board in expressing our appreciation for your efforts and am confident that the Federally qualified subsistence users of the Southeast Alaska Region are well represented through your work.

Sincerely,

Anthony Christianson
Chair

cc: Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Federal Subsistence Board
Office of Subsistence Management
DeAnna Perry, Council Coordinator, U.S. Forest Service
Interagency Staff Committee

Benjamin Mulligan, Deputy Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Mark Burch, Special Project Coordinator, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Administrative Record

Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

Don Hernandez, Chairman
1011 E. Tudor Road, MS121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

IN REPLY REFER TO:
RAC/SE22140.DP

JAN 20 2023

Office of Subsistence Management
1011 E. Tudor Road, M/S 121
Anchorage, AK 99503-6199

USDA - USFS Regional Office
ATTN: Regional Forester Dave Schmid
P.O. Box 21628
Juneau, AK 99801-1807

USDA – USFS Tongass National Forest
ATTN: Forest Supervisor Earl Stewart
648 Mission Street, Suite #110
Ketchikan, AK 99901

National Park Service - Alaska Region
ATTN: Regional Director Sarah Creachbaum
240 W 5th Ave
Anchorage, AK 99501

National Park Service – Glacier Bay
ATTN: Superintendent Phillip Hooge
Glacier Bay National Park & Preserve
PO Box 140
Gustavus, AK 99826

To Interested Parties:

The Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council) supports responsible management of natural resources throughout southeast Alaska; specifically, those that are utilized by indigenous and rural residents for their subsistence needs.

The Council represents subsistence harvesters of fish and wildlife resources on Federal public lands and waters in Southeast Alaska. It was established by the authority in Title VIII of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) and is chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act. Section 805 of ANILCA and the Council's charter establish its authority to initiate, review and evaluate regulations, policies, management plans, and other matters related to subsistence within the southeast Alaska region. The Council provides a forum for the expression of opinions and recommendations regarding any matter related to the subsistence uses of fish and wildlife within the region.

The Council also reviews resource management actions occurring outside their regions that may impact subsistence resources critical to communities served by the Council. Over the last several years, the Council has learned of meaningful opportunities for indigenous organizations and partnerships to actively participate in resource management. The Council would like to formally enumerate its support for local and regional indigenous/cooperative resource management in Southeast and looks forward to supporting co-management opportunities that are present under existing regulations.

1. **Why co-management?**

The Council has found, through testimony and deliberations at its meetings that co-management strengthens sustainable management of wild renewable resources, engages communities in stewardship of those resources, and results in overall improvement and acceptance of needed local strategies to maintain those wild renewable resources. This is because localizing natural resource monitoring leans on the knowledge of that place, puts money into the local community through local hire, and increases trust between managing entities and local user groups. Some local entities, Federal agencies are already moving toward addressing local concerns and needs under co-management, which some define as unique partnerships between Tribal governments, Federal government agencies, state agencies, Alaska Native corporations, and environmental non-governmental agencies. These groups have come together in a unified effort that strives to provide support to Alaska Native communities through the incorporation of local Indigenous Knowledge in the monitoring, protection, restoration, and decision-based co-management of traditional lands.

Since the inception of federal management of fish and wildlife on Federal public lands, federally recognized Tribes in Southeast Alaska have been important participants in the Federal Subsistence Management Program. In Southeast Alaska, tribes regularly comment on regulatory proposals that come before the Council, and they provide information on the state of subsistence in their traditional territories. Tribes actively cooperated in Tribal Government-to-Government or ANCSA (Alaska Native Claim Settlement Act) Consultation opportunities and dedicated tribal liaison Orville Lind, and with the Council in addressing proposed changes to the Roadless

Rule which has served Tongass communities very well. Tribes have been active participants in Forest Service and National Park Service land use planning and actions. They have also addressed herring depletion and other issues important to their members.

The Council has had a very positive relationship with Tribes and has supported cooperative fisheries harvest and escapement data gathering/analysis projects with Tribes. In recent years, Tribes are moving effectively to reestablish indigenous management of the traditional territories that have been theirs under traditional law. Tribes and tribal citizens are organizing through the Seacoast Indigenous Guardians Network project, the Sustainable Southeast Partnership, the Women's Earth and Climate Action Network, and other groups to prepare for a more active land and resource management responsibility.

In its role of providing a forum to gather and discuss matters related to subsistence, the Council has heard from these groups. At this time, our responsibility under our Federal Advisory Committee Act charter is to report what we have learned about this movement toward co-management to Office of Subsistence Management (OSM), USDA-Forest Service (USFS), and the National Park Service (NPS), and to suggest near-term program changes that may enhance subsistence protections. The Council also embraces our responsibility to develop a policy direction on how co-management might take place in our region by including more involvement by local Tribes. Increasing indigenous involvement in management plans is a natural progression of the previous efforts made to build capacity in the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program and consultations with the Departments of Interior and Agriculture for policy changes.

2. **Council has authority to support co-management and to recommend management changes to OSM, FS, and NPS**

Under ANILCA Sections 801(1) and 805(a)(3), the Council has the authority to provide recommendations on management of fish and wildlife resources within the region and this extends to co-management of these resources. The Council has regularly provided its recommendations on fish and wildlife management proposals, rural determinations, Forest Service management plans, program customary and traditional use determinations, extra-territorial jurisdiction, cultural/special use permits and regulations governing ceremonial use (Khu.éex') of fish and wildlife resources, and other matters.

Section 805 of ANILCA grants broad authority to evaluate proposals, policies, plans, provide for public participation and to report our activities to the secretaries of Interior and Agriculture. We respect the limitations to our authority dealing with the taking of fish and wildlife under Section 805 (a)(3)(C); however, to fulfill the Council's authority, as assigned in Section 805(3)(C) and (D), the Council looks forward to supporting co-management opportunities that exist under existing regulations.

Additionally, ANILCA 802(3) dictates except as otherwise provided by this Act or other Federal laws, Federal land managing agencies, in managing subsistence activities on the public lands and in protecting the continued viability of all wild renewable resources in Alaska, shall cooperate

with adjacent landowners and land managers, including Native Corporations, appropriate State and Federal agencies and other nations.

3. History of the Federal Subsistence Management Program (FSMP) and request to examine greater incorporation of Tribes in management activities

Federal management of subsistence fish and wildlife resources on Federal public land has been in place since 1990 when the State of Alaska failed to comply with ANILCA provisions to provide a rural preference for subsistence. Few of us at the time thought that the Federal Subsistence Management Program would become a virtually permanent Federal responsibility. At this 32-year mark, the Council continues to support the examination of management structures that have been implemented and to recommend incremental changes in Federal management of subsistence harvest and land management activities. The Council has extensive experience in supporting the gathering of field data, the complex land management issues that exist in southeast Alaska, and the Council has worked productively with our region's 20 Federally recognized tribal communities, as well as with the Central Council of Tlingit and Haida Tribes of Alaska (CCTHITA).

Over this 32-year time period, the Council has not just supported Tribes, but have actively sought after co-management with Tribes. The Council supported 14 fisheries monitoring projects undertaken with Hydaburg Cooperative Association, Chilkoot Indian Association, Hoonah Indian Association, Klawock Heenya Corporation, Organized Village of Kake, Ketchikan Indian Community, Sitka Tribe of Alaska, Angoon Community Association, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Takshanuk Watershed Council, and Skagway Traditional Council. These fisheries projects take place in the following areas in Southeast Alaska: Neva Lake, Kanalku Lake, Klag Lake, Kook Lake, Sitkoh Lake, Redoubt Lake, Falls Lake, Klawock Lake, Eek Lake, Hetta Lake, Hatchery Creek, Gut Bay, Unuk River, and Northern Southeast (Eulachon project).

The FSMP has supported subsistence harvest surveys in most of our region's communities. The Council led a multi-year planning effort concerning Prince of Wales Island deer strategy by forming a formal subcommittee for public process. The cooperative monitoring and subsistence use projects undertaken with Southeast Alaska indigenous communities have been particularly successful, such as the Southeast Alaska Sea Otter Commission co-management Tribal group, Southeast Alaska Tribal Oceans Research, which collects and assesses shellfish to better manage the resource, as well as Sitka Tribe's work through Southeast Alaska Tribal Ocean Research.

These co-management projects have been cost effective and have resulted in tribal capacity building and the Council would like to request that land management agencies examine their programs to identify additional opportunities for greater incorporation of Tribes in management activities.

4. Land Ownership under Traditional Law

The Council considers that all Southeast Alaska, including all Federal land in the Tongass National Forest, Glacier Bay National Park, the Admiralty Island and Misty Fjords national

monuments, and other Federal land designations to be Haa Aaní (our land), traditional and tribal clan territories, also known as Federal public lands under ANILCA.

The Council notes that traditional Native land ownership is well documented in kwaan and clan traditional law and in documentation studies done by Goldschmidt and Haas in 1946. Traditional ownership boundaries have been reaffirmed in tribal community studies undertaken with many of our region's tribes since the passage of ANILCA. This is to say that clan and kwaan boundaries are generally known and established. Under traditional law, access to owned land and harvest of natural resources was controlled by the owning clan as with other At'oowu (something owned or purchased). Co-management acknowledges this Tribal stewardship and knowledge of the land since time immemorial.

5. Tribal land issues in our region need to be addressed

The Council believes that the Federal government's approach to managing the land, water, and fish and wildlife resources of our region should address and engage tribal co-management in protecting the continued viability of fish and wildlife resources on their traditional territories and the public lands of Southeast Alaska. The Council's long-term goal is to enhance hands-on land and resource management activities in our region by including input from the tribal entities that traditionally owned Haa Aaní. This change would be similar to changes that have taken place where tribes actively manage land and resources with limited technical oversight by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. It is also similar to the Federal government's trust obligations to tribal entities, which now effectively manage health, housing, and other trust obligations and to the empowerment of tribal courts.

6. Existing indigenous/cooperative management activities

Over the past year and a half, the Council has heard from the Seacoast Indigenous Guardians Network, the Southeast Alaska Sustainability Partnership, the Women's Earth and Climate Action Network, and other groups. Very broadly, these groups support co-management of our region's natural resources and insuring subsistence food security. We support these ongoing efforts and encourage future food sovereignty concepts.

Examples of informal co-management from Federally recognized Tribes are the Hoonah Native Forest Partnership, where communities and landowners are working together to collect data and make decisions about what can happen across that landscape and Keex' Kwaan Community Forest Partnership, a science-based, landscape scale, community forest approach to watershed management in the Tlingit village of Kake, Alaska. These co-management opportunities have progressed through capacity building and have resulted in the Tribe making decisions in that project area.

7. Request for active engagement by OSM, USFS, and NPS with southeast Alaska Tribes concerning subsistence management

In the short and near term, the Council requests OSM, USFS, and NPS, as our region's lead Federal agencies, to actively engage our region's Tribes in co-management agreements

concerning **subsistence research and planning** as well as **active subsistence management**. We call on OSM to enter into co-management agreements with our region's Tribes to 1) monitor the status of fish and wildlife populations and their harvests used for subsistence, 2) analyze regulatory proposals that may be submitted to OSM and the Council, 3) issue licenses and permits that may be required, 4) engage their constituents on management issues. OSM and USFS should also enter into co-management agreements to address the looming threat posed to the continuation of the opportunity for subsistence uses to address climate change and environmental justice and looming threats from resultant pressure on subsistence resources identified in ANILCA 801(3) as the "continuation of the opportunity for subsistence uses of resources on public and other lands in Alaska is threatened by the increasing population of Alaska, with resultant pressure on subsistence resources, by sudden decline in the populations of some wildlife species which are crucial subsistence resources, by increased accessibility of remote areas containing subsistence resources, and by taking of fish and wildlife in a manner inconsistent with recognized principles of fish and wildlife management."

The Council would like to see funding for Tribes to engage with the Federal government on co-management opportunities. Many Tribes rely on grant funds, but it is not known if there are funds available to pay for tribal staff to engage in this type of work. The Council would like to encourage the exploration of the possibility of agreements between Federally Recognized Tribes and OSM. The Council would like to see the FSMP help Tribes to secure funding to have staff follow through on this engagement as it recognizes that if Tribes are asked to be a partner to an agreement, they should receive the resources to fulfill the agreement.

8. **Request for active engagement by USFS and NPS with Southeast Alaska Tribes concerning cooperative and co-management for land management**

In the short and near term, the Council calls on USFS and NPS to also enter cooperative co-management agreements with our region's Tribes on all matters concerning **land management of traditional lands**. The goal of these agreements should be driven by the community and would include space for co-decision making and extensive local resource monitoring. These could include delegating authority to prepare review materials for Federal plans and land use actions, to perform data gathering on forest resources, to assess and implement restoration activities, and to enable tribes to become effective guardians of public land resources. These agreements will require a long view on meeting the gaps of communities, Tribes, and Federal entities. Both agencies should recruit qualified tribal residents to their internship programs to grow a new generation of natural resource managers.

In conclusion, the Council is appreciative of the 32-year-old Federal Subsistence Management Program in Southeast Alaska and believes that incorporating our region's Tribes in active land and resource management provides meaningful opportunities for Alaska Federally qualified subsistence users residing within the region to contribute in a meaningful way to the protection of subsistence resources on Federal public lands and will result in greatly improved management in our region.

The Council would like to emphasize its strong support for local and regional indigenous/cooperative resource management in Southeast Alaska and looks forward to supporting co-management opportunities that are present under existing regulations.

If you have any questions regarding this letter, they can be addressed through our Council Coordinator DeAnna Perry at 907-209-7817 or dlperry@usda.gov.

Sincerely,

Donald Hernandez
Chair Regional Advisory Council
Southeast Alaska Region

cc: Federal Subsistence Board
Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Members
Office of Subsistence Management
Greg Risdahl, Subsistence Program Leader Alaska Region 10, USDA – Forest Service
Interagency Staff Committee
Southcentral Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Kodiak/Aleutians Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Seward Peninsula Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Northwest Arctic Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
North Slope Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Benjamin Mulligan, Deputy Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Mark Burch, Special Projects Coordinator, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Administrative Record

Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

Don Hernandez, Chairman
1011 E. Tudor Road, MS121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199

In Reply Refer To:
RAC.SE.DP.23001

MAY 12 2023

Anthony Christianson, Chair
Federal Subsistence Board
c/o Office of Subsistence Management
1011 East Tudor Road, Mail Stop 121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Dear Chairman Christianson:

I am writing to you on behalf of the Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council), to express our continuing concerns for the protection of subsistence fishery resources in international Transboundary River watersheds of the Taku, Stikine, and Unuk Rivers that originate in British Columbia and flow into Southeast Alaska. In a previous letter, dated January 24, 2017, the Council informed the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) that it was encouraged by reports that there had been communications between former Lt. Governor Byron Mallott and Canadian officials regarding interest in and cooperation towards protecting transboundary river watersheds. The Council asked the Board to forward a letter to Lt. Governor Mallott, sharing the Council's concerns about transboundary mining issues, with a request that the Lt. Governor's office send a letter to the Department of State, expressing his desire to work in conjunction with the Alaska Congressional Delegation to advance this issue at the federal and international levels. The Board forwarded the Council's letter of concern and request to the Lt. Governor in 2017, however we did not receive a response. Since that time there has been a change in administration to Governor Dunleavy and Lt. Governor Dahlstrom.

In its FY2021 Annual Report Reply, the Board requested that the Council resubmit their transboundary mining concerns in the form of a new letter to the Board and committed to elevate Council concerns to Lt. Governor Dahlstrom. The Council wishes to start with State support in its endeavor to protect watersheds and fishery resources that are vital to southeast Alaskans. The Council hopes that the Lt. Governor entertains the request for her to engage with the Department of State and Alaska's current Congressional Delegation to seek preemptive solutions.

Therefore, the Council specifically requests that the Board:

1) Write a letter to the Lt. Governor regarding large scale mining development in British Columbia, Canada, requesting support from the State to advocate for the protection of the international watersheds and fishery resources for subsistence uses.
2) In this letter, include a request for the Lt. Governor to engage with the Department of State and our Congressional Delegation to effectively address this issue.

The Council hopes that, as a result of engagements at these levels of government, the Department of State will take the lead in collaborating with Canada to openly address the transboundary mining issue and proactively resolve the concerns of subsistence users that depend on the health of transboundary rivers.

For your convenience, the Council has prepared and attached a draft letter from the Board to the Lt. Governor. We have also included two resolutions from the Alaska Congressional Delegation to the Secretary of State that enumerate detailed concerns from constituents and their governmental representatives. Please consider including these documents as enclosures to the letter if the Board deems it appropriate.

The Council continues to receive new information on the impacts that mining is having on resources utilized by subsistence users through testimony (also, see attached resolutions: Sitka Resolution 21-21 and Craig Resolution 21-18), and the Council members believe it is important to again alert those who can take action to protect the rivers that Southeast coastal communities rely on for sustainable resources and subsistence uses.

Thank you for supporting the Council's concern for an issue of vital importance to the subsistence needs of Southeast Alaska.

If you have any questions regarding this letter, they can be addressed through our Council Coordinator DeAnna Perry at 907-209-7817 or deanna.perry@usda.gov.

Sincerely,

Donald Hernandez,
Chair

Enclosures

cc: Federal Subsistence Board
Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Members
Office of Subsistence Management
Interagency Staff Committee
Benjamin Mulligan, Deputy Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Mark Burch, Special Projects Coordinator, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Administrative Record

CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA

RESOLUTION NO. 2021-21

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY AND BOROUGH OF SITKA URGING THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT TO ADVOCATE FOR A PERMANENT BAN ON TAILINGS DAMS AND FOR A TEMPORARY HALT TO THE PERMITTING, EXPLORATION, DEVELOPMENT, AND EXPANSION OF CANADIAN MINES ALONG ALASKA-BRITISH COLUMBIA TRANSBOUNDARY SALMON RIVERS UNTIL THE UNITED STATES-CANADA BOUNDARY WATERS TREATY OF 1909 AND THE UNITED NATIONS DECLARATION ON THE RIGHTS OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES ARE UPHELD AND AN INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT ON WATERSHED PROTECTIONS IS IMPLEMENTED

WHEREAS, the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 was signed to prevent and resolve disputes over the use of shared waters between the United States (U.S.) and Canada, declaring in Article IV that, "it is further agreed that the waters herein defined as boundary waters and waters flowing across the boundary shall not be polluted on either side to the injury of health or property on the other;" and

WHEREAS, the Alaska-British Columbia (B.C.) Memorandum of Understanding and associated Statement of Cooperation on Protection of Transboundary Waters signed by the State of Alaska and the Province of B.C. in 2015 are important, but cannot provide binding, enforceable protections for the residents, rivers, and watersheds of the Alaska-B.C. transboundary region; and

WHEREAS, inadequately regulated Canadian hard rock mines in Northwest B.C., most of which are large-scale and open-pit, are occurring in known acid-generating ore bodies near the transboundary Taku, Stikine, and Unuk Rivers shared with Southeast Alaska, producing massive tailings dams that have to store toxic waste forever, expansive waste rock storage facilities, the need for perpetual water treatment, roads, and other infrastructure, as well as threatening (both in the short term and on geological timescales) the productivity and ecological health of these watersheds through cumulative impacts, contamination, habitat destruction, and/or possible catastrophic failures; and

WHEREAS, the Taku, Stikine, and Unuk Rivers are of tremendous and unique cultural, ecological, subsistence, economic, and recreational value as Indigenous people from several Nations have stewarded the Alaska-B.C. transboundary region since time immemorial and this region is now home to nearly 80,000 people in dozens of communities; and

WHEREAS, the Southeast Alaska Indigenous Transboundary Commission - a consortium of fifteen federally recognized Tribes in Southeast Alaska - in 2018 submitted a petition to the Inter- American Commission on Human Rights, asserting that Canada has violated their human rights by failing to prevent foreseeable harms from hard rock mines in B.C., and on March 31, 2021 sent a request to B.C. Premier Horgan for a pause in the permitting of B.C. mining projects in Alaska- B.C. transboundary watersheds until an agreement is made regarding Alaska Tribal participation in ongoing permit decisions pursuant to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP); and

WHEREAS, the clean water and intact habitat of Alaska-B.C. transboundary watersheds are historically some of the most productive wild salmon rivers on the entire west coast of North America, with the Taku, Stikine, and Unuk Rivers alone contributing nearly $50 million in economic activity, $34 million in direct spending, over 400 jobs and almost $20 million in labor income towards Southeast Alaska's annual multi-billion dollar fishing and visitor industries; and

WHEREAS, the leaching of heavy metals to groundwater and sediment from mining can contaminate freshwater systems for decades, preventing recovery of fish populations many years after the cessation of mining activity and posing a risk to human health, and B.C.'s Tulsequah Chief mine in the Taku River watershed has been abandoned and leaching acid mine drainage since 1957; and

WHEREAS, B.C.'s environmental assessment process does not set legal requirements or standards for assessing cumulative effects of existing and proposed development, and B.C.'s open-pit Red Chris mine has been operating at the headwaters of the Stikine River since 2015, the entire riparian corridor of the Iskut River, the largest tributary of the Stikine River, is staked with B.C. mineral claims, B.C.'s Kerr-Sulphurets-Mitchell project (KSM), if built as proposed in the Unuk-Nass River watersheds, would be the largest open-pit mine in Canada and one of the largest in the world, and more than half of the B.C. portion of the Unuk watershed is staked with mineral claims; and

WHEREAS, the Taku, Stikine, and Unuk Rivers are experiencing a decline in wild salmon populations, resulting in the Alaska Department of Fish and Game listing Chinook salmon in the Unuk River as a Stock of Concern in 2017 and will soon list Chinook salmon in the Taku and Stikine Rivers as Stocks of Concern; and

WHEREAS, on June 30, 2021, Canada's Department of Fisheries and Oceans eliminated 60% of its commercial salmon fleet in B.C. due to poor returns and declining populations - some near 90% declines - resulting in the largest set of commercial salmon fishery closures in B.C. history, while simultaneously B.C. continues to permit industrialization of the headwaters (spawning and rearing grounds) of some of its largest salmon producing systems; and

WHEREAS, the risk of natural forces such as extreme precipitation events and landslides, which are becoming more common due to climate change, add further instability to the mining infrastructure and could trigger catastrophic failure of the tailings waste dams and thereby release contaminants into the Taku, Stikine, and Unuk waterbodies and are inadequately addressed in B.C. mine operations designs; and

WHEREAS, following B.C.'s Mount Polley mine disaster in 2014 an expert panel appointed by the B.C. government found that if mining companies continue their business-as-usual operations the province could face an average of two dam failures every ten years and the same expert panel reported there are 123 active tailings dams in B.C.; and

WHEREAS, the Auditor General of B.C., in her report issued on May 3, 2016, found that the B.C. Ministry of Energy and Mines and Ministry of the Environment's "compliance and enforcement activities of the mining sector are inadequate to protect the province from significant environmental risks", and according to a 2017 report by the United Nations Environment Programme, Canada has the world's second-worst record for mine tailings spills after China, with seven incidents reported in the previous decade; and

WHEREAS, the June 2021 Audit of Code Requirements for Tailings Storage Facilities by B.C.'s Mine Audits and Effectiveness Unit, has found provincial mining code changes developed after the Mount Polley disaster lack the definition needed to ensure compliance, verification and enforcement--which means communities and the environment across the province lack full protection against the potentially catastrophic consequences of tailings dam failures that B.C.'s new mining code was meant to provide; and

WHEREAS, B.C. touts itself to U.S. officials and potential investors as a world-class marketplace for responsibly-sourced metals and a mining jurisdiction with highly positive ESG (Environment, Social, Governance) outcomes and yet, B.C. is supporting widespread exploration and the permitting of open pits and tailings dams at mine sites across B.C. just upriver from four U.S. border states (AK, WA, ID,

MT) and at the headwaters of some of North America's last remaining productive wild salmon rivers, without the consultation and consent of local Tribes and communities downstream; and

WHEREAS, Native Tribes in Alaska, First Nations in B.C., commercial fishermen, local communities, conservation groups, thousands of concerned citizens, and local, state, provincial, and federal lawmakers (including all eight Senators from the four border states) on both sides of the U.S.- Canada border have raised concerns since 1998 about B.C. mining development potentially causing significant harm to water quality, fish and wildlife, cultural practices, and local economies in Alaska-B.C. transboundary watersheds and still do not have a meaningful say in the shared management of our shared rivers; and

WHEREAS, Commercial fishermen, subsistence and recreational users, local communities, elected leaders, and Tribes and First Nations on both sides of the Canadian/U.S. border have raised concerns about the pace and scope of the proposed industrial development in British Columbia and the potential for harm to water quality, fish and wildlife, and local economies; and

WHEREAS, A major part of Sitka's economic base is commercial and sport charter ocean fishing, in 2019 398 Sitka resident permit holders harvested 27.8 million pounds of fish with a total ex-vessel value of $41.3 million; and

WHEREAS, Maintaining and protecting healthy wild salmon populations throughout these river systems must be a priority. The concerns of local communities, individuals, and user groups downstream from these projects must be integral to any transboundary watershed development and decision making; and

WHEREAS, the City and Borough of Sitka seeks all opportunities for collaboration to address these issues, promote methods to protect these vital rivers from harm, to facilitate and promote meaningful dialogue and engagement at the local, state, federal, provincial, and Tribal levels to assure protection of resources on both sides of the border; and

WHEREAS, the community of Sitka and the Assembly of the City and Borough of Sitka, seek a thriving Salmon Coast (AK-B.C. transboundary region) fed by intact ecosystems, healthy salmon populations and landscapes, robust traditional lifestyles, and sustainable economies.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Assembly of the City and Borough of Sitka calls upon President Joe Biden and the United States government and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and the Canadian government to immediately:

1. Utilize their authority under the United States-Canada Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 to prevent and resolve disputes over the use of shared waters; and
2. Support an immediate temporary halt to permitting, exploration, development, and expansion of Canadian mines along shared Alaska-B.C. salmon rivers until a binding international agreement on watershed protections, developed by all jurisdictions in these shared transboundary watersheds and consistent with the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, is implemented; and
3. Convene with local communities, stakeholders, and Indigenous leaders of the Taku, Stikine, and Unuk watersheds to develop the aforementioned binding international agreement on watershed protections. This agreement will identify and honor no-go zones and decisions by local residents and Indigenous people on both sides of the international border, ensure mining companies and shareholders are liable for cleaning up their waste and compensating impacted communities for all damages, and enforce requirements for mining best practices, including a permanent ban on the perpetual storage of contaminated water and wet tailings behind earthen dams along these irreplaceable Alaska-B.C. transboundary salmon rivers.

PASSED, APPROVED, AND ADOPTED by the Assembly of the City and Borough of Sitka, Alaska on this 14th day of September 2021.

Steven Eisenbeisz, Mayor

ATTEST:

Sara Peterson, MMC
Municipal Clerk

1st and final reading 9/16/2021

Sponsors: Knox / Himschoot

CITY OF CRAIG
RESOLUTION 21-18

A RESOLUTION OF SUPPORT FOR A PERMANENT BAN ON TAILINGS DAMS AND FOR A TEMPORARY HALT TO THE PERMITTING, EXPLORATION, DEVELOPMENT, AND EXPANSION OF CANADIAN MINES ALONG ALASKA-BRITISH COLUMBIA TRANSBOUNDARY SALMON RIVERS UNTIL AN INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT ON WATERSHED PROTECTIONS IS IMPLEMENTED

WHEREAS, the Taku, Stikine, and Unuk Rivers are of tremendous and unique cultural, ecological, subsistence, economic, and recreational value; and,

WHEREAS this transboundary rivers region is home to more than 80,000 people in dozens of communities; and

WHEREAS, the Alaska-British Columbia (B.C.) Memorandum of Understanding and associated Statement of Cooperation on Protection of Transboundary Waters signed by the State of Alaska and the Province of B.C. in 2015 are an important starting point, but cannot provide binding, enforceable regulations for the residents, rivers, and watersheds of the Alaska-B.C. transboundary region; and

WHEREAS, inadequately regulated Canadian hard rock mines in Northwest B.C., most of which are large-scale and open-pit, occur in known acid-generating ore bodies near the transboundary Taku, Stikine, and Unuk Rivers shared with Southeast Alaska, producing massive tailings dams that have to store toxic waste permanently; and,

WHEREAS, tailing dams cannot be expected to last permanently and as a result will eventually fail decades later; and,

WHEREAS, expansive waste rock storage facilities, the need for perpetual water treatment, roads, and other infrastructure, threaten the productivity and ecological health of these watersheds through cumulative impacts, contamination, habitat destruction, and/or possible catastrophic failures; and

WHEREAS, the clean water and intact habitat of Alaska-B.C. transboundary watersheds are some of the most productive wild salmon rivers on the entire west coast of North America, with the Taku, Stikine, and Unuk Rivers contributing millions of dollars in economic activity, direct spending, hundreds of jobs and labor income towards Southeast Alaska's fishing and visitor industries; and

WHEREAS, the leaching of heavy metals to groundwater and sediment from mining can contaminate freshwater systems for decades, preventing recovery of fish populations many years after the cessation of mining activity and posing a risk to human health, an example being B.C.'s Tulsequah Chief mine in the Taku River watershed which is abandoned and leaching acid mine drainage since 1957; and

WHEREAS, B.C.'s environmental assessment process does not set legal requirements or standards for assessing cumulative effects of existing and proposed development, and B.C.'s open-pit Red Chris mine has been operating at the headwaters of the Stikine River since 2015, the entire riparian corridor of the Iskut River, the largest tributary of the Stikine River, is staked with B.C. mineral claims, B.C.'s Kerr-Sulphurets-Mitchell project (KSM), if built as proposed in the Unuk-Nass River watersheds, would be the largest open-pit mine in Canada and one of the largest in the world, and more than half of the B.C. portion of the Unuk watershed is staked with mineral claims; and

WHEREAS, the Taku, Stikine, and Unuk Rivers are experiencing a decline in wild salmon populations, resulting in the Alaska Department of Fish and Game listing Chinook salmon in the Unuk River as a Stock of Concern in 2017 and will soon list Chinook salmon in the Taku and Stikine Rivers as Stocks of Concern; and

WHEREAS, on June 30, 2021, Canada's Department of Fisheries and Oceans eliminated 60% of its commercial salmon fleet in B.C. due to poor returns and declining populations - some near 90% declines - resulting in the largest set of commercial salmon fishery closures in B.C.

history, while simultaneously B.C. continues to permit industrialization of the headwaters (spawning and rearing grounds) of some of its largest salmon producing systems; and

WHEREAS, the risk of natural forces such as extreme precipitation events and landslides add further instability to the mining infrastructure and could trigger catastrophic failure of the tailings waste dams and thereby release contaminants into the Taku, Stikine, and Unuk waterbodies and are inadequately addressed in B.C. mine operations designs; and

WHEREAS, following B.C.'s Mount Polley mine disaster in 2014 an expert panel appointed by the B.C. government found that if mining companies continue their business-as-usual operations the province could face an average of two dam failures every ten years, and the same expert panel reported there are 123 active tailings dams in B.C.; and

WHEREAS, the Auditor General of B.C., in her report issued on May 3, 2016, found that the B.C. Ministry of Energy and Mines and Ministry of the Environment's "compliance and enforcement activities of the mining sector are inadequate to protect the province from significant environmental risks", and according to a 2017 report by the United Nations Environment Programme, Canada has the world's second-worst record for mine tailings spills after China, with seven incidents reported in the previous decade; and

WHEREAS, the June 2021 *Audit of Code Requirements for Tailings Storage Facilities* by B.C.'s Mine Audits and Effectiveness Unit, has found provincial mining code changes developed after the Mount Polley disaster lack the definition needed to ensure compliance, verification and enforcement--which means communities and the environment across the province lack full protection against the potentially catastrophic consequences of tailings dam failures that B.C.'s new mining code was meant to provide; and

WHEREAS, B.C. touts itself to U.S. officials and potential investors as a world-class marketplace for responsibly-sourced metals and a mining jurisdiction with highly positive ESG (Environment, Social, Governance) outcomes and yet, B.C. is supporting widespread exploration

permitting of open pits and tailings dams at mine sites across B.C. just upriver from four U.S. border states (AK, WA, ID, MT) and at the headwaters of some of North America's last remaining productive wild salmon rivers; and

WHEREAS, Native Tribes in Alaska, First Nations in B.C., commercial fishermen, local communities, conservation groups, thousands of concerned citizens, and local, state, provincial, and federal lawmakers (including all eight Senators from the four border states) on both sides of the U.S.-Canada border have raised concerns since 1998 about B.C. mining development potentially causing significant harm to water quality, fish and wildlife, cultural practices, and local economies in Alaska-B.C. transboundary watersheds and still do not have a meaningful say in the shared management of our shared rivers; and

WHEREAS, the City of Craig, Alaska encourages parties within the transboundary areas to share information and seek all opportunities for collaboration to address these issues, promote methods to protect these vital rivers from harm, and seek to facilitate and promote meaningful dialogue and engagement at the local, state, federal, provincial, and Tribal levels to assure protection of resources on both sides of the border.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Craig seeks a thriving salmon coast (AK-B.C. transboundary region) fed by intact ecosystems, healthy salmon populations and landscapes, robust traditional lifestyles, and sustainable economies, including a mining industry.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we call upon President Joe Biden and the United States government and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and the Canadian government to immediately:

1. **Utilize** their authority under the United States-Canada Boundaries Water Treaty of 1909 to prevent and resolve disputes over the use of shared waters; and
2. **Support** an immediate temporary halt to permitting, exploration, development, and expansion of Canadian mines along shared Alaska-B.C. salmon rivers until a binding international agreement on watershed protections, developed by *all* jurisdictions in these

shared transboundary watersheds and consistent with the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 and the rights of indigenous peoples, is in place; and,

3. **Convene** with local communities, stakeholders, and Indigenous leaders of the Taku, Stikine, and Unuk watersheds to develop the aforementioned binding international agreement on watershed protections. This agreement will identify and honor no-go zones and decisions by local residents and indigenous people on both sides of the international border, ensure mining companies and shareholders are liable for cleaning up their waste and compensating impacted communities for all damages, and enforce requirements for mining best practices, including a permanent ban on the perpetual storage of contaminated water and wet tailings behind earthen dams along these irreplaceable Alaska-B.C. transboundary salmon rivers.

Approved this 11th day of October, 2021.

MAYOR TIM O'CONNOR

TRACEY JENSEN, CITY CLERK

CITY OF CRAIG CORPORATE SEAL 1922 ALASKA

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 8, 2016

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

Thank you for your staff's June 14th response regarding the development of several hardrock mines in British Columbia and their potential effects on water quality in the transboundary rivers that flow from Canada into Southeast Alaska. We are pleased to hear that you continue to discuss potential impacts of mining in British Columbia. It would be helpful if you could convey the results of these discussions, as well as address what actions have been taken on the specific items raised in our letter addressed to you this May.

For quite some time, we have urged you and your Department to work with us to focus appropriately on the risks that mining in British Columbia poses to Alaska and Alaskans. When you visited Alaska last year, we were encouraged by your comment that "downstream impacts should not be taken lightly by any country, anywhere." But we remain troubled that nearly a year later, we have seen little action from State on such an important issue to so many.

Treating transboundary mining issues with urgency and focus today would prevent discord and disaster tomorrow. We need the federal government to partner with Alaska to press Canada on policy answers.

Alaska is a resource state and we believe, as Canadians do, in smart, thoughtful extraction of energy and minerals. Mining is central to our economy, provides well-paying jobs, helps generate revenues for our treasuries, and serves as the foundation of our manufacturing sector. But we are very concerned about the absence of leadership at the Department of State to constructively and candidly address the transboundary issue and work collaboratively with Canada to find the best mechanism to proactively resolve concerns.

The stakes for Alaska are enormous. Alaska's salmon rivers provide for commercial and recreation fishing and tourism which are vital to the economy of southeast Alaska. The continued health of these rivers also sustains the regions unique way of life. This region of Canada is now one of the world's largest mining districts, and many Canadian mineral projects are located in transboundary watersheds of key salmon rivers—the Taku, Stikine and Unuk—that originate in British Columbia and flow into Southeast Alaska. These mines pose huge economic risk to Alaska in the form of acid mine drainage and toxic heavy metals that threaten Alaska Native communities and traditional and customary lifestyles as well as the regional $2 billion-dollar-a-year fishing and tourism industries. As

Secretary Kerry
September 8, 2016

we all remember, almost two years ago, the Mount Polley mine in central British Columbia dumped just over six billion gallons of contaminated tailings into waters leading to the salmon-rich Fraser River.

To this point, we believe there has been a failure by your Department to support potential solutions embraced by Alaskans. Alaska has been left alone to pursue steps including a Statement of Cooperation with British Columbia, even though we know that by definition that is only one step in a process which must include federal leadership. We are continuing our fight to elevate this issue and to find funding for baseline water quality monitoring. We ask that you please reconsider our requests from our May letter:

1) Encourage British Columbia officials to consider the cumulative impacts of mining and their potential impacts on transboundary waters during the review and approval process for mines.
2) Determine whether an International Joint Commission reference is a suitable venue to determine whether Canadian mines are following "best practices" in treatment of wastewaters and acid-producing mine tailings – especially in light of the scientific reviews of the causes of the Mt. Polley tailing disposal dam failure.
3) Establish a more formal consultation process with American state agencies, other federal agencies, tribes, and Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act corporations during Canadian mine permit reviews, similar to the American process of having participating entities during Environmental Impact Statement preparations.
4) Support Environment Canada's water quality study effort relating to the impacts of mining on transboundary waters.
5) Support and work towards robust funding for water quality testing on the American side of the border to establish baseline water quality data, so that the U.S. can file for damages in the event of mining-related damage from Canadian mines.

Alaska is at a point now where we urge you to consider appointing a Special Representative for U.S.-Canada Transboundary Issues, creating an Interagency Working Group to address these issues, and work with us to form U.S.-Canada exchanges of legislators and parliamentarians to discuss these issues on both sides of the border. Most importantly, we ask that you will respond to these specific proposals on the merits – and propose some answers of your own.

We formally request a meeting with you as soon as possible to discuss these issues. Thank you for your consideration of our requests. Please contact our offices if you need additional information.

Sincerely,

Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator

Dan Sullivan
United States Senator

Don Young
Congressman for All Alaska

Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

Michael Bangs, Chairman
P.O. Box 1733
Petersburg, Alaska 99833

RAC SE17001.DP

JAN 2 4 2017

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

Re: Transboundary River Watersheds

Dear Chairman Christianson:

The Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council would like to express its concern for the health and protection of Transboundary River watersheds. The Council would like to request the Federal Subsistence Board write a letter to Lt. Governor Byron Mallott in an effort to relay this concern.

The Council is pleased by the recent communications between the Lt. Governor and our neighbors in British Columbia related to the large scale mining development underway and proposed mining in the British Columbia portions of the Transboundary River watersheds. It is the Council's understanding that the Lt. Governor is disappointed with the U.S. Department of State's lack of engagement on this issue. The Council would like to encourage the Lt. Governor to maintain momentum in protecting these international watersheds and fishery resources for subsistence use by writing a letter to the U.S. Department of State, expressing his desire to work in conjunction with our Congressional Delegation to advance this issue at the federal and international levels.

For your convenience, the Council has prepared a draft letter for submission from the Board to the Lt. Governor (enclosed). The Council hopes that the Board will forward this letter on an issue that is of vital importance to the subsistence needs of the people of Southeast Alaska. Thank you for consideration of our request. Any questions regarding this letter can be addressed directly to me or through our Subsistence Council Coordinator, DeAnna Perry, at 907-586-7918, dlperry@fs.fed.us.

Sincerely,

Mike Bangs
Chair

Enclosures

cc: Federal Subsistence Board
Eugene R. Peltola, Jr., Assistant Regional Director, Office of Subsistence Management
Stewart Cogswell, Acting Deputy Assistant Regional Director
Office of Subsistence Management
Jennifer Hardin, Acting Fisheries Division Chief, Office of Subsistence Management
Carl Johnson, Council Coordination Division Chief, Office of Subsistence Management
Tom Whitford, Regional Subsistence Program Leader, U.S. Forest Service
Jill Klein, Special Assistant to the Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Interagency Staff Committee
Administrative Record

Suggested language for letter from Board to Lt. Governor re: Transboundary Rivers

The Honorable Lieutenant Governor

Dear Lt. Governor:

The Federal Subsistence Board (Board) has received a letter from the Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council), reiterating its concerns regarding the health of the transboundary rivers. We forwarded this Council's concerns on this issue to Lt. Governor Byron Mallot in January, 2017; however, no responses to that effort have been received, nor have the Council's concerns been addressed. The Council would like to again request that action be taken to protect the the water throughout the transboundary river watershed.

The Council hopes that you, in your capacity of representing Southeast Alaskans who depend on these watersheds for subsistence resources, will request that the U.S. Department of State engage with British Columbia, Canada, officials to ensure protection of these international watersheds. Specifically, the Council requests that your administration send a letter to the U.S Secretary of State explicitly requesting Federal engagement in this issue regarding the large scale mining operations that are currently operating or are planned for the transboundary river watershed. In addition, the Council would like to request an International Joint Commission referral to further safeguard water quality and fishery production in these rivers.

We appreciate your time and attention to this matter and hope that you will consider the Council's request with interest. The Federal Subsistence Management Program looks forward to hearing from you on this issue.

Sincerely,

Anthony Christianson
Chair

Enclosures: Letter from Board to Lt. Governor Mallot, Jan 24, 2017
Congressional Delegation letter to Secretary of State, Sep 8, 2016
Sitka Resolution 21-21
Craig Resolution 21-18

cc: Federal Subsistence Board
Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Members
Office of Subsistence Management
Benjamin Mulligan, Deputy Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Mark Burch, Special Projects Coordinator, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Interagency Staff Committee
Administrative Record

Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

Don Hernandez, Chairman
1011 E. Tudor Road, MS121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

In Reply Refer To:
RAC/SE.23042.DP

MAY 12 2023

Anthony Christianson, Chair
Federal Subsistence Board
c/o Office of Subsistence Management
1011 East Tudor Road, Mail Stop 121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Dear Chairman Christianson:

The Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council), utilizing its authority to review and evaluate matters related to subsistence within its region, requests the Federal Subsistence Board's (Board) assistance to elevate its concerns regarding mining activities within Transboundary River watersheds to the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture and to request an International Joint Commission referral, if appropriate. The industry threatens subsistence resources in Southeast Alaska, namely the quality of the water and the health and productivity of fisheries in these rivers.

In 2017, the Council received information on mining activities within the Transboundary River watersheds and the threats these activities pose to subsistence resources in Southeast Alaska. Since then, the Council has heard additional testimony from groups such as Salmon Beyond Borders (SBB), Southeast Alaska Conservation Council, Seacoast Indigenous Guardians Network, and members of the public regarding the continued risks to subsistence resources.

The Council is currently in the process of sending a follow-up letter to its 2017 correspondence to the Alaska Lieutenant Governor. That letter requested that the Alaska Lieutenant Governor reach out to the U.S. Secretary of State to explicitly request Federal engagement on the issue of large-scale mineral developments that were in operation at that time or that were planned in the Transboundary River watersheds. To date, the Lieutenant Governor's office has not yet responded to the 2017 letter.

During a presentation on this topic by the SBB at the Council's October 2022 meeting, SBB asked the Council for a letter of support to the Departments of Agriculture, Interior, and State highlighting the Council's and communities' shared concerns for the future of the Taku, Stikine, and Unuk rivers, and the threats posed to them by Canadian upriver mining operations. The Council voted to send this letter of support to the Federal Subsistence Board with a request to elevate their concerns to the aforementioned parties and to add its voice to SBB's efforts on this crucial regional issue.

As stated earlier, the Council requests the Board to convey these concerns to the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture. Further, the Council would like to convey its support of specific requests made by Salmon Beyond Borders to:

1. Utilize United States and Canada authorities under the United States-Canada Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 to prevent and resolve disputes over the use of shared waters;

2. Support an immediate temporary halt to permitting, exploration, development, and expansion of Canadian mines along shared Alaska-British Columbia salmon rivers until a binding international agreement on watershed protections, developed by all jurisdictions in these shared transboundary watersheds and consistent with the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909 and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, is implemented; and

3. Convene with local communities, stakeholders, and Indigenous leaders of the Taku, Stikine, and Unuk watersheds to develop the aforementioned binding international agreement on watershed protections. This agreement will identify and honor no-go zones and decisions by local residents and Indigenous people on both sides of the international border, ensure mining companies and shareholders are liable for cleaning up their waste, compensating impacted communities for all damages, and enforcing requirements for mining best practices, including a permanent ban on the perpetual storage of contaminated water and wet tailings behind earthen dams along these irreplaceable Alaska-British Columbia transboundary salmon rivers.

The Council appreciates the Board's attention to protecting Federal public lands and waters upon which subsistence users depend. If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact me via DeAnna Perry, Subsistence Council Coordinator, USDA – Forest Service, at deanna.perry@usda.gov, or 1-800-478-1456 or 907-209-7817.

Sincerely,

Don Hernandez
Chair

Enclosures: AK Congressional Letter to Secretary Kerry (2016)

City of Craig Resolution 21-18
City and Borough of Sitka Resolution 2021-21

cc: Federal Subsistence Board
Southeast Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
DeAnna Perry, Subsistence Council Coordinator, USDA – Forest Service
Office of Subsistence Management
Interagency Staff Committee
Administrative Record

Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

Don Hernandez, Chairman
1011 E. Tudor Road, MS121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199

In Reply Refer To:
RAC SE23023.DP

FEB 24 2023

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

Dear Chairman Christianson:

The Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council) wishes to add its voice to those of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, Western Interior Alaska, Eastern Interior Alaska, and Seward Peninsula Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils (Councils) dated April 12, 2022, to the Chair of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council. Specifically, the Council acknowledges that there is a growing concern about bycatch in trawl fisheries throughout the State of Alaska.

This Council has heard from Southeast constituents that there are similar concerns of trawl bycatch in southeast Alaska, including testimony that no effort has been made to reduce interception and that the trawling industry was expected to 'be more creative' in addressing the problem. Southeast residents, including subsistence users, are very concerned about the overall health, and limited harvestable amount of Chinook Salmon.

Currently, the bycatch cap for Chinook Salmon in the Gulf of Alaska (GOA) trawl fisheries is 32,500 fish. To put that number in perspective, it is about 164% of the most recent (2022) allocation of Chinook Salmon in the Southeast Alaska purse seine, drift gillnet, and set gillnet fisheries combined. Most subsistence users harvest Chinook Salmon under sport fishing regulations and allocation plans. In 2022, the 32,500 fish bycatch cap was about 2/3 of the entire sport allocation of Chinook Salmon in Southeast Alaska. As such, the current bycatch cap represents a large portion of an already fully allocated resource.

The impact of trawl bycatch on Southeast Alaska Chinook fisheries is especially concerning given the pending legal actions threatening the troll fishery, which is an important component of the economy in the rural Southeast Alaska communities where subsistence users live and work. Shutting down the troll fishery while allowing the wasteful taking of Chinook in trawl fisheries to continue would be a travesty.

Encouragingly, the GOA trawl fleet has maintained bycatch levels under the current bycatch cap in recent years. While that is certainly good news, it shows that more can be done. The Council believes that the bycatch cap should be reduced further, to require the GOA trawl fleet to continue to innovate ways to reduce bycatch of Chinook Salmon and other non-target species. Any progress on this front can be transferred to other fisheries with bycatch concerns, most notably the Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands fisheries that have been shown to impact already devastated subsistence users of Western Alaska salmon stocks.

The Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council stands in support of the Councils requesting regulatory relief and subsistence representation on the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council. The issue of trawl bycatch is one that affects every subsistence fishing community in Alaska, and these communities should have a seat at the table when it comes to management of the salmon resources we all share.

If you have any questions regarding this letter, they can be addressed through our Council Coordinator, DeAnna Perry, at 907-209-7817, deanna.perry@usda.gov.

Sincerely,

Donald Hernandez
Chair

cc: Federal Subsistence Board
Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Members
Office of Subsistence Management
Benjamin Mulligan, Deputy Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Mark Burch, Special Projects Coordinator, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Interagency Staff Committee
Administrative Record

Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

Don Hernandez, Chairman
1011 E. Tudor Road, MS121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

IN REPLY REFER TO:
RAC/SExxxxx.DP

[date]

Federal Subsistence Board
ATTN: Chair, Anthony Christianson
c/o Office of Subsistence Management
1011 E. Tudor Road, M/S 121
Anchorage, AK 99503-6199

Office of Subsistence Management
ATTN: Assistant Regional Director, Sue Detwiler
1011 E. Tudor Road, M/S 121
Anchorage, AK 99503-6199

USDA - USFS Regional Office
ATTN: Regional Forester Dave Schmid
P.O. Box 21628
Juneau, AK 99801-1807

USDA – USFS Tongass National Forest
ATTN: Forest Supervisor Frank Sherman
648 Mission Street, Suite #110
Ketchikan, AK 99901

National Park Service - Alaska Region
ATTN: Regional Director Sarah Creachbaum
240 W 5th Ave
Anchorage, AK 99501

National Park Service – Glacier Bay
ATTN: Superintendent Phillip Hooge
Glacier Bay National Park & Preserve
PO Box 140
Gustavus, AK 99826

To Interested Parties:

The Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council) represents subsistence harvesters of fish and wildlife resources on Federal public lands and waters in Southeast Alaska. It was established by the authority in and is chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act. Section 805 of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) and the Council's charter established its authority to initiate, review and evaluate regulations, policies, management plans, and other matters related to subsistence within the southeast Alaska region.

Therefore, the Council wishes to submit a position statement regarding the interpretation and application of regulations, policies, and procedures regarding the definition of 'meaningful priority' and the 'continuation of subsistence uses,' as they are applied to matters relating to subsistence uses. This Council's first chairman, Bill Thomas, emphasized that the Council should closely follow ANILCA's intent in making recommendations and developing policy and this was kept in mind during the Council's work on this matter.

This position statement is born from the testimony that Southeast rural residents have given to the Council about their difficulty in meeting their subsistence needs. In recent years, these comments from subsistence users and their representatives highlighted their difficulties in meeting subsistence needs because, they say, their uses are often overwhelmed by sport, commercial or other non-subsistence uses. The Council has also received proposals from subsistence users and their communities calling for regulatory changes that would limit the impact of these non-subsistence uses and provide for a meaningful preference for subsistence uses.

This position statement is also the result of the Council's experiences over the years with the Federal Subsistence Management Program's (FSMP) understanding of Title VIII of ANILCA, specifically Sections 801, 802, 804 and 815(3). The Council reflected on the history and testimony regarding meaningful priority and continuance of subsistence uses at its Winter 2023 meeting in Juneau. The following is an expanded version of this discussion.

The Council would like to formally state its position and concerns with the FSMP and the Board's interpretation of pertinent sections of ANILCA and other guidelines that form the basis of the Federal Subsistence Board's (Board) decisions on resource management for subsistence uses. The Council identified this issue in its FY2022 Annual Report to the Board and would like to take this opportunity to provide additional details for context so that the Board can fully understand and appreciate the Council's perspective on the issue.

COUNCIL'S REVIEW OF PERTINENT REGULATORY HISTORY

1. During the more than 40 years since the passage of ANILCA on December 6, 1980, there have been progressive changes in the approach taken to implement the subsistence provisions of the law.

2. The Congressional Record of deliberations leading up to ANILCA conclusively showed that the subsistence provisions were intended to augment the passage of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANSCA) passed December 18, 1971. ANSCA did not address the hunting and fishing rights of the indigenous peoples of Alaska, however. The Marine Mammal Protection Act, passed a year later on December 21, 1972, provided for continued take of most marine mammals by coastal Alaska Natives. The International Whaling Commission, established soon after World War II on December 2, 1946, provided for traditional bowhead whale hunting by Alaska Eskimos until 1977; after some problematic years and, due to the work of the Eskimo Whaling Commission, a quota for traditional bowhead whale hunting was established in 1981.

   The North Pacific Fisheries Management Council adopted a program recognizing Alaska subsistence halibut fishing in October 2000; management regulations for this program have been in effect since May 15, 2003.

   Because Sec. 8 of ANILCA was passed by Congress to address Native hunting, fishing, and gathering rights that were not covered by ANSCA[1], the Council considers Section 8 of ANILCA to be "Native" legislation As such interpretation of these ANILCA provisions are due deference.

3. The Federal Government began managing subsistence hunting, trapping, and fishing on Alaska's Federal public lands and non-navigable waters in 1990.

   Federal Regional Advisory Councils were established in 1993. State of Alaska Advisory Committees, comprised of the chairs of Alaska Fish and Game Advisory Committees, were in existence before that date.

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[1] *The Senate amendment to the House bill provided for the protection of the Native peoples' interest in and use of subsistence resources on the public lands. The conference committee, after careful consideration, believes that Native interests in subsistence resource lands can and will be protected by the Secretary through the exercise of his existing withdrawal authority. The Secretary could, for example, withdraw appropriate lands and classify them in a manner which would protect Native subsistence needs and requirements by closing appropriate lands and classify them in a manner which would protect Native subsistence needs and requirements by closing appropriate lands to entry by non-residents when the subsistence resources of these lands are in short supply or otherwise threatened. The conference committee expects both the Secretary and the State to take any action necessary to protect the subsistence needs of the Native. 12-13-1971 Congressional Record - House H12353 (ANCSA)*

Following legal challenges, the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that Federal authority to manage subsistence should expand to include fisheries on all public lands and waters, including all navigable waters in which the United States holds reserved water rights, such as waters on or next to wildlife refuges, national parks, and national forests. Congressional moratoriums prevented this ruling from taking effect until October 1, 1999.

4. Since 1993, 30 years ago, this Council worked assiduously within the Federal Subsistence Program to implement subsistence protections in Southeast Alaska. The Council's consistent objective has been to recommend subsistence regulations and policies that provide for the continuation of subsistence uses in rural Southeast Alaska within the authority of ANILCA. Over the decades that it has been in existence, the Council has supported:

    a. A designated hunter program that recognizes rural hunting patterns,
    b. Recognition of ceremonial and cultural uses of fish and wildlife,
    c. An approach to customary and traditional use findings that we believe conforms to subsistence practices in Southeast Alaska and follows the letter and intent of ANLCA,
    d. Maintaining the original rural designations for Southeast communities, which we believe reflect the rural character of our region and,
    e. Consistently provided comments to Federal land management agencies under ANILCA Sec. 810 concerning the effects of Federal land use actions on subsistence uses.

    The above recognizes the community characteristics of subsistence uses. The Council has recommended specific regulatory actions to provide a subsistence priority for subsistence uses that had relatively limited effect on the ability of urban or non-local hunters, fishers, and trappers to use the fish and game resources of our region. Overall, it has been fortunate that the fish and wildlife populations used for subsistence from Federal lands and waters in Southeast Alaska have generally been sufficient to support Federally qualified subsistence uses, as well as provide hunting and fishing opportunities for urban/nonrural residents.

5. ANILCA primarily talks about 'uses.' Sec. 801 of ANILCA presents Congressional Findings:

    a. Finds that subsistence uses are essential to Native physical, economic, traditional, and cultural existence and to non-Native physical, economic, traditional, and social existence.
    b. Refers to subsistence uses in light of food dependency
    c. Notes that the increasing human population of Alaska threatens subsistence uses. Alaska's population has increased from 401,851 in 1980 to an estimated 737,000

in 2023 (https:usa.ipums.org). In Southeast Alaska, the total population has increased significantly. As an example, the non-rural population (Juneau and Ketchikan) has increased from 26,726 (Juneau = 19,528; Ketchikan = 7,198) in 1980 to 39,404 (Juneau = 31,534; Ketchikan = 7,870) in 2023.

d. States that providing the opportunity for continued subsistence uses is a matter of equity.
e. Requires that rural residents have a meaningful role in the management of fish and wildlife and of subsistence uses on public lands in Alaska.

Most critically, when speaking to uses, ANILCA Sec. 8 provisions do not refer, even once, to individual hunting and fishing harvest limits or to the right of individuals to hunt and fish under subsistence provisions.

6. In Sec. 802, Congress declares that:

> (1) Use of public lands in Alaska is to cause the least adverse impact on rural residents who depend on subsistence uses of the resources of such lands…… the purpose of this title is to provide the opportunity of rural residents engaged in a subsistence way of life to do so…
> (2) Subsistence shall be the priority consumptive use of fish and wildlife resources on public lands in Alaska.

7. Sec. 804 includes provisions for discriminating among subsistence users based on dependency on a particular resource, local residency, and availability of alternative resources.

8. Sec. 815 (3) authorizes restrictions on non-subsistence uses if necessary to continue subsistence uses.

9. Congress was remarkably prescient concerning the likelihood that increasing pressure on Alaska's fish, wildlife, and plant resources over time would threaten subsistence uses. As was expected in 1980, Alaska had an oil boom that led to major increases in the Alaskan urban and non-Native population.

While Congress anticipated that Alaska's population would increase, it did not foretell some of the other social and technological changes that would occur in the subsequent 43 years that would have significant impacts on subsistence uses:

a. Global Positioning Systems, 450 horsepower outboard engines on $250,000 recreational boats, 4 wheelers that fit on drop bow boats, digital charts, and other advanced electronics that greatly improve hunting and fishing success, particularly for urban residents who can afford such items.

b. The unchecked growth of the guided and unguided sport fishing industry. In many communities, a single sport fishing lodge may take as much fish as the rest of the community. By way of regulation, in much of SE Alaska, sport fishers can out-fish subsistence users. Sport fish take of King and Coho salmon and of Halibut and rockfish appears to be greater than the take of these species by rural residents.
c. Tourism now brings over 1.5 million tourists to SE Alaska. In addition, the tourism season coincides with the main subsistence fishing season and with some of the subsistence hunting seasons.
d. Increased technology and other gear efficiencies have made it possible for commercial fisheries to literally catch ALL the fish in targeted fisheries.
e. Rapid climate change affects all subsistence resources and threatens many fishery and intertidal subsistence resources.

10. Congress also showed an awareness of how subsistence actually took place in rural Alaska. Pre ANILCA examination of subsistence uses focused on community use (Alaska Natives and the Land, Federal Field Committee for Development Planning in Alaska, 1968). Post 1980 studies have consistently shown that subsistence use is community based, meaning that a small number of subsistence harvesters who have the expertise, resources, equipment, and time may harvest the majority of subsistence foods used by a community. ADF&G subsistence studies allowed formulation of the 30/70 rule, consistently finding that 30% of subsistence households harvested 70% of the subsistence resources overall. For herring eggs and seals, the harvest by a few individuals is even greater. These 'high harvesters' are the mainstay for maintaining traditional subsistence practices, uses, and the subsistence way of life. Subsistence foods are distributed within communities and between communities through customary trade and exchange.

This fundamental characteristic of subsistence was recognized by Congress. Interestingly, similar patterns of distribution and exchange of wild foods has been found to be characteristic of hunting, fishing, and gathering societies globally (CF Man the Hunter, Lee and Devore, 1968).

The distinction between subsistence use and harvest and the relationship between use and harvest was central to ANILCA's approach to safeguarding subsistence. In its wisdom, Congress focused on "**use**" rather than "**harvest**."

This is in stark contrast to State of Alaska management of fish and wildlife or, for that matter, fish and wildlife management in other states. This colonial orientation is focused on the individual hunter or fisher, not on the community. The Council notes that hunting provisions of the Marine Mammal Protection Act, (the bowhead whale quota), and National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) regulations assume that harvesting is done for community subsistence uses, not to satisfy individual hunters and fishers.

Understandably, it would be absurd to have an individual bag limit for bowhead whales.

11. ANILCA very clearly is aimed at protecting subsistence uses and ensuring the continuation of the rural subsistence way of life. In real-world situations, this Council has found that many things can effectively limit or constrain subsistence uses. These, of course, include resource scarcity when there simply is not a sufficient harvestable surplus to meet subsistence (and sport or commercial) needs. However,

    a. Competition from non-subsistence sport and commercial harvesters;
    b. Displacement from traditional subsistence use areas;
    c. Habitat degradation;
    d. Limitations on access to traditional subsistence use areas;
    e. Climate change affecting availability of subsistence resources;
    f. Adverse weather conditions;
    g. Lack of financial resources for the equipment and supplies needed to undertake subsistence;
    h. Lack of financial resources to address information needs (monitoring, surveys, etc.);
    i. Localized depletion in high subsistence use areas;
    j. And other factors,

    can interfere with meeting community subsistence uses and needs even when there is no overall conservation concern with a particular subsistence resource.

12. This Council believes that ANILCA requires the Federal Subsistence Program to address and ameliorate all conditions that limit or eliminate the ability of subsistence users to meet community subsistence uses and needs.

    Not surprisingly, since the Federal Subsistence Program regulatory actions set **harvest** regulations for subsistence harvests and establishes meaningful priorities for subsistence **harvests**, regulatory actions tend to **focus on harvests rather than uses**. The Council believes that this understandable focus on subsistence harvests, rather than on subsistence uses, has deviated from Congressional intent and is in error. Operationally, harvest regulations are clearly necessary. However, the objective of harvest regulations under ANILCA directions must be to ensure that community subsistence uses and community needs are met. The objective should not be a matter of satisfying individual harvesting opportunities.

    As we shall see, protecting community subsistence uses and providing a meaningful priority for subsistence uses may require restrictions on non-subsistence uses even when there may not be a serious conservation concern, a low harvestable surplus, or a population decline in a fish and wildlife population.

13. The SE RAC has supported Federal management actions to address problems in the 'supply side' of fish and wildlife management when there have been concerns about the health of fish and wildlife populations. These would include supporting restrictive bag limits in subsistence fisheries and close management and reporting for subsistence harvest of moose, elk, and goats.

    The Council has increasingly noted, however, that subsistence uses in our region may be threatened even when there is not a general resource scarcity. Rural residents' ability to meet their community subsistence needs may be threatened by competition and reduced access to subsistence resources.

    Testimony received at recent Council meetings and proposals submitted by rural residents and their communities in recent years have focused on competition from non-federally qualified users. Simply put, rural residents have found that their ability to meet community subsistence needs for deer and sockeye salmon may be adversely affected by other users even when, overall, there are healthy populations of these species. Subsistence users may be displaced from traditional harvest locations or otherwise overrun by non-federally qualified users.

    Competition from non-federally qualified users may be limiting rural residents of Prince of Wales Island, Angoon, and Pelican to meet their community subsistence needs for deer. Competition with guided and non-guided sport fishers and with commercial fisheries may be limiting the ability for rural residents to meet their needs for subsistence fish in many areas of the region.

14. This Council believes that it and the Federal Subsistence Board need to be guided by the clear provisions found in ANILCA, specifically recognizing that:
    a. Subsistence is the priority use of fish and wildlife;
    b. Subsistence uses (and harvests) require regulations to provide a meaningful preference; and
    c. Competition, as envisioned in ANILCA findings, is now acting as a strong constraint on rural subsistence users' ability to continue their subsistence way of life and meet their subsistence needs.

15. The Council believes that following the clear provision found in ANILCA to provide a meaningful priority to rural residents is likely to require further restrictions on non-Federally qualified hunters and fishers using Federal public lands and waters in the future. This is a certain based on the demographic changes taking place within our region and across the state and that increasingly threaten subsistence uses. The Council supports the letter and intent of ANILCA in this regard.

POSSIBLE FUTURE POSITION / POLICY STATEMENTS

The Council also notes the following additional issues that may be addressed in future Council position/policy statements:

a. Rapid climate change poses a serious threat to subsistence uses. The Council anticipates major regulatory changes to safeguard subsistence uses as anthropogenic and ecological changes affect our region.

b. Climate change is likely to exacerbate the detrimental effects of fishery resource interception on subsistence uses. Simply put, it is anticipated that subsistence users fishing in terminal locations on Federal lands and waters will have increasing difficulty meeting their subsistence needs. This means that Federal authority will have to reach beyond Federal land and waters to ensure that anadromous fish will continue to be on the subsistence table, such as the extension of Federal jurisdiction through the Extra-territorial jurisdiction process.

c. In addition, the Council may further examine the meaning and intent of the Congressional Finding in Sec. 801 *(1) finds that subsistence uses are essential to Native physical, economic, traditional, and cultural existence and to non-Native physical, economic, traditional, and social existence*.

   This finding implies that subsistence uses have an existential importance to Native and non-Native rural Alaskans in addition to simply being a way of putting food on the table. Here, and elsewhere in this Title, Congress appears to be concerned with the character of subsistence as central to Native and rural culture . Sec. 802 says clearly that *the purpose of this this title is to provide the opportunity of rural residents engaged in a subsistence way of life to do so.* In this respect, Congress appears to weigh in on supporting *the act of subsistence* itself. This approach for protecting subsistence uses contrasts with other Federal approaches used elsewhere to recognize rights to resources.

   1) The Council also notes that ANILCA Title VIII calls for protecting subsistence uses, rather than establish a compensatory mechanism that would pay subsistence users for loss of their use of traditional resources.

   2) The approach taken in Title VIII suggests that the law aims to provide protection for subsistence uses as cultural and social activities, not simply to provide subsistence uses with a harvest.

   If, upon further study, this Council finds the above reasoning to be correct, it is likely to recommend adoption of proposals that provide for cultural or social subsistence use practices.

In light of this examination of ANILCA, the Council will entertain regulatory proposals that provide for community subsistence uses and needs.

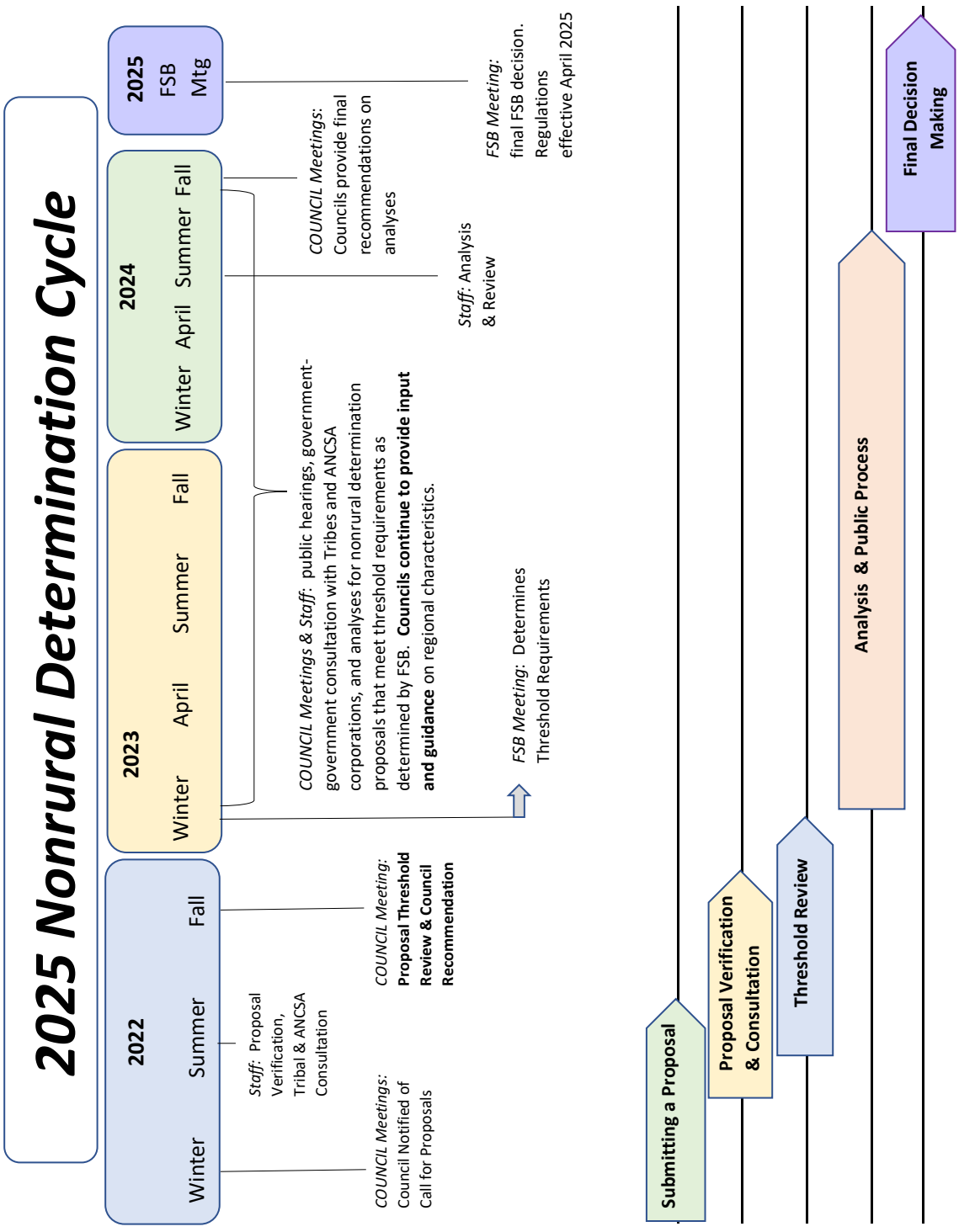
Lastly, we would like to thank the Board for its time to consider our interpretation of the intent of ANILCA Title VIII, specifically as it relates to providing meaningful priority and promoting the continuation of subsistence uses of fish and wildlife resources.

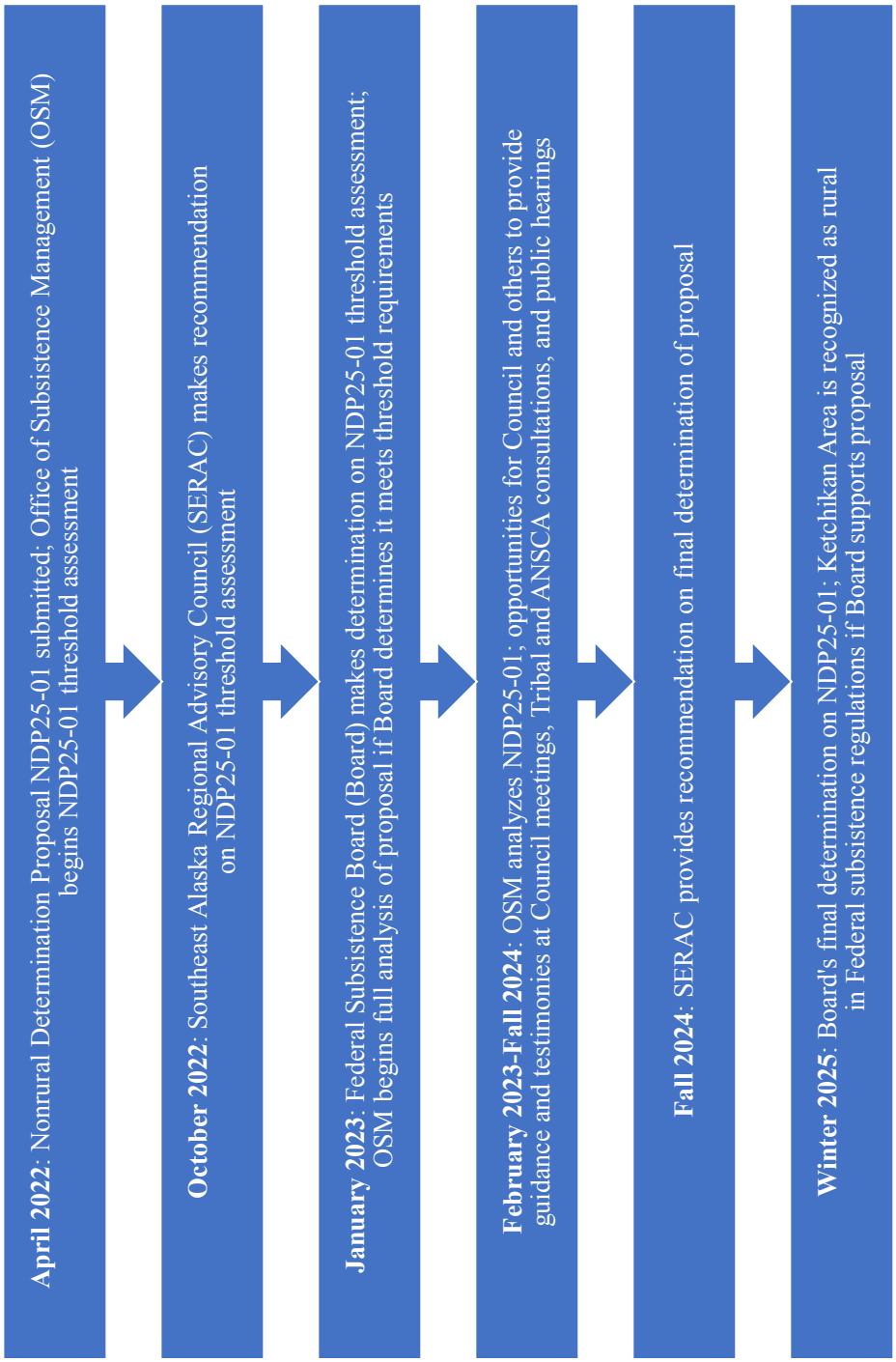
If you have any questions regarding this letter, they can be addressed through our Council Coordinator DeAnna Perry at 907-209-7817 or dlperry@usda.gov.

Sincerely,

Donald Hernandez
Chair, Regional Advisory Council
Southeast Alaska Region

cc: Federal Subsistence Board
Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Members
Office of Subsistence Management
Interagency Staff Committee
Southcentral Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Kodiak/Aleutians Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Seward Peninsula Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Northwest Arctic Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
North Slope Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Benjamin Mulligan, Deputy Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Mark Burch, Special Projects Coordinator, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Administrative Record


2025 Nonrural Determination Cycle
2022
Winter
Summer
Fall
2023
Winter
April
Summer
Fall
2024
Winter
April
Summer
Fall
2025
FSB
Mtg
Staff: Proposal Verification, Tribal & ANCSA Consultation
COUNCIL Meetings: Council Notified of Call for Proposals
COUNCIL Meeting: Proposal Threshold Review & Council Recommendation
COUNCIL Meetings & Staff: public hearings, government-government consultation with Tribes and ANCSA corporations, and analyses for nonrural determination proposals that meet threshold requirements as determined by FSB. Councils continue to provide input and guidance on regional characteristics.
FSB Meeting: Determines Threshold Requirements
Staff: Analysis & Review
COUNCIL Meetings: Councils provide final recommendations on analyses
FSB Meeting: final FSB decision. Regulations effective April 2025
Submitting a Proposal
Proposal Verification & Consultation
Threshold Review
Analysis & Public Process
Final Decision Making


April 2022: Nonrural Determination Proposal NDP25-01 submitted; Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) begins NDP25-01 threshold assessment
October 2022: Southeast Alaska Regional Advisory Council (SERAC) makes recommendation on NDP25-01 threshold assessment
January 2023: Federal Subsistence Board (Board) makes determination on NDP25-01 threshold assessment; OSM begins full analysis of proposal if Board determines it meets threshold requirements
February 2023-Fall 2024: OSM analyzes NDP25-01; opportunities for Council and others to provide guidance and testimonies at Council meetings, Tribal and ANSCA consultations, and public hearings
Fall 2024: SERAC provides recommendation on final determination of proposal
Winter 2025: Board's final determination on NDP25-01; Ketchikan Area is recognized as rural in Federal subsistence regulations if Board supports proposal

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Proposal to the Federal Subsistence Board for Rural Designation of the Ketchikan Area and in the alternative to designate the Federally Recognized Ketchikan Indian Community Service Area as rural or as a subsistence area for all Alaska Natives who reside in that area.

1. The Ketchikan Indian Community Tribal Government respectfully proposes that the Federal Subsistence Board change the Board's previous designation of Ketchikan from nonrural to rural.

2. As a threshold matter the following are key factors or points of information not previously considered by the Board or that demonstrate that the information previously used has changed since the original determination was made and which is expanded upon further in our narrative and supported by the exhibits attached to this proposal:

    a. The population for the Ketchikan area has declined in each of the last 3 decennial censuses. (see exhibit 1. United State Census-Ketchikan, AK.)

b. Since the last determination of Ketchikan as "non-rural", the FSB has reviewed and determined that the Organized Village of Saxman (OVS) – which falls wholly within the same community and population area as Ketchikan – as rural. KIC supports and agrees with the designation of OVS as rural and we contend that FSB's determination of OVS as rural on March 10, 2016 adds support to, validates, and underscores KIC's own proposal for rural status as access to community infrastructure, food vendors, healthcare, education etc. is identical to both OVS and KIC. (see exhibit 2. Saxman IRA-Federal Subsistence Board Restores Rural Community Status, Press release)

c. New factors creating pressure on food security for our isolated community including the loss of one of three local primary food vendors, COVD-19, inflation in food prices, fuel prices, and the constriction of the supply chain discussed in more detail below.

d. The continuing and expanding recognition of the Ketchikan area as rural by the federal government through many of its departments and agencies including but not limited to the Department of Agriculture, the Indian Health Service, the National Libraries of Medicine, the U.S. Census Bureau, the U.S. Department of Transportation, the U.S. Department of Treasury. The Department of Health and Human Services. (see exhibit 3. Definitions of rural by various Federal Agencies)

e. The failure of the policies, practices, regulations, and designations of the federal government in general and FSB in particular to adequately protect and provide for the physical, economic, traditional, and cultural existence as contemplated by the subsistence authority granted to FSB and as enshrined in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) discussed in more detail below.

3. Ketchikan lies on the traditional territory of the Tlingit Aani, specifically the lands of the Saanya Kwaan and Tanta Kwaan. Ketchikan has a long-standing history of Indigenous occupation well before colonizers ever stepped foot in Alaska. The community of Ketchikan (which is a Tlingit word that roughly translates to the "Thundering wings of an Eagle."), and its home on Revillagegado Island are essentially separated and isolated from the rest of the world. Ketchikan - a community that is comparable in size to both Sitka and Kodiak, Alaska and smaller in population that Bethel, Alaska, all three of which enjoy FSB's rural designation - is heavily reliant on the natural resources in our immediate area including fish, wildlife, and terrestrial/aquatic plants. Whether indigenous or not, the residents of Ketchikan have strong ties to the food resources that can be gathered here. The area that we are proposing for rural status designation includes the entirety of Revillagegado Island, Pennock Island, Gravina Island, the southern portion of Cleveland Peninsula, and the surrounding waters in this area. This area is the footprint of both Ketchikan Indian Community and the Ketchikan Gateway Borough (see map and exhibit 4. Ketchikan Indian Community/Ketchikan Gateway Borough Jurisdiction map).

4. There are a number of factors that support the determination of rural status for the Ketchikan area:

a. Ketchikan, which is comparable in population size and area characteristics to Sitka, AK, is completely inaccessible by the road system from the rest of the state of Alaska and the country as a whole. In terms of non-traditional foods that can be purchased through stores, our access is limited by the privately-owned barges that come to Ketchikan once a week (and which may be further limited based on whether conditions). We do not have large scale agricultural systems on our islands, and we do not raise livestock in our area. If anything happened to these barges we would not be able feed ourselves with food available for purchase in the stores for very long. This was apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic. The image in this section was a common occurrence for the past two years both due to COVID and more recent challenges with the national and international supply chain network. Some people are fortunate and were able to get their needs through the grocery store, but for those without reliable transportation they would often find the store bare by the time they got there, especially with meat and vegetable products. Theoretically supplies could be flown in, but at best it would be inefficient and no private entity has the obligation to make those efforts. This factor alone should be enough to seriously consider rural status designation.

b. Ketchikan suffered the loss of one of its only three principal food vendors known as Tatsuda's, (the other two are Safeway and Alaska & Proud) the grocery store here that was demolished in a rockslide in 2019. Not only was this store an important local business for the family that owned it and their employees, but Ketchikan has seen further tightening of its food access since that tragic event. The family decided to not rebuild, and Ketchikan has felt these shortages throughout the community.

c. It seems that there are misconceptions on the public services that are available to Ketchikan. One of these misconceptions has to do with our access to healthcare services. Ketchikan has one small, rural, critical access hospital. This CAH has limited capacity to treat people. Often our people must be referred or transferred to Seattle, Anchorage, or Sitka for medical services. Again, access to these extended specialty or emergent services are only accessible via air flight as Ketchikan is not connected to any road system. The Ketchikan Indian Community Tribal Government does not believe that our tribal citizens should continue to be denied the ability to harvest their traditional foods to sustain their healthy culture merely due to the presence of some limited infrastructure in our community. Having grocery stores, sewers, and other facilities should not limit the ability to hunt, harvest, and gather the things that keep our people the healthy and allow then to retain important ties to their indigenous culture.

d. The Ketchikan Indian Community Tribal Government, a Sovereign Alaska Native Tribe that is recognized by the United States Federal Government has formally acknowledged the Ketchikan area as a rural community through official action of its Tribal Council (see attached). The criteria used to make this resolution cited the high reliance on the traditional foods in our area, our inability to easily travel to other communities, and historical love for our own space in this community. This action by a Sovereign Tribe is entitled to the full faith and credit of the United States Government and should be should consequently be adopted by the FSB.

e. While our current non-rural status does not differentiate between Indigenous vs. non-Indigenous rights, the United States federal government has the obligation through law to affirm that the subsistence needs of the Alaska native tribes are being met for all traditional foods. During the passage of the Alaska Native Settlement Claims Act (ANCSA) Congress stated that it recognized Native interests in subsistence resources and directed - in committee report – that the Secretary of the Interior and the State

of Alaska were " to take any action necessary to protect the subsistence needs of Alaska Natives." The follow up to that commitment was the passage of the Alaska National interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) nearly ten years later. Specifically, section 801 of ANILCA invokes the historic federal authority over Native affairs to protect Native physical, economic, traditional, and cultural existence. Despite FSB's interpretation of ANILCA as "racially neutral" statute, it is an important principle within ANILCA that subsistence protections are remedial in nature, and indeed based in federal law. Under the current non-rural/rural scheme those subsistence, physical, and cultural needs of Alaska Native's in Ketchikan are not being met, and the tribal citizens of the Ketchikan Indian Community are the ones that are being disproportionately disadvantaged. The only resource that our tribal citizens have reasonable access to is Pacific halibut, however due to non-rural status regulations, we are forced to go miles out of town to attempt to harvest that resource. The further out our people have to go can result in a higher potential for injury and loss of life, something that both of our governments should be actively trying to prevent for any individual. Moreover, the most recent surge in fuel prices further challenges our citizens' access to even this resource. The point we are trying to make here is that the way that things are managed in Ketchikan are not working in a way that is safe and equitable for all our traditional resources. The Federal Subsistence Board has the responsibility to the federally recognized tribes to provide opportunities to harvest these traditional foods in sufficient quantities. This responsibility has not been met and is currently not being me for out people.

It is for these and all the reasons set forth herein that KIC asks the FSB to consider a broader interpretation of its mandate by alternatively designating the service area of KIC as set forth in its federally recognized constitution, at Article V, as a subsistence area for all Alaska native's residing within that area.

f. The Ketchikan Indian Community holds is traditional foods in high regard as these foods are critical to our people's survival and promote a healthy mind and body. As a result, co-management of the resource between the Tribe, the federal government, and the state of Alaska is imperative for the sustainability of all the resources that we utilize. The Ketchikan Indian Community is already engaging in activities that are promoting conservation for various species around our community. Our most recent venture involves a population assessment of ooligan (eulachon, *Thaleichthys pacificus*) on the Joonax (Unuk) River. For years we have not had access to this traditional food in either state or federally managed waters ostensibly due to low abundances. The Tribe more recently partnered with the United States Forest Service and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to do an eDNA project to get a better idea of abundance of this species. As a Tribe, we have also been working with the Alaska Board of Fisheries to open the harvest of ooligan in state managed waters so that our tribal citizens can reconnect with those resources. Recognizing Ketchikan as rural would mean access to the all-important harvest of ooligan on the Joonax in federally managed waters, which at least on this river is safer to harvest than state managed waters. There are other species of game and finfish that would become more accessible to our tribal citizens if Ketchikan's rural status was recognized by the FSB and as a tribe we are working to become full partners in the co-management of these traditional foods.

g. In our traditional homelands, the indigenous people in this area have historically had high reliance on the Joonax (Unuk) River for a variety of resources. These include, but are not limited to, ooligan, king salmon, deer, moose, and seals. For generations indigenous harvesters would utilize this oasis as a multi-use gathering and hunting area. Due to the non-rural status designation that has been given to Ketchikan however, our tribal citizens have very limited access to the bountiful resources that the Joonax has to offer. KIC contends that stripping our tribal citizens of the option to harvest in this area contributes to the destruction of our culture and traditional ecological knowledge. This is something that the Ketchikan Indian Community Tribal Government wants to avoid at all costs. We cannot allow this to continue any longer.

h. While not everyone in Ketchikan has an Indigenous background, the idea of trading and sharing is alive and well in our community. The thinking that resources will be depleted at higher rates, at least through harvesting, is not supported in any way. The great majority of harvesters in this area do not exercise their individual harvesting rights or access once their own families' needs have been met in any year. The point of this designation is to make sure that our loved ones are taken care of within our community. To reiterate, our community is small, off the road system, is completely reliant on private entities to supply non-traditional foods. Many of the people on this island are harvesters, and those harvesters take care of their parents and grandparents throughout the rest of Ketchikan. Within the KIC community our harvesters consider elders, disabled

people, youth, and any other tribal members who may not be able to harvest for themselves. We do not use harvesting opportunities for sport, we use them for our way of life, whether Indigenous or not. This culture, tradition, and practice is consistent with rural communities like our neighbors in Saxman, Metlakatla, and Prince of Wales.

5. Based on the character of our community, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, the Federal Subsistence Board can verify that the community of Ketchikan meets the criteria needed to change our designation. KIC is respectfully requesting that the Federal Subsistence Board re-designate Ketchikan as rural. The fact the majority of households in Ketchikan rely on salmon, deer, halibut, beach growth, seafood, and terrestrial plants to sustain themselves and their families is reason enough to change this designation. Any disruption in the supply chain from the lower 48 will leave all citizens of Ketchikan, including the tribal citizens of the Ketchikan Indian Community, in a really bad position. In terms of processed westernized foods, we do not have any options other than the food the privately-owned barges operators supply us, which is alarming with the overhanging food security issues that we have been seeing for years coupled with the current restrictive federal regulations that are in place.

6. In summary, the Ketchikan Indian Community Tribal Government is proposing and requesting that the Federal Subsistence Board designate Ketchikan as rural. The Ketchikan Indian Tribal Government officially

recognizes the land of the Saanya Kwaan and Tanta Kwaan as rural by unanimous vote through resolution (see exhibit 5. KIC Resolution 22-14). As a federally recognized tribe, we have the sovereignty to make this decision and have identified our traditional territory as rural. At this stage we feel we have provided enough supporting information to move forward with this four-year process. The Ketchikan Indian Community represents a total 3300+ tribal citizens that live on Revillagegado Island. We are also confident that during this process you will find multiple stake-holders in who support this proposal who are not affiliated with the Ketchikan Indian Community. This is a community issue, not just a tribal issue. Following the years of COVID-19 and the more recent ravages of inflation it is becoming more apparent than ever that that potential for economic growth in Ketchikan is severely limited, which again underscores the importance of our peoples need to rely on the resources that are in the environment around them. As the governing body for our tribal citizens, we must overcome and oppose any condition which would result in forcing our people out of or away from their traditional homeland due to lack of opportunity to fish, hunt, and gather. Without changes in regulatory policy through the Federal Subsistence Board, we continue to run the risk of losing our people to larger communities. Please consider giving the citizens that reside in Ketchikan more access to the resources of the Tongass National Forest.

As a postscript to this proposal, here are quotes from some our tribal citizens on what it means to them to be subsistence users of the traditional foods of our lands and seas:

1. "Life."
2. "It means everything to me."
3. "Our culture."
4. "Family Tradition and passing this information onto the next generation. It means food stability in the winter time and pride in yourself knowing you are able to provide for your family or others if needed.
5. "Survival."
6. "Community."

7. "It means that my ancestors won the fight to keep our ancestral traditions alive and strong so that I too can provide for people.
8. "It means the place we belong."
9. "In this age of technology, it is being able to spend quality time with family and friends where there is no cell phone service while putting food on the table and our freezer."
10. "Self-sufficient. I can get my own food and medicine so I don't have to depend on going to the stores."

Respectfully submitted,

Trixie Bennett, President
Ketchikan Indian Community

EXHIBIT 1. UNITED STATE CENSUS, KETCHIKAN, AK.

QuickFacts

Kodiak Island Borough, Alaska; Bethel Census Area, Alaska; Ketchikan Gateway Borough, Alaska

QuickFacts provides statistics for all states and counties, and for cities and towns with a ***population of 5,000 or more.***

Table

All Topics	Kodiak Island Borough, Alaska	Bethel Census Area, Alaska	Ketchikan Gateway Borough, Alaska
Population Estimates, July 1 2021, (V2021)	△ 12,787	△ 18,557	△ 13,754
PEOPLE			
Population			
Population Estimates, July 1 2021, (V2021)	△ 12,787	△ 18,557	△ 13,754
Population estimates base, April 1, 2020, (V2021)	△ 13,101	△ 18,666	△ 13,948
Population, percent change – April 1, 2020 (estimates base) to July 1, 2021, (V2021)	△ -2.4%	△ -0.6%	△ -1.4%
Population, Census, April 1, 2020	13,101	18,666	13,948
Population, Census, April 1, 2010	13,592	17,013	13,477
Age and Sex			
Persons under 5 years, percent	△ 7.3%	△ 10.7%	△ 5.6%
Persons under 18 years, percent	△ 24.9%	△ 30.6%	△ 21.7%
Persons 65 years and over, percent	△ 11.4%	△ 7.9%	△ 16.5%
Female persons, percent	△ 46.9%	△ 48.4%	△ 48.9%
Race and Hispanic Origin			
White alone, percent	△ 55.0%	△ 10.3%	△ 67.4%
Black or African American alone, percent (a)	△ 1.3%	△ 1.8%	△ 1.1%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone, percent (a)	△ 15.1%	△ 83.9%	△ 13.9%
Asian alone, percent (a)	△ 21.9%	△ 1.8%	△ 8.2%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, percent (a)	△ 1.0%	△ 0.2%	△ 0.4%
Two or More Races, percent	△ 7.7%	△ 3.7%	△ 9.1%
Hispanic or Latino, percent (b)	△ 8.6%	△ 2.7%	△ 5.8%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, percent	△ 49.1%	△ 9.8%	△ 63.9%
Population Characteristics			
Veterans, 2016-2020	1,112	710	1,264
Foreign born persons, percent, 2016-2020	21.3%	2.1%	8.9%
Housing			
Housing units, July 1, 2019, (V2019)	5,501	6,034	6,458

EXHIBIT 2. SAXMAN IRA-FEDERAL SUBSISTENCE BOARD RESTORES RURAL COMMUNITY STATUS, PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: President Lee Wallace, Organized Village of Saxman
Phone: (907) 617-3128
Email: iragovt@kpunet.net

FEDERAL SUBSISTENCE BOARD RESTORES RURAL COMMUNITY STATUS TO SAXMAN VILLAGE

After ten years of arduous effort, the Organized Village of Saxman is filled with gratitude today at the recent announcement by the Federal Subsistence Board (FSB) to remove Saxman from the list of nonrural communities, thereby recognizing Saxman as a rural community. Under the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), rural community members enjoy a priority to harvest wild fish and game on federal public lands and waters. In 2006, however, the FSB wrongfully classified Saxman as a non-rural community, there by denying its citizens the subsistence rights they had exercised since time immemorial.

"The importance of being recognized as a rural community is acute for Saxman and is crucial to survival. Subsistence is an essential cultural practice, a traditional worldview that is at the heart of surviving and thriving in Saxman," said Lee Wallace, Tribal President of the Organized Village of Saxman. The preference for take of fish and wildlife resources for subsistence uses on federal public lands and waters in Alaska, when these resources are sometimes scarce, is profoundly important to a traditional culture that has lived and breathed this lifestyle for millennia. The affirmation of being classified as rural means the retention and sustenance of natural resource harvest will remain for generations into the future. "In Saxman, subsistence is a meaningful traditional cultural practice and a way of living and prospering in this world," added President Wallace. "All those days, all those doubts of the last ten years, are behind the Tribe now. I praise and thank the Federal Subsistence Board for recognizing that Saxman is indeed rural, thank you to Alaska Federation of Natives, Sealaska Corporation, and Cape Fox Corporation for assisting, give praise to Dr. Daniel Monteith for his support, give praise to the Native American Rights Fund, who were a source of strength, give praise to the Tribes who bolstered Saxman up, give praise to the faithful tribal citizens and community members who gave moral support and testimony, and especially give praise to God the Creator, who indelibly oversees all good."

NATIVE AMERICAN RIGHTS FUND

FEDERAL SUBSISTENCE BOARD RESTORES RURAL COMMUNITY STATUS TO SAXMAN VILLAGE

March 11, 2016

Categories: Hunting and Fishing (Treaty Rights, Subsistence), Native Lands & Sacred Places (Land Back, Treaty Rights, Tribal Homelands, National Historic Places Protections)

Yesterday the Federal Subsistence Board (FSB) officially restored the rural status of Saxman, Alaska. The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) grants a harvest priority of fish and game on public lands, but this priority is only extended to "rural communities." In 2006, under political pressure from the State of Alaska, the FSB terminated Saxman's rural status and grouped the village with the larger city of Ketchikan. Represented by NARF, Saxman later filed suit to restore its rural status, but parties settled the case in favor of yesterday's administrative fix.

Our client, the Organized Village of Saxman, worked for over ten years to restore the community's rural status. We congratulate all of the tribal citizens and community members who worked for so long to restore their essential subsistence rights. The Organized Village of Saxman's press release discussing this important milestone is available here.

Boulder CO (main) – 303-447-8760 Anchorage AK – 907-276-0680 Washington DC – 202-785-4166

EXHIBIT 3. DEFINITIONS OF RURAL BY VARIOUS FEDERAL AGENCIES

Definitions of rural by various Federal Entities

Indian Health Service (Ketchikan IS rural)

Comprehensive primary health care and disease prevention services are provided through a network of hospitals, clinics, and health stations on or near Indian reservations. These facilities, which are managed by the IHS, Tribes, and Tribal organizations, are predominately located in rural and primary care settings. In addition, the IHS contracts with urban Indian organizations (UIOs) for health care services provided in some urban centers. The Indian health care system strives to provide comprehensive care through a network of IHS, Tribal, and urban health facilities and by purchasing health care services from non-IHS providers through the Purchased/Referred Care (PRC) program.

National Library of Medicine (Ketchikan IS rural)

https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1449333/

Although many policymakers, researchers, and policy analysts would prefer one standardized, all-purpose definition, "rural" is a multifaceted concept about which there is no universal agreement. Defining rurality can be elusive and frequently relies on stereotypes and personal experiences. The term suggests pastoral landscapes, unique demographic structures and settlement patterns, isolation, low population density, extractive economic activities, and distinct sociocultural milieus. But these aspects of rurality fail to completely define "rural." For example, rural cultures can exist in urban places. Only a small fraction of the rural population is involved in farming, and towns range from tens of thousands to a handful of residents. The proximity of rural areas to urban cores and services may range from a few miles to hundreds of miles. Generations of rural sociologists, demographers, and geographers have struggled with these concepts

US Census Bureau (Ketchikan IS rural)

https://mtgis-portal.geo.census.gov/arcgis/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=49cd4bc9c8eb444ab51218c1d5001ef6#:~:text=The%20Census%20Bureau%20defines%20rural,rural%20based%20on%20this%20definition.

See Map

US Department of Transportation (Ketchikan is Rural)

This link shows various definitions for different grant programs, all of which Ketchikan would be eligible for rural funding.
https://www.transportation.gov/rural/eligibility#:~:text=Located%20outside%20of%20a%20U.S.%20

Census%2Ddesignated%20urbanized%20area%20with,population%20of%20200%2C000%20or%20more

US Department of Treasury (Maybe)

By definition, any census tract that is not in a UA or UC is "rural."2 Each rural area, then, has less than 1,000 ppsm.

https://gwipp.gwu.edu/sites/g/files/zaxdzs2181/f/downloads/Counting%20for%20Dollars%233%20Federal%20Funds%20for%20Rural%20America%2012-18.pdf

US Department of Health and Human Services (Ketchikan IS rural)

Anything that is not in a metro area is considered rural. Metro meaning 50,000+ people

EXHIBIT 4. KETCHIKAN INDIAN COMMUNITY/KETCHIKAN GATEWAY BOROUGH JURISDICTION MAP

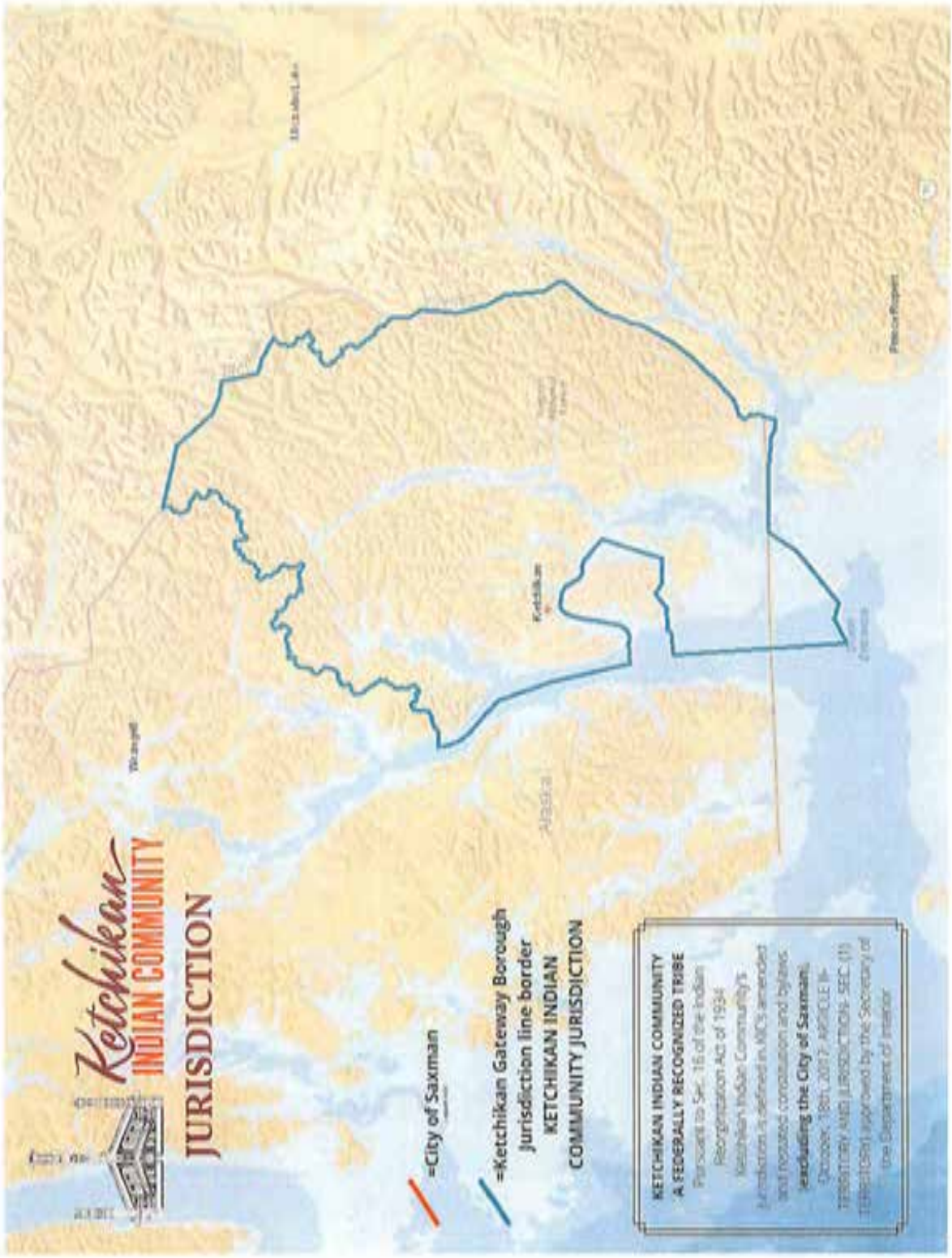
Ketchikan
INDIAN COMMUNITY
JURISDICTION
=City of Saxman
=Ketchikan Gateway Borough
Jurisdiction line border
KETCHIKAN INDIAN
COMMUNITY JURISDICTION
KETCHIKAN INDIAN COMMUNITY
A FEDERALLY RECOGNIZED TRIBE
including the City of Saxman

EXHIBIT 5. KIC RESOLUTION 22-14

Ketchikan INDIAN COMMUNITY

RESOLUTION: KIC 22-14

TITLE: DECLARATION OF KETCHIKAN INDIAN COMMUNITY'S JURISDICTION AND TERRITORY AS RURAL.

WHEREAS, the Ketchikan Indian Community ("KIC" or the "Tribe"), is a federally recognized Tribal government organized under a Constitution and Bylaws (collectively, the "Constitution") ratified on October 18, 2017, and previously organized under a Constitution and Bylaws ratified on January 16, 1979, and previously organized under a Constitution and Bylaws ratified on January 27, 1940, in each instance pursuant to Section 16 of the Indian Reorganization Act

WHEREAS, the KIC Tribal Council (the "Tribal Council") is the governing body of the representative Tribal Government of the Tribe; and

WHEREAS, KIC is the Tribal Government entity that represents and serves over 6,300 Tribal Citizens in which KIC tribal citizens are of Alaskan Native descent and primarily of Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian origin; and

WHEREAS, the Indian relocation act, and Indian Removal policy encouraged native American people and Alaska natives to leave their ancestral homelands to assimilate to the general population of American in the name of the United States Manifest Destiny; and

WHEREAS, native Americans and Alaska Natives have experienced detrimental trauma, eradication and genocide from the United States laws, acts, policies and statehood and still to this day our native people are on a healing journey from those traumas; and

WHEREAS, native Americans and Alaska natives were forced into and to abide by a law called the Indian Reorganization act, in which this act was

1

created to keep native Americans off lands that the non-native people wish to settle; and

WHEREAS, the Federal Government and Alaska Statehood formed ANILCA, and ANCSA in an effort to address long standing Alaska native land claims and native rights to hunt, fish, and gather on Alaska lands and waters; and

WHEREAS, Alaska native peoples have never conveyed or conceded or officially transferred our homelands, and still hunt, fish, gather and govern the lands and waters as our native people have done since the beginning of time; and

WHEREAS, the Ketchikan Indian Community and its Tribal Citizens within the jurisdiction of Ketchikan, Alaska (Ketchikan Gateway Borough), is made up of *(defined in KIC's Amended and Restated Constitution and Bylaws October, 18th, 2017; ARTICLE II-TERRITORY AND JURISDICTION- SEC. (1) TERRITORY*; and

WHEREAS, ANILCA and federal subsistence rules were initiated and amended to protect the traditional subsistence and native fishing, hunting, and gathering rights for Alaska Natives and all residents of Alaska residing in "rural" designated areas; and

WHEREAS, The Federal Subsistence Board and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service designated the area within the Ketchikan Gateway Borough as "non-rural" despite its clear, historic, and well accepted status as a rural area. And, despite Ketchikan's designation as a rural area by multiple other federal departments including the USDA and the US Census Bureau; and

WHEREAS, the Federal Subsistence Board's current designation of Ketchikan as "non-rural" jeopardizes the subsistence needs of Native Alaskan's and other residents who live in our area; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED,

that as a Federally Recognized Tribe which was established under the Indian Reorganization Act, KIC hereby declares Ketchikan Indian Community's territory and jurisdiction a rural area; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Ketchikan Indian Community and as long as KIC's Tribal Citizens are in existence, KIC will continue to combat and defend our inherent rights to fish, hunt, gather and govern the lands and waters within KIC jurisdiction.

CERTIFICATION

The foregoing resolution was adopted at a duly convened meeting of the Ketchikan Indian Community Tribal Council, assembled this 21st day of March, 2022 at 2960 Tongass, Ketchikan, Alaska 99901, by a vote of: 8 FOR and 0 AGAINST

Trixie Bennett, President — Date 03/21/2022

ATTEST:

Judy Leask-Guthrie, Secretary — Date 03/21/2022

Effective: March 21, 2022 KIC 22-14			
Roll Call	Yes	No	Absent
BENNETT			
SKAN	X		
LEASK GUTHRIE	X		
EDWARDSON	X		
BURNS	X		
RUARO	X		
HAYNES	X		
JOHNSON	X		
WILLARD FLANERY	X		

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Ketchikan
INDIAN COMMUNITY
JURISDICTION
=City of Saxman
=Ketchikan Gateway Borough Jurisdiction line border
KETCHIKAN INDIAN COMMUNITY
A FEDERALLY RECOGNIZED TRIBE
excluding the City of Saxman

POLICY ON NONRURAL DETERMINATIONS

FEDERAL SUBSISTENCE BOARD

Adopted January 11, 2017

PURPOSE

This policy clarifies the internal management of the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) and provides transparence to the public regarding the process of making or rescinding nonrural determinations of communities or areas for the purpose of identifying rural residents who may harvest fish and wildlife for subsistence uses on Federal public lands in Alaska. This policy is intended to clarify existing practices under the current statute and regulations. It does not create any right or benefit enforceable at law or in equity, against the United States, its agencies, officers, or employees, or any other person.

INTRODUCTION

Title VIII of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) declares that,

> the continuation of the opportunity for subsistence uses by rural residents of Alaska, including both Natives and non-Natives, on the public lands and by Alaska Natives on Native lands is essential to Native physical, economic, traditional, and cultural existence and to non-Native physical, economic, traditional, and social existence; the situation in Alaska is unique in that, in most cases, no practical alternative means are available to replace the food supplies and other items gathered from fish and wildlife which supply rural residents dependent on subsistence uses" (ANILCA Section 801).

Rural status provides the foundation for the subsistence priority on Federal public lands to help ensure the continuation of the subsistence way of life in Alaska. Prior to 2015, the Board determined rural status based on specific criteria set forth in Subpart B of the Federal subsistence regulations.

This approach was revised after a lengthy process that commenced in October 2009, when the Secretary of the Interior, with the concurrence of the Secretary of Agriculture, directed the Board to review the process for rural determinations. On December 31, 2012, the Board initiated a public review of the rural determination process. That public process lasted nearly a year, producing 278 comments from individuals, 137 comments from members of Regional Advisory Councils (Councils), 37 comments from Alaska Native entities, and 25 comments from other entities (e.g., city and borough governments). Additionally, the Board engaged in government-to-government consultation with tribes and consultation with Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) corporations. In general, the comments received indicated a broad dissatisfaction with the rural determination process. Among other comments, respondents indicated the aggregation criteria were perceived as arbitrary, the population thresholds were seen as inadequate to capture the reality of rural Alaska, and the decennial review was widely viewed to be unnecessary.

Based on this information, the Board held a public meeting on April 17, 2014 and decided to recommend a simplification of the process to the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture (Secretaries) to address rural status in the Federal Subsistence Management Program. The Board's recommended simplified process would eliminate the rural determination criteria from regulation and allows the Board to determine which areas or communities are nonrural in Alaska. All other communities or areas would, therefore, be considered "rural" in relation to the Federal subsistence priority in Alaska.

The Secretaries accepted the Board recommendation and published a Final Rule on November 4, 2015, revising the regulations governing the rural determination process for the Federal Subsistence Management Program in Alaska. The Secretaries removed specific rural determination guidelines and criteria, including requirements regarding population data, the aggregation of communities, and a decennial review. The final rule allowed the Board to make nonrural determinations using a comprehensive approach that may consider such factors as population size and density, economic indicators, military presence, industrial facilities, use of fish and wildlife, degree of remoteness and isolation, and any other relevant material, including information provided by the public.

By using a comprehensive approach and not relying on set guidelines and criteria, this new process will enable the Board to be more flexible in making decisions that take into account regional differences found throughout the State. This will also allow for greater input from the Councils, Federally recognized tribes of Alaska, Alaska Native Corporations, and the public in making nonrural determinations by incorporating the nonrural determination process into the subsistence regulatory schedule which has established comment periods and will allow for multiple opportunities for input. Simultaneously with the Final Rule, the Board published a Direct Final Rule (80 FR 68245; Nov. 4, 2015) **(Appendix B)** establishing the list of nonrural communities, i.e. those communities not subject to the Federal subsistence priority on Federal public lands, based on the list that predated the 2007 Final Rule (72 FR 25688; May 7, 2007).

As of November 4, 2015, the Board determined in accordance with 36 CFR 242.15 and 50 CFR 100.15 that the following communities or Census-designated Places (CDPs)[1] are nonrural: Fairbanks North Star Borough; Homer area - including Homer, Anchor Point, Kachemak City, and Fritz Creek; Juneau area - including Juneau, West Juneau, and Douglas; Kenai area - including Kenai, Soldotna, Sterling, Nikiski, Salamatof, Kalifomsky, Kasilof, and Clam Gulch; Ketchikan area - including Ketchikan City, Clover Pass, North Tongass Highway, Ketchikan East, Mountain Point, Herring Cove, Saxman East, Pennock Island, and parts of Gravina Island; Municipality of Anchorage; Seward area- including Seward and Moose Pass; Valdez; and Wasilla/Palmer area - including Wasilla, Palmer, Sutton, Big Lake, Houston, and Bodenberg

[1] Census Designated Place (CDP) is defined by the Federal Census Bureau as the statistical counterpart of incorporated places, delineated to provide data for settled concentrations of populations identifiable by name but not legally incorporated under the laws of the state in which they are located. CDPs are delineated cooperatively by state and local officials and the Census Bureau, following Census Bureau guidelines.

Butte (36 CPR 242.23 and 50 CPR 100.23). All other communities and areas in Alaska are, therefore, rural.

BOARD AUTHORITIES

- ANILCA 16 U.S.C. 3101, 3126.
- Administrative Procedures Act (APA), 5 U.S.C. 551-559
- 36 CPR 242.15; 50 CPR 100.15
- 36 CPR 242.18(a); 50 CPR 100.18(a)
- 36 CPR 242.23; 50 CPR 100.23

POLICY

In accordance with the Administrative Procedures Act (APA), Federal rulemaking undertaken by the Federal Subsistence Management Program requires that any individual, organization, or community be given the opportunity to submit proposals to change Federal regulations. The Board will only address changes to the rural or nonrural status of communities or areas when requested in a proposal. This policy describes the Board's administrative process for addressing proposals to change the rural or nonrural status of a community or area by outlining proposal requirements and submission, identifying a process schedule and general process timeline, and outlining Board decision making when acting on such proposals.

SECTION A: Submitting a Proposal

Proponents must submit a written proposal in accordance with the guidance provided in the same Federal Register notice that includes a call for proposals to revise subsistence taking of fish and shellfish regulations and nonrural determinations. This notice is published in even-numbered years. Proposals to revise nonrural determinations will be accepted every other fish and shellfish regulatory cycle, starting in 2018.

SECTION B: Requirements for Proposals

Making a Nonrural Determination

Proposals can be submitted to the Board to make a nonrural determination for a community or area. It is the proponent's responsibility to provide the Board with substantive narrative evidence to support their rationale of why the proposed nonrural determination should be considered. Proposals seeking a nonrural determination must also include the basic requirements and meet the threshold requirements outlined below.

Basic Requirements

All proposals must contain the following information:

- Full name and mailing address of the proponent;
- A statement describing the proposed nonrural determination action requested;
- A detailed description of the community or area under consideration, including any current boundaries, borders, or distinguishing landmarks, so as to identify which Alaska residents would be affected by the change in nonrural status;

- Rationale and supporting evidence (population size and density, economic indicators, military presence, industrial facilities, use of fish and wildlife, degree of remoteness and isolation, and any other relevant material) for the Board to consider in determining the nonrural status of a community or area;
- A detailed statement of the facts that illustrate that the community or area is nonrural using the rationale and supporting evidence stated above; and
- Any additional information supporting the proposed change.

Threshold Requirements

In addition to the basic requirements outlined above, the following threshold requirements apply. The Board shall only accept a proposal to designate a community or area as nonrural, if the Board determines the proposal meets the following threshold requirements:

- The proposal provides new or different relevant information than was used by the Board in its most recent decision about the nonrural status of the individual community or area;
- The proposal provides substantive rationale for the nonrural character of a community or area that takes into consideration the unique qualities of the region; and
- The proposal provides evidence supporting the proponent's rationale that a community or area is nonrural.

The Board shall determine whether or not the proposal satisfies the threshold requirements outlined above after considering the recommendation(s) from the affected Regional Advisory Council(s). If the Board determines the proposal does not satisfy the threshold requirements, the proponent will be notified in writing. If it is determined the proposal does meet the threshold, it shall be considered in accordance with the process schedule and timeline set forth below.

Limitation on Submission of Proposals Seeking Nonrural Determinations

The Board is aware of the burden placed on rural communities and areas in defending their rural status. If the rural status of a community or area is maintained after a proposal to change its status to nonrural is rejected, then no proposals to change the rural status of that community or area shall be accepted until the next proposal cycle. If a new proposal is submitted during a subsequent proposal cycle, then the proposal must set forth a demonstrated change that was not previously considered by the Board. Additionally, the following considerations apply to resubmitting proposals to change a community's status from rural to nonrural:

- Whether or not there has been a "demonstrated change" to the rural identity of a community or area is the burden of the proponent to illustrate by a preponderance of the evidence;

- Many characteristics, individually or in combination, may constitute a "demonstrated change" including, but not limited to, changes in population size and density, economic indicators, military presence, industrial facilities, use of fish and wildlife, or degree of remoteness and isolation; and
- The Board's most recent decision on the nonrural status of a community or area will be the baseline for any future proposals for that community or area, thus, a "demonstrated change", as referred to in this portion of the process, must have taken place after the Board's most recent decision.

Rescinding a Nonrural Determination

For proposals seeking to have the Board rescind a nonrural determination, it is the proponent's responsibility to provide the Board with substantive narrative evidence to support their rationale of why the nonrural determination should be rescinded. Proposals seeking to have the Board rescind a nonrural determination must also include the basic requirements and meet the threshold requirements outlined below.

Basic Requirements

All proposals must contain the following information:

- Full name and mailing address of the proponent;
- A statement describing the proposed nonrural determination action requested;
- A description of the community or area considered as nonrural, including any current boundaries, borders, or distinguishing landmarks, so as to identify what Alaska residents would be affected by the change in rural status;
- Rationale and supporting evidence (law, policy, factors, or guidance) for the Board to consider in determining the nonrural status of a community or area;
- A detailed statement of the facts that illustrate that the community or area is rural using the rationale stated above; and
- Any additional information supporting the proposed change.

Threshold Requirements

In addition to the baseline information outlined above, the following threshold requirements apply. The Board shall only accept a proposal to rescind a nonrural determination, if the Board determines the proposal meets the following threshold requirements:

- The proposal provides new or different relevant information than was used by the Board in its most recent decision about the nonrural status of the individual community or area;
- The proposal provides substantive rationale for the rural character of a community or area that takes into consideration the unique qualities of the region; and
- The proposal provides evidence supporting the proponent's rationale that a community or area is rural instead of nonrural.

The Board shall determine whether or not the proposal satisfies the threshold requirements outlined above after considering the recommendation(s) from the affected Regional Advisory Council(s). If the Board determines the proposal does not satisfy the threshold requirements, the proponent will be notified in writing. If it is determined the proposal does meet the threshold, it shall be considered in accordance with the process schedule and timeline set forth below.

SECTION C: Decision Making

The Board will make or rescind nonrural determinations using a comprehensive approach that may consider such factors as population size and density, economic indicators, military presence, industrial facilities, use of fish and wildlife, degree of remoteness and isolation, and any other relevant material including information provided by the public. As part of its decision-making process, the Board may compare information from other, similarly-situated communities or areas if limited information exists for a certain community or area.

When acting on proposals to change the nonrural status of a community or area, the Board shall:

- Proceed on a case-by-case basis to address each proposal regarding nonrural determinations;
- Base its decision on nonrural status for a community or area on information of a reasonable and defensible nature contained within the administrative record;
- Make or rescind nonrural determinations based on a comprehensive application of evidence and considerations presented in the proposal that have been verified by the Board as accurate;
- Rely heavily on the recommendations from the affected Regional Advisory Council(s);
- Consider comments from government-to-government consultation with affected tribes;
- Consider comments from the public;
- Consider comments from the State of Alaska;
- Consider comments from consultation with affected ANCSA corporations;
- Have the discretion to modify the geographical extent of the area relevant to the nonrural determination; and

- Implement a final decision on a nonrural determination in compliance with the APA.

Regional Advisory Council Recommendations

The Board intends to rely heavily on the recommendations of the Councils and recognizes that Council input will be critical in addressing regional differences in the nonrural determination process. The Board will look to the Regional Advisory Councils for confirmation that any relevant information brought forth during the nonrural determination process accurately describes the unique characteristics of the affected community or region.

SECTION D: Process Schedule

As authorized in 36 CFR 242.18(a) and 50 CFR 100.18(a), "The Board may establish a rotating schedule for accepting proposals on various sections of subpart C or D regulations over a period of years." To ensure meaningful input from the Councils and allow opportunities for tribal and ANCSA corporation consultation and public comment, the Board will only accept nonrural determination proposals every other fish and shellfish regulatory cycle. If accepted, the proposal will be deliberated during the regulatory Board meeting in the next fisheries regulatory cycle. This schedule creates a three-year period for proposal submission, review, analysis, Regional Advisory Council input, tribal and ANCSA corporation consultation, public comment, and Board deliberation and decision.

SECTION E: General Process Timeline

Outlined in Table 1 and Table 2

Adopted by the Federal Subsistence Board January 11, 2017.
Revised by the Federal Subsistence Board August 4, 2020.

Table 1. General Process Timeline

1. January to March (Even Year) -A proposed rule is published in the Federal Register with the call for proposals to revise subsistence taking of fish and shellfish regulations and nonrural determinations.
2. April to July (Even Year) - Staff will verify that proposals include the basic requirements and can be legally addressed by the Federal Subsistence Program. If the proposal is incomplete or cannot be addressed by the Federal Subsistence Program, the proponent will be notified in writing. Additionally for verified proposals, tribal consultation and ANCSA corporation consultation opportunities will be provided during this time.
3. August to November (Even Year) - Staff will conduct a threshold assessment for verified proposals. Affected Regional Advisory Council(s) reviews the verified proposals and provides comments for the Board. The Council comments may include: relevant regional characteristics; and if, in the Council's opinion, the proposal meets the threshold requirements with justification. This action shall occur at the affected Council's fall meeting on the record.
4. November to December (Even Year)-The Interagency Staff Committee (ISC) shall provide comments on each verified proposal. Staff shall organize nonrural determination proposal presentations that include the original proposal, the Council preliminary recommendation, tribal and ANCSA consultation comments, and the ISC comments.
5. January (Odd Year) -At the Board's public meeting, Staff will present the proposals, and the Board will determine if the threshold requirements have been met. If the Board determines the proposal does not satisfy the threshold requirements, the proponent will be notified in writing. If it is determined the proposal does meet the threshold requirements, the Board will direct staff to prepare a full analysis according to established guidelines and address the proposal in accordance with the process schedule and timeline set forth below.
6. February (Odd Year) to July (Even Year) (18 months)- For proposals determined to satisfy the threshold requirements, the Board will conduct public hearings in the communities that may be affected should the proposal be adopted by the Board. OSM staff will also confer with affected Regional Advisory Council(s) about unique regional characteristics that should be considered in the analysis of the proposal and the suggested public hearing schedule. During this time period, independent of the fall Council meetings, interested tribes may request formal government-to-government consultation and ANCSA corporations may also request consultation on the nonrural determination proposals.
7. August to November (Even Year)-The Council(s) shall provide recommendations at their fall meetings and the ISC shall provide comments on the draft nonrural determination analyses.
8. November to December (Even Year)- Staff incorporates Council recommendations and ISC comments into the draft nonrural determination analyses for the Board.

9. January (Odd Year) -At the Board's Fisheries Regulatory meeting, staff present the nonrural determination analyses to the Board. The Board adopts, adopts with modification, or rejects the proposals regarding nonrural determinations.

Table 2. General Process Timeline Comparison with other Cycles

Wildlife & FRMP Cycle	***Fishery Cycle***	Dates ***Council Cycle***	**Board or Activity**	***Proposed Nonrural Determination Cycle***	
				Even Years	
	Fishery *Review Cycle*	***January***	***Board FRMP Work Session***	*1*	Nonrural Proposed Rule
		February *March*	Fishery Proposed Rule Jan- Mar		
		April *July*	**Board Meeting**	*2*	Proposal verification, Tribal and ANCSA consultation
		August *September* *October* *November*	*Fishery Proposal Review*	***3***	Proposal Threshold Review by Councils
		December		*4*	Finalize Threshold presentations for the Board
Wildlife & FRMP *Review Cycle*		***January***	**Board Meeting**	***5***	***Odd Years-*** ***Board determines which proposals meet the threshold requirements***
		February *March*	Wildlife Proposed Rule Jan - Mar	***6***	Odd to Even Years (18 months) - Public Hearings, government-government consultation with the tribes, ANCSA Corporation Consultation, and writing of Nonrural Determination Analyses for proposals that meet the threshold requirements as determined by the Board
		April *July*			
		August *September* *October* *November*	*Wildlife Proposal & FRMP Project Review*		
		December			
	Fishery *Review Cycle*	***January***	***Board FRMP Work Session***		
		February *March*	Fishery Proposed Rule Jan- Mar		
		April *July*	**Board Meeting**		
		August *September* *October* *November*	*Fishery Proposal Review*	***7***	Even Years Analysis Review
		December		*8*	Finalize Nonrural Determination Analyses
		January	**Board Meeting**	***9***	***Odd Years - Final Board Decision***

PRESS RELEASE

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Finds Listing of Alexander Archipelago wolf under the Endangered Species Act Not Warranted

Aug 22, 2023

Media Contacts
Katrina Liebich

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is announcing today that listing the Alexander Archipelago wolf under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) is not warranted at this time.

Alexander Archipelago wolf is a subspecies of North American gray wolf. It is found along Southeast Alaska and British Columbia's coastal mainland and larger island complexes. It is generally smaller and darker than continental gray wolves and prefers to den beneath the root systems of very large, old trees. The extensive review process found that Alexander Archipelago wolf is not currently endangered throughout its range, nor likely to become so within the foreseeable future.

To determine if listing was warranted, the Service conducted a species status assessment using the best available Western science and Traditional Ecological Knowledge of Southeast Alaska Indigenous peoples. Conservation biology principles of resiliency, redundancy, and representation were applied to identify Alexander Archipelago wolves' ecological requirements for survival and reproduction at the individual, population, and species levels.

The ESA allows citizens to petition the Service to add species to the list of threatened and endangered species, remove species from the list, and to reclassify species already on the list. When the Service receives a petition to list a species under the ESA, it is required to make a finding as to whether there is substantial information indicating the petitioned action may be warranted. If the preliminary finding is positive, the Service conducts a species status assessment to determine if

listing is warranted. The Service received a petition to list the Alexander Archipelago wolf and subsequently published a 90-day finding that the petition contained substantial information indicating listing may be warranted.

The purpose of the ESA is to conserve endangered and threatened species and the ecosystems on which they depend. The ESA is extraordinarily effective at preventing species from going extinct and has inspired action to conserve at-risk species and their habitat before they need to be listed as threatened or endangered. More than 99 percent of all listed species are still with us today since the ESA was signed into law in 1973. As a result of the ESA, more than 100 species of plants and animals have been delisted based on recovery or downlisted from endangered to threatened. https://www.fws.gov/esa50

The notice will publish in the Federal Register on August 23, 2023. For more information, including supporting materials, please visit https://www.regulations.gov/, Docket Number: FWS-R7-ES-2023-0109.

More: Alexander Archip.e.1.ago Wolf 12-month Not Warranted Finding.Questions& Answers

For more details on the ESA listing process, go to: https://www.fws.gQ\llR[Ogram/listing:.a.n.d.: classification/what-we-do.

To learn more about the Alexander Archipelago wolf, visit: https://www.fws.gov/species/alexander-archipelago-wolf-canis-lupus-ligoni

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service works with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. For more information, visit www.fws.gov

Press Release

Published
Aug 22, 2023

Endangered Species Act

Media Contacts
Katrina Liebich

the Commission limit these requirements to service providers that are currently receiving support?

III. Procedural Matters

A. Paperwork Reduction Act

28. The document does not contain proposed information collection requirements subject to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, Public Law 104–13. In addition, therefore, it does not contain any proposed information collection burden for small business concerns with fewer than 25 employees, pursuant to the Small Business Paperwork Relief Act of 2002, Public Law 107–198, *see* 44 U.S.C. 3506(c)(4).

IV. Ordering Clauses

29. *It is further ordered* that, pursuant to the authority contained in sections 4(i), 214, 218–220, 254, 303(r), and 403 of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, 47 U.S.C. 154(i), 214, 218–220, 254, 303(r), and 403, and § 1.1 of the Commission's rules, 47 CFR 1.1, this Notice of Inquiry *is adopted*. The Notice of Inquiry will be *effective* upon publication in the **Federal Register**, with comment dates indicated therein.

Federal Communications Commission.

Marlene Dortch,

Secretary.

[FR Doc. 2023–18084 Filed 8–22–23; 8:45 am]
BILLING CODE 6712–01–P

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

50 CFR Part 17

[FF09E21000 FXES1111090FEDR 234]

Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Nine Species Not Warranted for Listing as Endangered or Threatened Species

AGENCY: Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notification of findings.

SUMMARY: We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), announce findings that nine species are not warranted for listing as endangered or threatened species under the Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended (Act). After a thorough review of the best available scientific and commercial information, we find that it is not warranted at this time to list the Alexander Archipelago wolf (*Canis lupus ligoni*), Chihuahua catfish (*Ictalurus* sp. 1), Cooper's cave amphipod (*Stygobromus cooperi*), Georgia blind salamander (*Eurycea wallacei*), minute cave amphipod (*Stygobromus parvus*), Morrison's cave amphipod (*Stygobromus morrisoni*), narrow-foot hygrotus diving beetle (*Hygrotus diversipes*), pristine crayfish (*Cambarus pristinus*), and Tennessee heelsplitter (*Lasmigona holstonia*). However, we ask the public to submit to us at any time any new information relevant to the status of any of the species mentioned above or their habitats.

DATES: The findings in this document were made on August 23, 2023.

ADDRESSES: Detailed descriptions of the bases for these findings are available on the internet at *https://www.regulations.gov* under the following docket numbers:

Species	Docket No.
Alexander Archipelago wolf	FWS–R7–ES–2023–0109
Chihuahua catfish	FWS–R2–ES–2023–0110
Cooper's cave amphipod	FWS–R5–ES–2023–0120
Georgia blind salamander	FWS–R4–ES–2023–0117
Minute cave amphipod	FWS–R5–ES–2023–0121
Morrison's cave amphipod	FWS–R5–ES–2023–0122
Narrow-foot hygrotus diving beetle	FWS–R6–ES–2023–0111
Pristine crayfish	FWS–R4–ES–2023–0115
Tennessee heelsplitter	FWS–R4–ES–2023–0116

Those descriptions are also available by contacting the appropriate person as specified under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**. Please submit any new information, materials, comments, or questions concerning this finding to the appropriate person, as specified under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Species	Contact information
Alexander Archipelago wolf	Stewart Cogswell, Field Supervisor, Anchorage Field Office, *Stewart_Cogswell@fws.gov*, 907–271–2888.
Chihuahua catfish	Michael Warriner, Supervisory Fish and Wildlife Biologist, Austin Ecological Services Field Office, *Michael_warriner@fws.gov*, 512–490–0057.
Cooper's cave amphipod, minute cave amphipod, Morrison's cave amphipod.	Jennifer Norris, Field Supervisor, West Virginia Field Office, *jennifer_l_norris@fws.gov*, 304–704–0655.
Georgia blind salamander	Peter Maholland, Field Supervisor, Georgia Ecological Services Field Office, *peter_maholland@fws.gov*, 706–208–7512.
Narrow-foot hygrotus diving beetle	Tyler Abbott, Field Supervisor, Wyoming Field Office, *tyler_abbott@fws.gov*, 307–757–3707.
Pristine crayfish	Dan Elbert, Field Supervisor, Tennessee Field Office, *daniel_elbert@fws.gov*, 571–461–8964.
Tennessee heelsplitter	Janet Mizzi, Field Supervisor, Asheville Ecological Services Field Office, *janet_mizzi@fws.gov*, 828–258–3939x42223.

Individuals in the United States who are deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability may dial 711 (TTY, TDD, or TeleBraille) to access telecommunications relay services. Individuals outside the United States should use the relay services offered within their country to make

international calls to the point-of-contact in the United States.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Under section 4(b)(3)(B) of the Act (16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*), we are required to make a finding on whether or not a petitioned action is warranted within 12 months after receiving any petition that we have determined contains substantial scientific or commercial information indicating that the petitioned action may be warranted (hereafter a ''12-month finding''). We must make a finding that the petitioned action is: (1) Not warranted; (2) warranted; or (3) warranted but precluded by other listing activity. We must publish a notification of these 12-month findings in the **Federal Register**.

Summary of Information Pertaining to the Five Factors

Section 4 of the Act (16 U.S.C. 1533) and the implementing regulations at part 424 of title 50 of the Code of Federal Regulations (50 CFR part 424) set forth procedures for adding species to, removing species from, or reclassifying species on the Lists of Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants (Lists). The Act defines ''species'' as including any subspecies of fish or wildlife or plants, and any distinct population segment of any species of vertebrate fish or wildlife which interbreeds when mature (16 U.S.C. 1532(16)). The Act defines ''endangered species'' as any species that is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range (16 U.S.C. 1532(6)), and ''threatened species'' as any species that is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range (16 U.S.C. 1532(20)). Under section 4(a)(1) of the Act, a species may be determined to be an endangered species or a threatened species because of any of the following five factors:

(A) The present or threatened destruction, modification, or curtailment of its habitat or range;

(B) Overutilization for commercial, recreational, scientific, or educational purposes;

(C) Disease or predation;

(D) The inadequacy of existing regulatory mechanisms; or

(E) Other natural or manmade factors affecting its continued existence.

These factors represent broad categories of natural or human-caused actions or conditions that could have an effect on a species' continued existence. In evaluating these actions and conditions, we look for those that may have a negative effect on individuals of the species, as well as other actions or conditions that may ameliorate any negative effects or may have positive effects.

We use the term ''threat'' to refer in general to actions or conditions that are known to or are reasonably likely to negatively affect individuals of a species. The term ''threat'' includes actions or conditions that have a direct impact on individuals (direct impacts), as well as those that affect individuals through alteration of their habitat or required resources (stressors). The term ''threat'' may encompass—either together or separately—the source of the action or condition or the action or condition itself. However, the mere identification of any threat(s) does not necessarily mean that the species meets the statutory definition of an ''endangered species'' or a ''threatened species.'' In determining whether a species meets either definition, we must evaluate all identified threats by considering the expected response by the species, and the effects of the threats—in light of those actions and conditions that will ameliorate the threats—on an individual, population, and species level. We evaluate each threat and its expected effects on the species, then analyze the cumulative effect of all of the threats on the species as a whole. We also consider the cumulative effect of the threats in light of those actions and conditions that will have positive effects on the species, such as any existing regulatory mechanisms or conservation efforts. The Secretary determines whether the species meets the Act's definition of an ''endangered species'' or a ''threatened species'' only after conducting this cumulative analysis and describing the expected effect on the species now and in the foreseeable future.

The Act does not define the term ''foreseeable future,'' which appears in the statutory definition of ''threatened species.'' Our implementing regulations at 50 CFR 424.11(d) set forth a framework for evaluating the foreseeable future on a case-by-case basis. The term ''foreseeable future'' extends only so far into the future as we can reasonably determine that both the future threats and the species' responses to those threats are likely. In other words, the foreseeable future is the period of time in which we can make reliable predictions. ''Reliable'' does not mean ''certain''; it means sufficient to provide a reasonable degree of confidence in the prediction. Thus, a prediction is reliable if it is reasonable to depend on it when making decisions.

It is not always possible or necessary to define foreseeable future as a particular number of years. Analysis of the foreseeable future uses the best scientific and commercial data available and should consider the timeframes applicable to the relevant threats and to the species' responses to those threats in view of its life-history characteristics. Data that are typically relevant to assessing the species' biological response include species-specific factors such as lifespan, reproductive rates or productivity, certain behaviors, and other demographic factors.

In conducting our evaluation of the five factors provided in section 4(a)(1) of the Act to determine whether the Alexander Archipelago wolf, Cooper's cave amphipod, Georgia blind salamander, minute cave amphipod, Morrison's cave amphipod, narrow-foot hygrotus diving beetle, pristine crayfish, and Tennessee heelsplitter meet the Act's definition of ''endangered species'' or ''threatened species,'' we considered and thoroughly evaluated the best scientific and commercial information available regarding the past, present, and future stressors and threats. In conducting our evaluation of the Chihuahua catfish, we determined that it does not meet the definition of a ''species'' under the Act, and, as a result, we conclude that it is not a listable entity. We reviewed the petitions, information available in our files, and other available published and unpublished information for all these species. Our evaluation may include information from recognized experts; Federal, State, and Tribal governments; academic institutions; foreign governments; private entities; and other members of the public.

In accordance with the regulations at 50 CFR 424.14(h)(2)(i), this document announces the not-warranted findings on petitions to list nine species. We have also elected to include brief summaries of the analyses on which these findings are based. We provide the full analyses, including the reasons and data on which the findings are based, in the decisional file for each of the nine actions included in this document. The following is a description of the documents containing these analyses:

The species assessment forms for Alexander Archipelago wolf, Cooper's cave amphipod, Georgia blind salamander, minute cave amphipod, Morrison's cave amphipod, narrow-foot hygrotus diving beetle, pristine crayfish, and Tennessee heelsplitter contain more detailed biological information, a thorough analysis of the listing factors, a list of literature cited, and an explanation of why we determined that

each species does not meet the Act's definition of an ''endangered species'' or a ''threatened species.'' To inform our status reviews, we completed species status assessment (SSA) reports for the Alexander Archipelago wolf, Cooper's cave amphipod, Georgia blind salamander, minute cave amphipod, Morrison's cave amphipod, narrow-foot hygrotus diving beetle, pristine crayfish, and Tennessee heelsplitter. Each SSA report contains a thorough review of the taxonomy, life history, ecology, current status, and projected future status for each species. The species assessment form for the Chihuahua catfish contains more detailed taxonomic information, a list of literature cited, and an explanation of why we determined that the species does not meet the Act's definition of a ''species.'' This supporting information can be found on the internet at *https://www.regulations.gov* under the appropriate docket number (see **ADDRESSES**, above).

Alexander Archipelago Wolf

Previous Federal Actions

On July 15, 2020, we received a petition from the Center for Biological Diversity, Alaska Rainforest Defenders, and Defenders of Wildlife, requesting that the Alexander Archipelago wolf subspecies in Southeast Alaska be listed as a threatened species or an endangered species and critical habitat be designated for this species under the Act. The petitioners requested that we recognize Alexander Archipelago wolves in Southeast Alaska as a distinct population segment (DPS), and evaluate this DPS for listing as threatened or endangered. The petitioners also requested that we evaluate the Alexander Archipelago wolf subspecies for listing where Southeast Alaska constitutes a significant portion of the range. On July 27, 2021, we published a 90-day finding (86 FR 40186) that the petition contained substantial information indicating that listing may be warranted for the species. This document constitutes our 12-month finding on the July 15, 2020, petition to list the Alexander Archipelago wolf under the Act.

We evaluated the Southeast Alaska population of AA wolf under our 1996 DPS policy (61 FR 4722) and found that it met both the discreteness and significance criteria. The population is discrete based on the international governmental boundary between the United States (Alaska) and Canada (British Columbia) within which significant differences in control of exploitation, management of habitat, and regulatory mechanisms exist. The population meets the significance criteria because the loss of the Alexander Archipelago wolves in Southeast Alaska would result in a significant gap in the range of the taxon because an extensive area would be without Alexander Archipelago wolves if the Southeast Alaska population were lost. For a more detailed discussion of our DPS analysis, please see the species assessment form.

Given the best available information related to the DPS Policy's discreteness and significance criteria, we determined that the Southeast Alaska segment of the Alexander Archipelago wolf population meets the DPS Policy criteria for both the discreteness criteria and the significance criteria. Thus, in addition to our listing evaluation and finding on the Alexander Archipelago wolf range-wide, we also evaluated the Southeast Alaska DPS, as requested by the petition.

Summary of Finding for the Alexander Archipelago Wolf

The Alexander Archipelago wolf is a subspecies of gray wolf that occurs along the coastal mainland and islands of Southeast Alaska and British Columbia. Based on the best available information, the current distribution of the species is similar to its historical distribution.

There are gaps in our understanding of the life history of the Alexander Archipelago wolf; thus, when appropriate, we have applied information from gray wolves and other gray wolf subspecies. Alexander Archipelago wolves breed between 22 to 34 months of age, and litters range from 1 to 8 pups. Denning typically occurs from mid-April through early July; throughout the rest of the year Alexander Archipelago wolves are traveling, hunting, or dispersing. Alexander Archipelago wolves are capable of dispersing long distances, both on land and water, although there are many examples of these wolves avoiding water crossings. Pack sizes typically range between 2 and 12 wolves, although much larger groups have been observed. Alexander Archipelago wolves are opportunistic predators that eat a variety of prey species, yet, like gray wolves, ungulates compose most of their diet. Across the range of the species, Sitka black-tailed deer (*Odocoileus hemionus sitkensis*) and moose (*Alces americanus*) make up 75 percent of the wolf's diet. Alexander Archipelago wolves are habitat generalists, typically utilizing whatever habitat their preferred prey use and avoiding areas of intense human activity. Old-growth forests, which Alexander Archipelago wolves select for, make up a majority of home range areas, and areas near freshwater are also selected by wolves during denning.

We have carefully assessed the best scientific and commercial information available regarding the past, present, and future threats to the Alexander Archipelago wolf, and we evaluated all relevant factors under the five listing factors, including any regulatory mechanisms and conservation measures addressing these threats. The primary threats affecting the Alexander Archipelago wolf's biological status include timber harvest and associated road development, harvest of wolves, and genetic inbreeding. Although disease and climate change may not be currently impacting the species, the best available information indicates that these factors could have impacts on the species' viability in the future.

After evaluating threats to the species and assessing the cumulative effect of the threats under the section 4(a)(1) factors, we assessed the current status of the Alexander Archipelago wolf to determine if it meets the definition of an endangered species or threatened species. Our assessment of Alexander Archipelago wolf current viability included the primary threats of timber harvest and associated road development, harvest of wolves, and genetic inbreeding. To evaluate overall current population resiliency of the Alexander Archipelago wolf, we ranked each population into a current condition category (*i.e.,* high, moderately-high, moderate, moderately-low, low, or functionally extirpated) based on estimates of population growth, and the species' needs which include dietary diversity, area of old-growth forest available, and remoteness (*i.e.,* space from human activity; Table 3 of the SSA Report). Despite past and ongoing threats, Alexander Archipelago wolf currently occupies five analysis units that span its historical range, three of which exhibit high resiliency (Northern and Southern Coastal British Columbia and Northern Southeast Alaska), one with moderately high resiliency (Southern Southeast Alaska), and one with moderately low resiliency (Prince of Wales Island Complex). Currently, Alexander Archipelago wolves appear to have high adaptive capacity, and we expect most populations to be able to adapt to near-term changes in their physical and biological environments. The exception to this is the Prince of Wales Island Complex analysis unit.

Within the Prince of Wales Island Complex analysis unit, high levels of inbreeding have been documented, and

ungulate prey is limited compared to the rest of the range. These characteristics limit the adaptive capacity of wolves within this analysis unit. Nonetheless, based on the best available information, the Prince of Wales Island Complex analysis unit demonstrates stable population trends. Overall, the Alexander Archipelago wolf is widely distributed across its current and historical range indicating that it has high redundancy (ability to withstand catastrophic events) and overall high representation (adaptive capacity), contributing to its overall viability. Thus, after assessing the best available information, we conclude that the Alexander Archipelago wolf is not in danger of extinction throughout all of its range.

To assess future viability of the Alexander Archipelago wolf, we considered the foreseeable future out approximately 30 years (to 2050) and projected the influence of three future scenarios that included disease and climate change and the other primary threats included in the assessment of current viability. The Alexander Archipelago wolf is projected to retain high to moderate levels of resiliency within four of the five analysis units, and no significant loss in distribution is predicted across its range. The exception is the Prince of Wales Island Complex analysis unit, which is projected to decline in resiliency under most scenarios, and under one scenario, projections indicate possible extirpation. However, the Prince of Wales Island Complex analysis unit represents a relatively small area (approximately 4.5 percent; Service 2023, p. 110) compared to the overall geographic range of the species, and a relatively small proportion of the rangewide population estimate (17 percent; Service 2023, pp. 90–91). Thus, after assessing the best available information, we conclude that the Alexander Archipelago wolf is not likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all of its range.

We evaluated the range of the Alexander Archipelago wolf to determine if the species is in danger of extinction now or likely to become so in the foreseeable future in any portion of its range. The Prince of Wales Island Complex analysis unit has moderately low resiliency now and ranges from moderate resiliency to functionally extirpated into the future. We found that this analysis unit may have a different status compared to the rest of the range. Within the Prince of Wales Island Complex analysis unit, high levels of old-growth timber harvest, road development, and inbreeding have been documented, and wolf harvest rates (reported and unreported) may also exceed sustainable levels in some years (Service 2023, p. 62). Additionally, ungulate prey is limited to just one species, the Sitka black-tailed deer, limiting adaptive capacity for wolves in this analysis unit. Although other analysis units may also face one or two threats from timber harvest, road development, inbreeding, wolf harvest, or prey availability, the Prince of Wales Island Complex is the only analysis unit that experiences all of these threats.

However, we did not find that the Prince of Wales Island Complex analysis unit represents a significant portion of the range for the Alexander Archipelago wolf. The Prince of Wales Island Complex analysis unit represents approximately 4.5 percent of the overall geographic range of the species (Service 2023, p. 110). Additionally, the Prince of Wales Island Complex analysis unit does not have high-quality habitat relative to the rest of the range. Contiguous patches of old-growth forest (at least 75 square kilometers) have been identified as the preferred habitat for this species and are considered high-quality habitat. The Prince of Wales Island Complex analysis unit contains 10.9 percent of the total preferred old-growth habitat that is available to the species rangewide (Service 2023, p. 110). Lastly, the habitat within the Prince of Wales Island Complex analysis unit is not considered unique for any specific life-history functions (*e.g.,* availability of denning habitat or ungulate prey); the species' preferred denning habitat is found in all other analysis units, and ungulate prey diversity is greater in the other analysis units. Thus, we do not consider the Prince of Wales Island Complex analysis unit to represent a large geographic area relative to the range of the species as a whole, to have higher quality habitat relative to the remaining portions of the range, or to represent uniquely valuable habitat for the species. We do not find that the Prince of Wales Island Complex analysis unit is significant. Therefore, the Prince of Wales Island Complex analysis unit does not represent a significant portion of its range, and we find that the Alexander Archipelago wolf is not in danger of extinction now or likely to become so in the foreseeable future in any significant portion of its range.

After assessing the best available information, we conclude that the Alexander Archipelago wolf is not in danger of extinction or likely to become in danger of extinction throughout all of its range or in any significant portion of its range. Therefore, we find that listing the Alexander Archipelago wolf as an endangered species or threatened species under the Act is not warranted.

Summary of Finding for the Southeast Alaska Alexander Archipelago Wolf DPS

The Southeast Alaska Alexander Archipelago wolf DPS occurs along the coastal mainland and islands of Southeast Alaska. Based on the best available information, the current distribution of the species is similar to its historical distribution.

We have carefully assessed the best scientific and commercial information available regarding the past, present, and future threats to the Southeast Alaska Alexander Archipelago wolf DPS, and we evaluated all relevant factors under the five listing factors, including any regulatory mechanisms and conservation measures addressing these threats. The primary threats affecting the Southeast Alaska Alexander Archipelago wolf DPS's biological status include timber harvest and associated road development, harvest of wolves, and genetic inbreeding. Although disease and climate change may not be currently impacting the species, the best available information indicates that these factors could have impacts on the species' viability in the future.

Our assessment of the current viability of the Southeast Alaska Alexander Archipelago wolf DPS included the primary threats of timber harvest and associated road development, harvest of wolves, and genetic inbreeding. Currently, one analysis unit exhibits high resiliency (Northern Southeast), one analysis unit exhibits moderately high resiliency (Southern Southeast), and one analysis unit exhibits moderately low resiliency (Prince of Wales Island Complex). Alexander Archipelago wolves in the Northern Southeast Alaska analysis unit and the Southern Southeast Alaska analysis unit appear to have high adaptive capacity, and we expect wolves in these analysis units to be able to adapt to near-term changes in their physical and biological environments. Even though the Southern Southeast Alaska analysis unit exhibits signs of recent and historical inbreeding, there is no evidence of a reduction in fitness related to inbreeding. Additionally, the Southern Southeast Alaska analysis unit has a greater potential for connectivity and therefore, gene flow, with other analysis units on the mainland, and it has a greater diversity of ungulate prey. Within the Prince of Wales Island Complex analysis unit, high levels of

inbreeding have been documented and ungulate prey is limited compared to the rest of the range of the DPS. These characteristics limit the current adaptive capacity of wolves within the Prince of Wales Island Complex analysis unit. However, even with this additional stress, the population estimates for Prince of Wales Island Complex analysis unit indicate it is currently stable. Within the Southeast Alaska Alexander Archipelago wolf DPS, the species is distributed across its current and historical range, indicating that it has high redundancy (ability to withstand catastrophic events) and high representation (adaptive capacity), contributing to its overall viability. Thus, after assessing the best available information, we conclude that the Southeast Alaska Alexander Archipelago wolf DPS is not in danger of extinction throughout its range.

To assess future viability of the Southeast Alaska Alexander Archipelago wolf DPS, we considered the foreseeable future out approximately 30 years (to 2050) and projected the influence of three future scenarios that included disease and climate change, and the other primary threats included in the assessment of current viability. The Southeast Alaska Alexander Archipelago wolf DPS is projected to have high to moderate resiliency within the Northern Southeast Alaska analysis unit, moderately high resiliency in the Southern Southeast Alaska analysis unit, and moderate resiliency to a functionally extirpated status within the Prince of Wales Island Complex analysis unit. However, the Prince of Wales Island Complex analysis unit represents a relatively small percentage of the total geographic area of the Southeast Alaska Alexander Archipelago wolf DPS (approximately 13.2 percent) and approximately 30 percent of the overall Southeast Alexander Archipelago wolf DPS population. Thus, after assessing the best available information, we conclude that the Southeast Alaska Alexander Archipelago wolf DPS is not likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all of its range.

We then evaluated the range of the Southeast Alaska Alexander Archipelago wolf DPS to determine if the species is in danger of extinction now or likely to become so in the foreseeable future in any significant portion of its range. We looked at the entire range of the Southeast Alaska Alexander Archipelago wolf DPS and found that the Prince of Wales Island Complex analysis unit has moderately low resiliency now and ranges from moderately resilient to functionally extirpated into the future. We found that the Prince of Wales Island Complex may have a different status compared to the rest of the DPS range. Within the Prince of Wales Island Complex analysis unit, high levels of old-growth timber harvest, road development, and inbreeding have been documented, and wolf harvest rates (reported and unreported) may exceed sustainable levels in some years (Service 2023, p. 62). Additionally, ungulate prey is limited to just one species, Sitka black-tailed deer, limiting adaptive capacity for wolves in this analysis unit. Although the other analysis units may also face one or two threats from either timber harvest, road development, inbreeding, wolf harvest, or prey availability, the Prince of Wales Island Complex is the only analysis unit that experiences all of these threats. However, we did not find the Prince of Wales Island Complex analysis unit to represent a significant portion of the range of the Southeast Alaska Alexander Archipelago wolf. The Prince of Wales Island Complex analysis unit represents a relatively small portion of the geographic area of the Southeast Alaska Alexander Archipelago wolf DPS (approximately 13.2 percent). Additionally, the Prince of Wales Island Complex analysis unit does not have high-quality habitat relative to the rest of the range. Contiguous patches of old-growth forest have been identified as the preferred habitat for this species and are considered high-quality habitat. The Prince of Wales Island Complex analysis unit contains approximately 22.8 percent of high-quality habitat compared to the rest of the DPS range (Service 2023, p. 110). Lastly, the habitat on the Prince of Wales Island Complex analysis unit is not considered unique for any specific life-history functions (*e.g.,* denning habitat or prey diversity); denning habitat is found in the other analysis units within the DPS, and the other two analysis units have greater ungulate prey diversity compared to the Prince of Wales Island Complex. Thus, we do not consider the Prince of Wales Island Complex analysis unit to represent a large geographic area relative to the range of the DPS, to have higher quality habitat relative to the rest of the DPS, or to represent uniquely valuable habitat for the DPS. Therefore, the Prince of Wales Island Complex analysis unit does not represent a significant portion of the Southeast Alaska Alexander Archipelago wolf DPS range, and the Southeast Alaska Alexander Archipelago wolf DPS is not in danger of extinction now or likely to become so in the foreseeable future in any significant portion of its range.

After assessing the best available information, we concluded that the Southeast Alaska Alexander Archipelago wolf DPS is not in danger of extinction or likely to become in danger of extinction throughout all of its range or in any significant portion of its range. Therefore, we find that listing the Southeast Alaska Alexander Archipelago wolf DPS as an endangered species or threatened species under the Act is not warranted. A detailed discussion of the basis for this finding can be found in the Alexander Archipelago wolf species assessment form and other supporting documents at *https://www.regulations.gov* under Docket No. FWS–R7–ES–2023–0109.

Peer Review

In accordance with our July 1, 1994, peer review policy (59 FR 34270; July 1, 1994) and the Service's August 22, 2016, Director's Memo on the Peer Review Process we solicited independent scientific reviews of the information contained in the Alexander Archipelago wolf SSA report. The Service sent the SSA report to 10 independent peer reviewers and received 4 responses. Results of this structured peer review process can be found at *https://www.regulations.gov* under Docket No. FWS–R7–ES–2023–0109 and *https://www.fws.gov/library/categories/peer-review-plans.* We incorporated the results of these reviews, as appropriate, into the SSA report, which is the foundation for this finding.

Chihuahua Catfish

Previous Federal Actions

On June 25, 2007, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) received a petition dated June 18, 2007, from Forest Guardians (now WildEarth Guardians) requesting that the Service list 475 species, including the Chihuahua catfish, as threatened or endangered species and designate critical habitat under the Act. All 475 species occur within the Southwest Region and were ranked as G1 or G1G2 species by NatureServe at the time. In a July 11, 2007, letter to the petitioner, the Service acknowledged receipt of the petition and stated that the petition was under review by staff in the Southwest Regional Office. On December 16, 2009, the Service published a partial 90-day finding on the petition, including the Chihuahua catfish and 191 other species, stating that the petition presented substantial scientific information indicating that listing may be warranted for 67 of the 192 species (74 FR 66866).

Presentation Procedure for Proposals and Closure Reviews

1. **Introduction and Presentation of Draft Staff Analysis**
2. **Report on Board Consultations:**
    a. Tribes
    b. ANCSA Corporations
3. **Agency Comments:**
    a. ADF&G
    b. Federal
    c. Tribal
4. **Advisory Group Comments**:
    a. Other Regional Advisory Council(s)
    b. Fish and Game Advisory Committees
    c. Subsistence Resource Commissions
5. **Summary of Written Public Comments**
6. **Public Testimony**
7. **Regional Council Recommendation (motion to support)**
8. **Discussion/Justification**
    - Is the recommendation consistent with established fish or wildlife management principles?
    - Is the recommendation supported by substantial evidence such as biological and traditional ecological knowledge?
    - Will the recommendation be beneficial or detrimental to subsistence needs and uses?
    - If a closure is involved, is closure necessary for conservation of healthy fish or wildlife populations, or is closure necessary to ensure continued subsistence uses?
    - Discuss what other relevant factors are mentioned in OSM Draft Staff Analysis
9. **Restate final motion for the record**
10. **Council's Vote**

WP24-02/03 Executive Summary	
General Description	**WP24-02** requests to extend the Federal subsistence season for mountain goat in Unit 1C on Federal public lands within the drainages of the Chilkat Range south to the south bank of the Endicott River to run from Jul. 24 – Dec. 31. *Submitted by: Nicholas Orr* **WP24-03** requests to extend the Federal subsistence season for mountain goat in Unit 1C on Federal public lands within the drainages of the Chilkat Range south to the south bank of the Endicott River to run from Aug. 1 – Nov. 30, and to close mountain goat hunting in this area to non-federally qualified users from Aug. 1-31. Submitted by: *Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council*
Proposed Regulation	**Unit 1C - Goat** **WP24-02**: *Unit 1C – 1 goat by State registration permit only* — *Jul.24-Dec. 31* ***Federal public lands within the drainages of the Chilkat Range south of the south bank of the Endicott River*** **WP24-03**: *Unit 1C – 1 goat by State registration permit only* — *Aug.1-Nov.30* ***Federal public lands within the drainages of the Chilkat Range south of the south bank of the Endicott River are closed to goat hunting Aug. 1-Aug. 31, except by federally qualified subsistence users hunting under these regulations.***
OSM Preliminary Conclusion	**Support** WP24-02 with **Modification** **Oppose** WP24-03
Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Recommendation	

WP24-02/03 Executive Summary	
Interagency Staff Committee Comments	
ADF&G Comments	
Written Public Comments	**None**

DRAFT STAFF ANALYSIS
WP24-02/03

ISSUES

Proposal WP24-02 was submitted by Nicholas Orr of Juneau. It requests to extend the Federal subsistence season for mountain goat in Unit 1C on Federal public lands within the drainages of the Chilkat Range south to the south bank of the Endicott River (RG015 Permit Area) to run from Jul. 24 – Dec. 31. Proposal WP24-03 was submitted by the Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Southeast Council). WP24-03 requests to extend the Federal subsistence season for mountain goat in Unit 1C on Federal public lands within the drainages of the Chilkat Range south to the south bank of the Endicott River (RG015 Permit Area) to run from Aug. 1 – Nov. 30, and to close mountain goat hunting in this area to non-federally qualified users from Aug. 1-31 (see **Figures 1** & **2**). Both proposals are being analyzed together below because they are similar.

DISCUSSION

The proponent of WP24-02 states that extending the Federal subsistence season for mountain goat would provide a more meaningful priority for federally qualified subsistence users in Unit 1C on Federal public lands within the drainages of the Chilkat Range south to the south bank of the Endicott River (RG015 Permit Area). Similarly, the proponents of WP24-03 submitted their proposal to establish a meaningful preference for the continuation of subsistence uses of goat in the same area of Unit 1C (RG015 Permit Area).

The proponents of WP24-03 note that the proposal area (RG015 Permit Area) was the site of a timber sale in the 1970s, which created logging roads near alpine zones. The renovated docking area at the Couverden log transfer facility now has a ramp where people can unload 4-wheelers and hunt goats via the Couverden logging road system. However, there is only room to anchor three to four boats at once here, without worrying about boats getting blown away. This creates access issues. The logging roads also provide relatively easy access to alpine zones. People set up camps, which block the roads and prevent access to the best areas to hunt goats, limiting opportunities for federally qualified subsistence users who must compete with non-federally qualified users for limited access. The proponents note that a priority opportunity to hunt goats during the month of August without competition from non-federally qualified users is important because the State moose season opens on September 15, and this area gets more crowded after the moose season opens.

Existing Federal Regulation

Unit 1C - Goat

Unit 1C – 1 goat by State registration permit only *Oct. 1-Nov. 30.*

That portion draining into Lynn Canal and Stephens Passage between Antler River and Eagle Glacier and River, and all drainages of the Chilkat Range south of the Endicott River

Proposed Federal Regulation

WP24-02: Unit 1C – Goat

Unit 1C – 1 goat by State registration permit only *Jul. 24-Dec. 31*

Federal public lands within the drainages of the Chilkat Range south of the south bank of the Endicott River

WP24-03: Unit 1C - Goat

Unit 1C – 1 goat by State registration permit only *Aug. 1-Nov. 30*

Federal public lands within the drainages of the Chilkat Range south of the south bank of the Endicott River are closed to goat hunting Aug. 1-Aug. 31, except by federally qualified subsistence users hunting under these regulations.

Existing State Regulation

Unit 1C - Goat

Residents – 1 goat by State registration permit only *Aug. 1-Nov. 30*

Nonresidents – 1 goat by State registration permit only *Sept. 1-Nov. 30*

Drainages of the Chilkat Range south of the south bank of the Endicott River.

Extent of Federal Public Lands/Waters

Federal public lands comprise approximately 95% of Unit 1C and consist of 62% U.S. Forest Service (USFS) managed lands, and 33% National Park Service (NPS) managed lands. The Federal lands involved in the current proposals are those of the RG015 Permit Area, which is located within the Tongass National Forest, between the drainages of the Chilkat Range, south of the south bank of the Endicott River (see **Figures 1** & **2**).

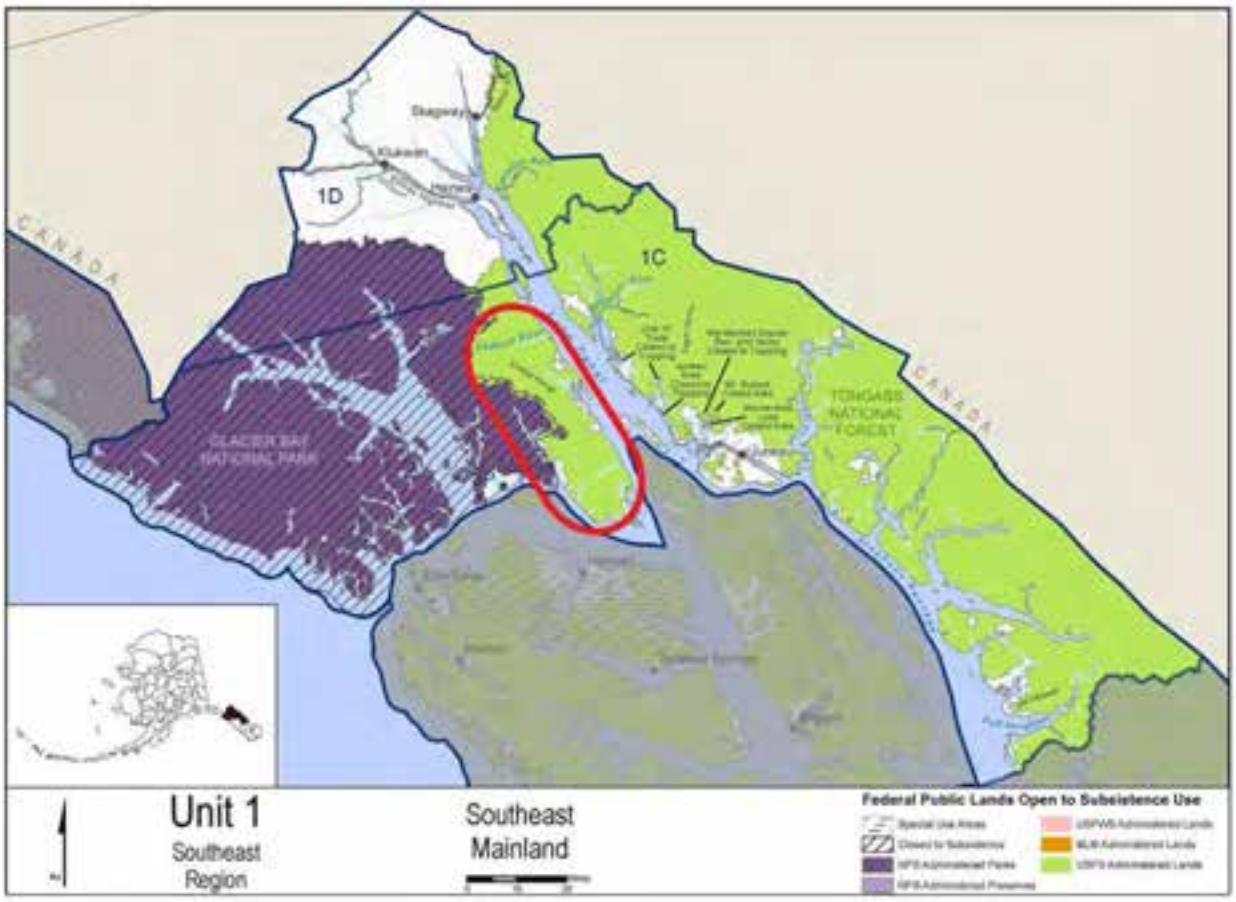

Figure 1. Unit 1C Map with Proposal Analysis Area Encircled in Red.

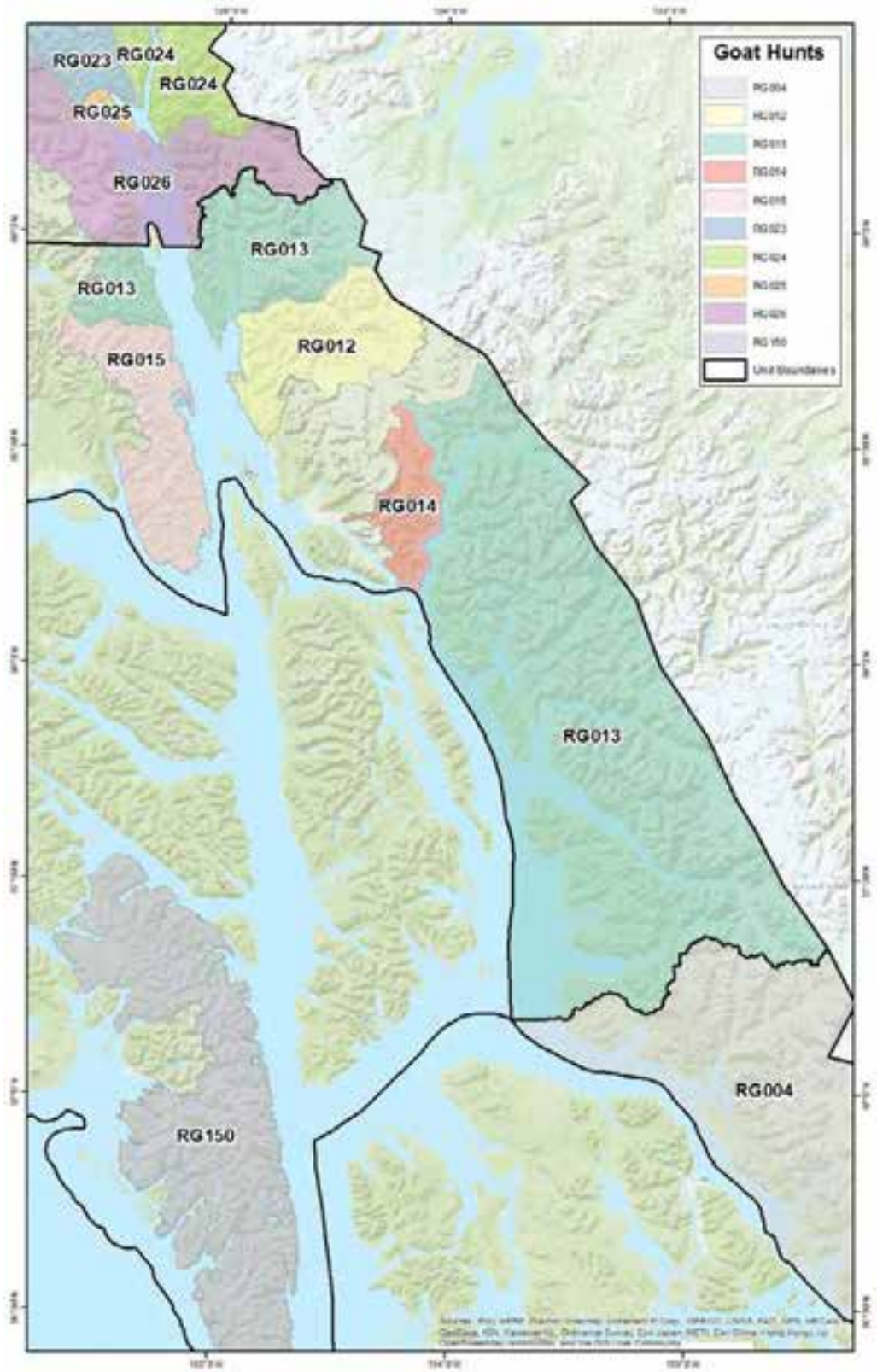

Figure 2. Unit 1C Mountain Goat State Registration Hunt Permit Areas (Churchwell 2021).

Customary and Traditional Use Determination

Rural residents of Units 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 have a customary and traditional use determination for mountain goats in Unit 1C.

Regulatory History

At the beginning of the Federal Subsistence Management Program in Alaska in 1992, the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) adopted the State's customary and traditional use determination for goats in Unit 1C, which included residents of Haines, Klukwan, and Hoonah (50 FR 22958, May 29, 1992). The Board did not make specific customary and traditional use determinations for goats in Units 1A, 1D, 4, and 5. Therefore, all rural residents were eligible to hunt for goats under Federal regulations in Units 1A, 1D, 4, and 5 at that time. The Board also adopted a customary and traditional use determination of "no Federal subsistence priority" for goats in Unit 1B at this time.

In 1997, proposal P96-06, submitted by the Sitka Tribe of Alaska, was adopted by the Board with modification. This action established a customary and traditional use determination for goats in Unit 4 for the residents of Angoon, Elfin Cove, Funter Bay, Hoonah, Pelican, Port Alexander, Sitka, and Tenakee Springs (FSB 1996: 128). Proposal P97-02c, submitted by Joe Doerr, was also adopted by the Board, establishing a customary and traditional use determination for goats in Unit 1B to include residents of Units 1B and 3 (50 FR 66229, December 17, 1997).

In 1998, the Board adopted proposals P98-07 and P98-08 submitted by the Wrangell and Petersburg Ranger Districts of the Tongass National Forest, respectively (50 FR 35336; June 29, 1998). This action expanded the customary and traditional use determination for goats in Unit 1C to include the residents of Petersburg and Kake.

In 2018, the Board adopted proposal WP18-12, submitted by Calvin Casipit, to add the residents of Gustavus to the customary and traditional use determination for goats in Unit 1C (50 FR 50763, October 9, 2018).

In 2020, the Board adopted proposal WP20-14, submitted by the Southeast Council. This action expanded the customary and traditional use determinations for goats in Units 1, 4, and 5 to include all rural residents of Units 1 – 5. This regulatory change was in keeping with the Southeast Council's recently stated preference to recognize customary and traditional uses of subsistence resources more broadly.

There are currently four different zones within Unit 1C that are covered by three specific Federal seasons for mountain goat harvest. These four zones within Unit 1C correspond to four state permit areas for mountain goat harvest (RG012, RG013, RG014, and RG015). The Federal season in the portion of Unit 1C draining into Lynn Canal and Stephens Passage between Antler River and Eagle Glacier and River (RG012 Permit Area), and all drainages of the Chilkat Range south of the Endicott River (RG015 Permit Area) currently runs from Oct. 1 – Nov. 30. There is currently no Federal season in the portion of Unit 1C draining into Stephens Passage and Taku Inlet between Eagle Glacier and River and Taku Glacier (RG014 Permit Area). The Federal season in Unit 1C Remainder (RG013 Permit Area) currently runs from Aug. 1 – Nov. 30.

Under State regulations, all four registration permit areas in Unit 1C (RG012, RG013, RG014, and RG015) are combined under a single registration hunt permit (RG012), whereby a user may sign up for one registration hunt but hunt all four permitted goat hunting areas (Churchwell 2021).

Current Events

At their January 2023 meeting, the Alaska Board of Game (BOG) adopted Proposal 31 to extend the resident goat season in the southern end of the Chilkat range in Unit 1C from Sept. 1-Nov. 30 to Aug. 1-Nov. 30.

Biological Background

Goats in Alaska inhabit alpine areas adjacent to steep cliffs or rocky terrain that provide escape from predators (OSM 2020). They usually graze on grasses, forbs, and low-growing shrubs in high alpine meadows (OSM 2020). As winter approaches, most goats migrate downhill and spend the winter months below tree line or on south-facing cliffs, where they feed on hemlock, grasses, and shrubs (OSM 2020). Others may remain on wind-swept ridges, feeding on mosses and lichens (OSM 2020). Forested habitat near alpine ridges may provide critical winter range, especially during periods of heavy snow accumulation (Shafer et al. 2012).

Security from predators, thermoregulation, snow avoidance, and forage availability have all been identified as important considerations in winter habitat selection by goats in Southeast Alaska (Schoen and Kirchhoff 1982), and South-coastal British Columbia (Taylor et al 2006). Smith (1986) reported that over 85% of all winter relocations of radio-collared goats in three Southeast Alaska goat populations occurred in forested habitat and concluded that the use of forested habitats may be critical to over-winter survival and productivity for mountain goats.

Goats typically occur in small, isolated populations and have little interchange with other populations (OSM 2020). Genetic studies have shown that goats maintain a strong fidelity to discrete ridge systems, indicating very little movement across high elevation habitats (Shafer et al. 2012). Goats breed in November and December and, except during the rut, adult males remain segregated from females and young animals (OSM 2020). The age of first reproduction of goats is more comparable to brown bears than other northern ungulates (Cote et al. 2001). Although there is regional variation, the age of first reproduction for goats is 4.6 years on average (Cote et al. 2001). For comparison, the average age of first reproduction is 4-5 years for brown bears (Schwartz et al. 2003), 3 years for caribou (Adams and Dale 1998), and 2-3 years for moose (Boertje et al. 2007). Females with kids are generally found in small groups, although larger nursery bands may form during early and mid-summer (OSM 2020). Kids remain with their nannies until the next breeding season (OSM 2020). Goat populations often suffer high mortality during severe winters with high total snowfall, which are regularly encountered in high alpine habitat close to cliffs (Hjeljord 1973, Cote and Festa-Bianchet 2003). In these conditions, males typically exhibit lower survival than females (OSM 2020). Older animals also exhibit lower survival than young, prime-aged goats (OSM 2020). During winter, goats are in a negative energy balance and must rely on fat reserves built up during the summer (OSM 2020). Summer range conditions may also affect goat survival because they are subject to heat stress and may shift to sub-optimal foraging habitats on warm

summer days (OSM 2020). Previous studies have also shown that high alpine plants are less nutritious when growing in warmer temperatures (White et al. 2011a).

Goats are generally susceptible to overharvest in localized areas due to their group site fidelity and typically low reproductive rate, as well as the difficulty that hunters can have distinguishing between males and females (Hamel et al. 2006). Predation by wolves can also have a significant impact on goats, especially when they are forced into smaller winter ranges due to logging or development (Hamel et al. 2006). The harvest of even a few females can be unsustainable in these conditions, and hunting mortality can depress goat populations for several years (Hamel et al. 2006).

Goats are also particularly susceptible to disturbance by helicopter overflights that occur during industrial and recreational activities during the summer and winter (Goldstein et al 2005, Cote et al. 2013). Increased recreational activities such as snowmobiling and skiing (Cote et al. 2013) have been shown to increase stress in the winter, which is already the most difficult period for goats (White et al. 2011b). Limiting disturbance during the winter and maintaining a 2,000-meter buffer between goats and helicopter activities was recommended by Cote and colleagues (2013) to minimize adverse impacts. Helicopter overflights during the summer (e.g., ecotourism, transportation flights, biological surveys, development activities), all-terrain vehicles, road construction, and blasting associated with industrial activities, may also be a contributing factor to declines in some goat populations (White et al. 2011b, Cote et al. 2013, St-Louis et al. 2013). More accurate seasonal movement data could be used to help minimize disturbance in critical winter and summer habitats (White et al. 2011b, Herreman 2014).

Limiting factors

Management concerns for mountain goats include late age at first reproduction (Festa-Bianchet and Côte 2008, White and Barten 2008), low kid production, and high susceptibility to harvest (Côte and Festa-Bianchet 2003). Toweill and colleagues (2004) noted that population recovery following herd reduction is slow due to relatively low reproductive rates, high mortality, and low dispersal rates. As a result, hunting mortality can represent a significant addition to natural mortality.

Fox and colleagues (1989) suggested that the quantity and quality of forage is likely a major limiting factor for goats in Southeast Alaska. Severe winters have been associated with declines in several mountain goat populations, including Southeast Alaska (Smith 1976, Wright 1977, Smith 1984). Klein (1953) reported that heavy snow cover may prevent goats from obtaining sufficient forage and may restrict movements to the point of starvation. White and colleagues (2011b) reported that, overall, winter climate exerted the strongest effects on mountain goat survival in coastal Alaska.

Small populations are susceptible to extinction due to environmental variation, demographic stochasticity, and inbreeding (Caughley and Sinclair 1994 *in* Komers and Curman 2000). Varley (1995) observed limited movements between "island-like" alpine habitats, possibly attributable to a lack of habitat between suitable use areas, and that more isolated subunits usually supported lower population densities. Small populations (i.e., < 75-100 animals) may not be able to sustain any harvest (Hamel et al. 2006)

and, at a minimum, harvest can be a key factor affecting population sustainability (Adams 1981, Smith 1988, Voyer et al. 2003).

Global climate change also has the potential to negatively impact cold adapted alpine species including mountain goats (White et al. 2018). Warmer winters in mountainous areas, as influenced by climatic change (Diaz and Bradley 1997), have the potential to affect goat populations. Changes in snowmelt and spring green-up are likely to affect the life histories of ungulates (Rutberg 1987, Kudo 1991 *in* Pettorelli et al. 2007). Furthermore, distributions of pathogens may shift northwards with climatic warming (Mainguy et al. 2007).

General Population Information for Goats in Unit 1C

Goat registration permit hunts currently exist in four different State permit areas (RG012, RG013, RG014, RG015) within Unit 1C (see **Figure 2**). Goat harvests in these areas are managed through a point system that is designed to promote a sustainable yearly harvest of approximately 4-5% of the goat population (Churchwell 2021). Changes in the goat population in Unit 1C are primarily monitored through required hunter harvest reporting and aerial minimum count surveys, which are intended to be conducted in areas of high use at least once every three years (Churchwell 2021). However, specific population-level estimates are not consistently available for many Unit 1C mountain goat populations (Churchwell 2021: 8). Minimum count surveys and reported harvest data, therefore, provide the basis for mountain goat management in Unit 1C since individual registration hunts are closed when a certain number of animals are taken from a hunt area (Churchwell 2021). Work on a sightability model to be used in conjunction with aerial surveys as a method to calculate goat population estimates in specific areas is ongoing (White and Pendleton 2013, Churchwell 2021).

Aerial surveys were used to document goat declines in the Juneau area in 1970s and 1980s, particularly along the road system (Churchwell 2021). A severe winter in 1984-1985 also led to population declines in the Chilkat Range and along the east side of Lynn Canal (Churchwell 2021). Goat populations recovered and were stable by the late 1980s, however (Johnson 1988, Churchwell 2021). Goat populations were also healthy and stable through the early 2000s, until another severe winter storm in the 2006-2007 season caused substantial population declines in the Lynn Canal area (Churchwell 2021).

Survey data on mountain goat populations in the RG015 Permit Area (i.e., "the proposal area") has not been collected in the last ten years due to funding constraints, generally low harvest patterns in this area, and greater management priorities in other areas (Churchwell 2023). Poor weather conditions have also prevented many surveys from being conducted in this part of the southeast region for the last three years (Churchwell 2023). The most recent survey data for the proposal area is summarized in **Table 1** below. This survey data shows an increasing total number of goats over time (**Table 1**). However, the most recently published survey information for the Chilkat Range dates back to 2011 (**Table 1**). In general, the RG012/Antler River to Taku Glacier permit area has been more heavily utilized than the proposal area (RG015), because it is closer to the Juneau road-system and provides easier access to goat habitat (Churchwell 2021).

Table 1. Mountain Goat Survey Results from the Chilkat Range Area, 2000-2017 (Churchwell 2021)

Year	Number of Adults	Number of Kids	Total Goats	Kids:100 Goats	Percent Kids
2000	143	30	173	21	17%
2002	152	26	178	17	15%
2006	203	33	236	16	14%
2011	223	44	267	20	16%

During the last thirty years there have been three major economic development patterns and practices that have impacted goat populations in Unit 1C: (1) An increase in guided goat hunting; (2) Increased mining and other resource development processes in Berners Bay and areas near Juneau; and (3) The growth of tourism based on helicopter flights to glaciers and remote skiing locations (Robus 1996, Churchwell 2021). However, mining and helicopter-based tourism have not been significant issues in the proposal area (Churchwell 2023).

Guided hunts increased steadily through the early 2000s, with accompanying increases in goat harvests and harvest success rates in Unit 1C (Churchwell 2021). The US Forest Service began limiting the number of clients that guides could take out through commercial services permits in 2002, which helped to stabilize overall harvest levels within Unit 1C at 30-50 goats per year (Barten 2004, Churchwell 2021, Scott 2012). There are currently two guided hunts available specifically within the proposal area (Churchwell 2023).

Cultural Knowledge and Traditional Practices

The rural area of the Southeast Region is comprised of about 33 small-to-medium-sized communities, ranging in population from 20 or less (Point Baker, Elfin Cove, and Game Creek) to over 8,000 (Sitka). Many of these communities were originally established by Tlingit, Haida (Hydaburg and Kasaan), or Tsimshian (Metlakatla) groups, and are situated at historical village sites. Population growth in the Southeast Region during the historical period (beginning about 1750) has been affected by several waves of in-migration – first by Russian fur traders who established Sitka as their headquarters in the late 1700s (OSM 2020). After the sale of Alaska to the United States in 1867, new industries such as commercial fishing, fish processing, mining, and commercial trade were pursued with the associated influx of migrants (Worl 1990, George and Bosworth 1988, Smythe 1988).

Beginning in the 1970s, logging camps sprang up and some have persisted as new communities, such as Game Creek and Thorne Bay (OSM 2020). Many rural communities in the Southeast Region have at their core a *kwaan* or Alaskan Native tribe. The indigenous territories mapped in 1947 by Goldschmidt and Haas covered all of the Southeast Region (Goldschmidt and Haas 1998). Unit 1C is located primarily within the boundaries of the traditional lands used by the Auke Bay Tribe (*Aak'w* Kwaan), the Taku Tribe (*T'aa ku* Kwaan), and the Hoonah Tribe (*Xunaa* Kwaan; ANKN 2017). The Kake Tribe (*Keex*' Kwaan) also had permanent and seasonal settlements in the southern portion of what is now Unit 1C (Firman and Bosworth 1990). The use of mountain goat in Unit 1C by these groups is well documented in ethnographic literature (see ADF&G 1992). The Hoonah Tlingit harvested goat

historically in Glacier Bay and Dundas Bay (Goldschmidt and Haas 1946), and near Excursion Inlet (Schroeder and Kookesh 1990).

Since 1960, the overall rural population of the Southeast Region has almost doubled, from 13,102 people in 1960, to 25,085 people in 2020 (see **Table 2**). Much of this growth has been concentrated in the larger rural communities like Haines, Petersburg, and Sitka. Some of this population growth has come from new communities established as a result of logging activities (Cerveny 2005). The development of recreation and tourism industries in the area has also resulted in population growth (Cerveny 2005). However, many of the smaller rural communities in this region have seen a decline in their populations since the 1990s, resulting primarily from downturns in commercial fishing industries and associated economic opportunities in this region (Sill and Koster 2017). Today, the majority of all residents in Unit 1C are non-federally qualified users (Churchwell 2021), due to the disproportionate population of Juneau.

Table 2. The Population of Rural Communities in the Southeast Region from 1960 to 2020 (Sources: ADLWD 2020, ADCCED 2017, and U.S. Bureau of the Census 1995).

Community	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Angoon	395	400	465	638	572	459	357
Coffman Cove	0	0	193	186	199	176	127
Craig	273	272	527	1,260	1,397	1,201	1,036
Edna Bay	135	112	6	86	49	42	25
Elfin Cove	0	49	28	57	32	20	24
Game Creek	0	0	0	61	35	18	23
Gustavus	107	64	98	258	429	442	655
Haines Borough	1,000	1,504	1,680	2,117	2,392	2,508	2,080
Hollis	0	0	0	111	139	112	65
Hoonah	686	748	680	795	860	760	931
Hydaburg	251	214	298	384	382	376	380
Hyder	32	49	77	99	97	87	48
Kake	455	448	555	700	710	557	543
Kasaan	36	30	25	54	39	49	30
Klawock	251	213	318	722	854	755	720
Klukwan	112	103	135	129	139	95	87
Kupreanof	26	36	47	23	23	27	15
Metlakatla	1,135	1,245	1,333	1,464	1,375	1,405	1,454
Naukati Bay	0	0	0	93	135	113	142
Pelican	135	133	180	222	163	88	98
Petersburg Borough	1,502	2,042	2,821	3,207	3,224	2,948	3,398
Point Baker	0	80	90	39	35	15	12
Port Alexander	18	36	86	119	81	52	78

Community	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Port Protection	0	0	40	62	63	48	36
Saxman	153	135	273	369	431	411	384
Sitka Borough	3,237	6,109	7,803	8,588	8,835	8,881	8,458
Skagway	659	675	814	692	862	920	410
Tenakee Springs	109	86	138	94	104	131	116
Thorne Bay	0	443	377	569	557	471	476
Whale Pass	0	0	90	75	58	31	86
Whitestone Camp	0	0	NA	164	116	17	2
Wrangell Borough	2,165	2,358	2,658	2,479	2,448	2,369	2,127
Yakutat Borough	230	190	449	534	808	662	662
Total	**13,102**	**17,774**	**22,284**	**26,450**	**27,643**	**26,246**	**25,085**

Overall, the residents of rural Southeast Alaska have used mountain goats continuously throughout recorded history, wherever goat has been found (OSM 2020). The mountain goat, found in rocky terrain from the Gulf of Alaska to the Cascade Range of Washington State, have been an important resource for the Tlingit, Tsimshian, and Haida groups of Southeast Alaska (de Laguna 1990). Archaeological evidence obtained from the Prince William Sound area suggests that mountain goat "seems to have played a fairly important part in the diet of those who lived or came near the areas where it could be obtained" (de Laguna 1972).

The Tlingit historically exhibited a pattern of hunting mountain goats in the fall, early winter, and spring. Hunts regularly took place in the mountainous areas during the fall and early winter, when goats are typically at their fattest (OSM 1998). Temporary camps were utilized, and berries picked and preserved while smoking fish and processing goat meat. Oberg's (1973) sources indicated that any meat to be stored was hunted and dried in August. Goats were hunted in timbered areas in the spring when snow pushed goats into the treeline (OSM 2020). Goat fleece was also collected from brush and branches for use in weaving ceremonial blankets in the spring (OSM 2020). Starting in the mid-nineteenth century, some Tlingit groups would go directly from the salmon streams to hunt mountain goat, deer, and bear (Goldschmidt and Haas 1946, de Laguna 1990).

The people of southeast Alaska have also employed a variety of means of handling, preparing, preserving, and storing various parts of mountain goats, which have been traditionally used by past generations (OSM 2020). Mountain goats have been used by the indigenous peoples of the region as a source of food, clothing, tools, and fat/grease (OSM 2020). Goat horns, skins, and fleece were common trade items among the Tlingit (OSM 2020). The horns were used to make spoons, personal ornaments, boxes for storing powder and shot, tool handles, and feast dishes (OSM 2020). Goat skin was thought to make the best drumheads (Emmons 1991; de Laguna 1990). Goat wool is used to weave ceremonial blankets, each blanket requiring the wool of approximately three goats and taking up to a year to complete (OSM 2020). These blankets were found among the Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian (OSM 2020). According to Tlingit tradition, the blankets originated with the Tsimshian and were carried to other groups by intermarriage or migration (Emmons 1991). The wool of the goat was also used for bedding, twisted into cordage, and used for decorations like ear ornaments (OSM 2020). The fat of the

goat was melted and formed into cakes (OSM 2020). The fat from these cakes was used in food and to grease the face before blackening or painting (Emmons 1991). Traditionally, the meat was dried or boiled and preserved in oil (Goldschmidt and Haas 1946). If killed in the mountains, the goat was usually butchered, and the meat dried on site to make it easier to pack out (de Laguna 1990).

Goat hunting knowledge, skills, values, and lore were traditionally passed down to young men by their maternal uncles (OSM 2020). In many communities, favored goat hunting areas could not be shown to newcomers without kinship ties until they became established as a resident (OSM 2020). Young women are traditionally taught how to weave ceremonial Chilkat blankets, made from goat hair, by their mother or maternal grandmother (OSM 2020). These blankets and other items made from goat horns, fleece, and skin have been used as important ceremonial regalia (OSM 2020). Blanket wearing is still taught and practiced among Tlingit groups (OSM 1998).

To reach goat hunting areas, Tlingit hunters had to climb high into the mountains (Krause 1956). These areas were approached by canoe, with hunting taking place from the heads of rivers and lakes adjacent to steep mountains (Oberg 1973). Traditionally, Tlingit groups used bow and arrow or spears to hunt goat (OSM 1998). Trained dogs were used to drive goats down into canyons where hunters waited to spear them (de Laguna 1990). Contemporary hunters use firearms for goat hunting, and boats or airplanes to reach goat hunting areas (ADF&G 2017a).

Both past and present harvest of goat in southeast Alaska is demonstrative of a pattern of use in which the harvest is shared within a community (OSM 2020). In Tlingit tradition, the meat of a boy's first kill is divided up and distributed, with the belief that this act of sharing would bring the boy luck in his future hunting efforts (OSM 2020). This tradition is still in practice (de Laguna 1972). Goat meat continues to be shared and traded within and among the communities of Kake and Petersburg, as well as other communities which have used Unit 1C to harvest goat (OSM 1998). Goat remains part of the broad range of subsistence resources utilized by rural Southeast Alaskan communities, which provide substantial cultural, economic, social, and nutritional benefits to these communities (OSM 2020).

Harvest History

General Harvest History Throughout Unit 1C

Mountain goats are hunted in Unit 1C "both for meat and as a trophy animals by resident and nonresident hunters" (Churchwell 2021: 2). The average reported yearly mountain goat harvest for all users throughout Unit 1C was 43 for the most recently published five-year reporting period between 2013 and 2017 (Churchwell 2021). This yearly average was higher than the 36 goat per year average reported for the previous five-year reporting period between 2008 and 2012 (Churchwell 2021). The average annual number of goat hunters throughout Unit 1C also increased during the most recently published five-year reporting period between 2013 and 2017 (~ 49 resident hunters and 30 non-resident hunters per year), compared to the previous reporting period (~ 39 resident hunters and 27 non-resident hunters per year) (Churchwell 2021). The overall success rate of non-resident hunters has been substantially higher than that of resident hunters in Unit 1C in recent years, possibly because non-resident hunters are required to

hire a hunting guide or hunt with a resident Alaskan relative (see **Table 3**). In general, most harvest in Unit 1C takes place in November (51%), which is in part because the bulk of guided harvest occurs during this month (Churchwell 2021: 17). The monthly percentage of harvest within Unit 1C typically increased across the season during the 2013 – 2017 reporting period, with about 8% of the harvest taking place in August, 9% in September, 31% in October, and 51% in November (Churchwell 2021). This general harvest pattern occurs because snow often drives goats down from higher elevations as the season progresses, and they become easier to access (Churchwell 2021). "This is the main reason that guides focus their efforts later in the season" (Churchwell 2021: 17). **Table 3** shows that, on average, about 14 more Unit 1C residents reported hunting goats each year from 2008-2017 than non-residents. However, the average reported hunting success rate of non-residents was approximately 59% higher than that of Unit 1C residents (**Table 3**). The average success rate of Other Alaskan residents hunting in Unit 1C was similar to that of Unit residents (**Table 3**). However, the number of Other Alaskan residents hunting in Unit 1C, and their rate of success, was more variable from year-to-year than Unit residents (**Table 3**).

Table 3. Mountain Goat Hunter Residency and Success in Unit 1C, 2008-2017 (calculated from Churchwell 2021).

	Total Hunters			**Percent Successful**		
	Unit Residents	Other AK Residents	Non-Residents	Unit Residents	Other AK Residents	Non-Residents
2008	54	8	31	26%	0%	90%
2009	41	10	23	27%	10%	78%
2010	35	10	29	23%	60%	93%
2011	33	13	26	21%	38%	81%
2012	30	2	28	23%	0%	89%
2013	43	9	30	33%	44%	90%
2014	47	7	31	28%	14%	84%
2015	33	1	30	33%	0%	90%
2016	64	9	31	34%	44%	94%
2017	46	5	30	28%	60%	77%
Total	426	74	289			
Average	43	7	29	28%	32%	87%

During the 2008-2017 period, 60% of all reported goat harvests in Unit 1C took place in the southeastern zone of the RG013 permit area (specifically Wildlife Analysis Areas 2824 and 2825) (Churchwell 2021). These locations are outside the proposal area (RG015 permit area). Goat harvests in Wildlife Analysis Area (WAA) 2517 around Juneau have also grown recently with the increasing popularity of archery hunting (Churchwell 2021). Churchwell (2021) notes that other popular areas for mountain goat hunting in Unit 1C include Berners Bay (WAA 2409) and the Upper Taku River Drainage (WAA 2518). The most popular location for goat hunting within the proposal area is the Homeshore Area of the Chilkat Peninsula in WAA 2306 (Churchwell 2021). WAA 2306 is located in the southwestern portion of the

RG015 permit area, in closest proximity to Gustavus and Hoonah, where residents have a substantial history of engaging in goat hunting (OSM 1998, OSM 2020). The Homeshore area includes the Couverden dock and road system cited by the proponents of WP24-03 as both an important access area and the site of competition with non-federally qualified users.

Boating was the most commonly reported transportation method used to reach goat hunting locations throughout Unit 1C from 2013 to 2017 (Churchwell 2021). Eighty percent of hunters reported using boats for their hunts, while ten percent reported using aircraft, and six percent reported highway vehicle use (Churchwell 2021). The use of commercial services (~ 31 hunters per year), registered hunting guides (27 hunters per year), and transporters (3 hunters per year) throughout Unit 1C was stable during this reporting period (Churchwell 2021). However, as the Southeast Council member from Gustavus explained, the primary use of boats to reach favored hunting locations in the proposal area can lead to issues of user conflict and competition for access in narrow embayments and places with limited spots for safe anchorage:

> The area that's in question here is an old timber sale I think from back in the '70s or something? There's lots of logging roads back up there that get pretty high up close to alpine. There is at the old log transfer facility, the dock that was there is no longer there. It got blown out by a storm a few years ago. They've modified that dock area so that there's a ramp going down into the water now so people can bring their boats right up…and unload their four-wheelers and they have this huge road system to drive on and chase animals around on. That particular little anchorage there, right at the log transfer facility is not a very good place to keep a boat. When the southwesterly blows up it gets rolling in there, so there's not a whole lot of places to keep boats to begin with…There's probably only a spot there for maybe three or four boats and every other place you anchor, you don't want to put your boat there. It's a very small area where you can keep a boat and not worry about it getting blown off anchor and on to shore. So that's an issue. You know there's just a limited amount of where you can bring your boat to even start hunting. And then beyond that you get on these logging roads and the idea is you want to use those roads to get as high up and close to alpine as you can, and there are some roads that get pretty darn close. I mean it's a pretty easy walk up to alpine. The problem is that people set up camps and, you know, block the roads and so you're not able to get above those areas and access the best areas to go up and find the goats. And this also happens during the moose season. So, there's a period from…September 1 to the end of the moose season, to past the moose season with lots of people with boats anchored there – people up on the road system blocking the best roads up to alpine. So, there's a bunch of people there running around (SERAC 2023: 327-328).

Though a percentage of the yearly harvest quota for goats throughout Unit 1C is reserved for federally qualified subsistence users, there is currently no time-period where federally qualified subsistence users are permitted to hunt without potential competition from non-federally qualified users in the area covered by this proposal. The Federal season in the proposal area currently runs from Oct. 1 – Nov. 30, while the State resident season in the proposal area was recently extended to run from Aug. 1 – Nov. 30. Both non-federally qualified users and federally qualified subsistence users may obtain a permit to hunt during the State season.

Harvest History Specifically in the Proposal Area (RG015 Permit Area)

The differences in reported harvests and success rates for federally qualified subsistence users (FQSUs), non-federally qualified users (NFQUs), and non-residents were not as substantial when looking specifically at the proposal area from 2003-2022 (see **Table 4**). Because of issues of timing and accessibility, the proposal area has generally not been as popular of a goat hunting location as some of the other Unit 1C areas mentioned earlier in the analysis (see Churchwell 2021). Stormy weather and poor anchorage tends to restrict accessibility to the proposal area during the latter months of the season when snow typically drives goats down to lower, more easily reachable locations (SERAC 2023, AK BOG 2023). Therefore, much of the goat hunting that takes place in the proposal area tends to occur at higher elevations, earlier in the season (SERAC 2023, AK BOG 2023). There are currently only two guided hunts available in this area (Churchwell 2023). As the Southeast Council member from Gustavus explained, "hunting [goats in the proposal area] in August is easier. There's better weather. You don't have to worry about storms as much…So, we thought that that seemed like a reasonable thing to do [extend the season into August] to maintain a meaningful [subsistence] priority" (SERAC 2023: 48). Similarly, the proponents of BOG Proposal 31 also noted this issue as part of their justification for extending the state resident season in the proposal area:

> The resident goat season for the southern area of the Chilkat Range doesn't start until September 1st, which is when storms frequent the area, making access from the coast and hunting much more difficult. According to ADF&G information, over the past five years there were three to nine goats harvested off of the entire Chilkat Peninsula, with very few nannies taken. Goats have increased on the Chilkat Peninsula from the lows of the past, and the current harvest quota is not being met. So, we see no reason to continue the later season opener for the southern part of the Chilkat Range (AK BOG 2023: 27-28).

This issue of weather and accessibility restricting goat hunting opportunities later in the season could be heightening issues of competition and user conflict earlier in the season in an area with limited points of anchorage. It may also generally limit the use of the proposal area for goat hunting for all user types. Though hunting effort and harvests did vary from year-to-year, an average of approximately 3.5 federally qualified subsistence users and 7.3 non-federally qualified users reported hunting each year in the proposal area from 2003-2022 (see **Table 4**). Reported hunting effort and harvest in the proposal area by non-residents was minimal (**Table 4**). Federally qualified subsistence users reported harvesting an average of about 1 goat per year, non-federally qualified users harvested an average of approximately 2 goats per year, and non-residents harvested less than 1 goat per year in the proposal area during this time (**Table 4**). Federally qualified subsistence users and non-federally qualified users both reported average success rates of about 28%, while non-residents reported an average success rate of approximately 50% during the years in which they hunted in the proposal area (**Table 4**). On average, federally qualified subsistence users and non-federally qualified users reported hunting for about 10 days to harvest 1 goat, while non-residents reported hunting about 9 days to harvest one goat in the proposal area (**Table 4**).

Table 4. Reported Mountain Goat Hunting Effort and Harvest in the Proposal Area by Federally Qualified Subsistence Users (FQSUs), Non-Federally Qualified Users (NFQUs), and Non-Residents from 2003-2022 (Churchwell 2023).

	Number of Hunters			Days Hunted			Goats Harvested		
Year	FQSUs	NFQU	Non-resident	FQSU	NFQU	Non-resident	FQSU	NFQU	Non-resident
2003	7	8	0	21	22	0	1	0	0
2004	1	4	0	1	5	0	0	2	0
2005	0	2	0	0	5	0	0	0	0
2006	5	6	0	7	13	0	3	3	0
2007	3	7	0	3	18	0	0	1	0
2008	3	5	0	9	10	0	0	1	0
2009	8	4	0	23	5	0	0	1	0
2010	7	2	1	24	3	1	3	2	1
2011	7	6	1	19	35	5	1	0	0
2012	0	9	0	0	28	0	0	2	0
2013	7	14	0	18	87	0	2	3	0
2014	5	3	0	8	19	0	3	1	0
2015	3	5	0	12	11	0	1	1	0
2016	4	20	0	6	35	0	2	7	0
2017	1	8	1	3	14	4	0	4	0
2018	5	11	2	24	25	14	1	2	1
2019	0	10	0	0	13	0	0	3	0
2020	2	7	2	4	16	10	1	2	2
2021	0	6	0	0	13	0	0	2	0
2022	1	8	1	1	13	3	1	4	0
Total	69	145	8	183	390	37	19	41	4
Average	3.5	7.3	0.4	9.2	19.5	1.9	1.0	2.1	0.2

The highest number of federally qualified subsistence users hunting goats in the proposal area from 2003 to 2022 came from Hoonah, Gustavus, and Sitka (see **Table 5**). Over 80% of the non-federally qualified users hunting in the proposal area during this time came from Juneau. Juneau hunters outnumbered federally qualified subsistence users in the proposal area at a rate of just over 2:1 (**Table 5**). Similarly, Juneau hunters harvested approximately 46% more goats than federally qualified subsistence users hunting in the proposal area during this time (**Table 5**). Still, the reported hunting effort and harvest statistics for all user groups hunting in the proposal area during this time was relatively low (**Table 5**).

Table 5. Reported Mountain Goat Hunting Effort and Harvest within the Proposal Area by Community of Residence, 2003-2022 (Churchwell 2023).

Residence community	Number of Hunters	Days Hunted	Goats Harvested
Federally Qualified			
ANGOON	1	1	1
EXCURSION INLET	2	2	0
GAME CREEK	1	3	0
GUSTAVUS	20	59	8
HOONAH	33	88	3
NAUKATI BAY	1	1	0
SITKA	9	27	5
SKAGWAY	2	2	2
Total FQSU	**69**	**183**	**19**
FQSU per Year Average	**3.5**	**9.2**	**1.2**

Non-Federally Qualified	Number of Hunters	Days Hunted	Goats Harvested
ANCHORAGE	3	10	0
AUKE BAY	8	18	1
DOUGLAS	4	6	3
JUNEAU	124	345	35
SHUNGNAK	1	1	0
WASILLA	4	8	1
WILLOW	1	2	1
Total NFQU	**145**	**390**	**41**
Average NFQU	**7.3**	**19.5**	**2.1**
NON-RESIDENT Total	**8**	**37**	**4**
NON-RESIDENT Average	**0.4**	**1.9**	**0.7**

Other Alternatives Considered

Modify the period or area of season change/closure: It is not possible to reduce the area of the proposed season change/closure without creating a new permit area. However, it may be worth considering a modification of the period of the proposed season change/closure that would provide for a more meaningful subsistence preference, while limiting impact on non-federally qualified users.

Increase the goat quota reserved for harvest by federally qualified subsistence users: Increasing the goat quota reserved for federally qualified subsistence users in Unit 1C would enhance the Federal subsistence priority in this area.

Effects of the Proposal

If the Board adopts WP24-02, it will extend the Federal subsistence season for mountain goats in Unit 1C on Federal public lands within the drainages of the Chilkat Range south of the south bank of the Endicott River (RG015 Permit Area) to run from Jul. 24 – Dec. 31. This change would provide federally qualified subsistence users in the area with greater harvest opportunity, by extending the length of the Federal subsistence season here and providing two windows where user competition for goats and conflicts over access to favored goat hunting locations should be reduced. If the Board were to adopt this proposal, only federally qualified subsistence users would be able to hunt from July 24-31 and December 1-31. The registration permit hunt system should continue to minimize any potential conservation concerns associated with extending the Federal subsistence season in this way.

If the Board adopts WP24-03, it will extend the Federal subsistence season for mountain goats in Unit 1C on Federal public lands within the drainages of the Chilkat Range south of the south bank of the Endicott River (RG015 Permit Area) to run from Aug. – Nov. 30. WP24-03 would also close goat hunting to non-federally qualified users within this area from Aug. 1 – 31. However, under §815(3) of ANILCA, adopting WP24-03 would require substantial evidence of a conservation concern and/or competition and user conflict threatening the continuation of subsistence in this area.

OSM PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

Support WP24-02 with **modification** to extend the Federal season for goat hunting in the proposal area to run from Jul. 15 – Dec. 31.

Oppose WP24-03

Justification

Extending the Federal season for mountain goats on the Federal public lands of Unit 1C within the drainages of the Chilkat Range south of the south bank of the Endicott River (RG015 Permit Area) to Jul. 15 – Dec. 31 would provide for a more meaningful preference for federally qualified subsistence users in this area. The Federal subsistence season in this area is currently only open from Oct. 1 – Nov. 30, while the State resident season in the same area was recently extended to Aug. 1 – Nov. 30. The OSM modified version of WP24-02 would provide federally qualified subsistence users with an extended season to harvest goats from the proposal area, as well as two windows to hunt goats without potential competition from non-federally qualified users, from Jul. 15-31 and Dec. 1-31. Extending the preferential opening to federally qualified subsistence users further into the month of July may be particularly beneficial considering the difficulties posed by stormy weather conditions in the proposal area later in the season. Adopting the OSM modified version of WP24-02 would also provide a more meaningful subsistence preference without enacting a closure to non-federally qualified users during any period of the current State season.

Based on the data available, WP24-03 does not appear to meet the requirements for closure to non-federally qualified users as noted under §815(3) of ANILCA. Current information does not appear to

suggest that there is a significant conservation concern or threat to the continuation of subsistence uses of mountain goats that would necessitate a closure to goat harvest by non-federally qualified users in the proposal area.

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WP24-04 Executive Summary	
General Description	WP24-04 requests to close the Federal public lands on Admiralty Island draining into Chatham Strait south of the Thayer Creek drainage, but excluding the Hasselborg Lake and Hasselborg Creek drainages, to non-federally qualified users from Nov. 1-15. *Submitted by: Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council*
Proposed Regulation	**Unit 4 Deer** *Unit 4 — 6 deer; however, female deer may be taken only from Sept. 15 – Jan. 31* — *Aug. 1 – Jan. 31* ***Federal public lands of Admiralty Island draining into Chatham Strait south of the Thayer Creek drainage but excluding the Hasselborg Lake and Hasselborg Creek drainages are closed to deer hunting Nov. 1-15, except by federally qualified subsistence users hunting under these regulations.***
OSM Preliminary Conclusion	**Oppose**
Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Recommendation	
Interagency Staff Committee Comments	
ADF&G Comments	
Written Public Comments	**1 Oppose**

DRAFT STAFF ANALYSIS
WP24-04

ISSUES

Proposal WP24-04 was submitted by the Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Southeast Council). The proponents are requesting to close the Federal public lands on Admiralty Island draining into Chatham Strait south of the Thayer Creek drainage, but excluding the Hasselborg Lake and Hasselborg Creek drainages, to non-federally qualified users (NFQUs) from Nov. 1-15 (see **Figure 1**). This proposed closure area corresponds approximately to Wildlife Analysis Areas (WAAs) 4041, 4042, and 4055 (see **Figure 2**).

DISCUSSION

The proponents submitted WP24-04 to establish a meaningful preference for the continuation of subsistence uses of deer by federally qualified subsistence users (FQSUs) in the Angoon area. Angoon residents depend on deer as a key component of their subsistence lifestyles. However, the proponents assert that residents in this area have been experiencing difficulty harvesting enough deer to meet their subsistence needs because of increasing competition and user conflict with non-federally qualified users (NFQUs). The proponents explain that NFQUs anchor boats in small bays, often inhibiting access to subsistence users' primary hunting areas. NFQUs may also decrease the success rates of subsistence users if they shoot deer and miss, causing deer to become more skittish and wary of hunting presence.

The proponents note that high fuel costs, depressed economies, small boats, and inclement weather are all impacting the ability of Angoon residents to meet their subsistence needs. Angoon residents cannot afford to have unsuccessful deer hunts, or to travel far from their community to hunt deer. The proponents note that NFQUs exacerbate these concerns by obstructing access, competing for deer, and potentially altering deer behavior, all of which decrease the chances of successful subsistence hunts and hinder the continuation of subsistence uses.

Subsistence livelihoods require effective and efficient harvests. The proponents explain that the proposed two-week closure window in early November is the most efficient time for subsistence deer hunting in Unit 4 for several reasons. First, the deer are still fat, providing the highest quality and amount of meat. Second, the deer are in rut, making them more susceptible to harvest. Third, weather conditions are typically favorable for hunting and proper meat processing.

The proponents assert that this two-week closure would allow for the continuation of subsistence uses and provide a meaningful subsistence priority, enhancing opportunity for subsistence users and helping them meet their subsistence needs by reducing competition and improving access to hunting areas during the most important time of year for subsistence deer hunting. Additionally, the proponents note that the proposed closure area is limited in scope but represents the area most hunted by Angoon residents. The proponents believe that this closure will have a relatively small impact on NFQUs who would maintain significant time and space to hunt deer in Unit 4, but the closure would greatly benefit local subsistence users.

The proponents also acknowledge that while tidelands are State managed lands unaffected by any Federal closures, that should not decrease the effectiveness or necessity of this proposed closure. Deer are primarily pushed to beaches by heavy snowfalls, which usually occur after the requested closure period. Additionally, much of the proposed closure area is extremely steep and does not contain many beaches. Lastly, the proponents assert that when deer are on beaches, they are usually feeding above the mean high tide line, which is under Federal jurisdiction.

Existing Federal Regulation

Unit 4 - Deer

Unit 4 — 6 deer; however, female deer may be taken only from Sept. 15 – Jan. 31.	*Aug. 1 – Jan. 31*

Proposed Federal Regulation

Unit 4 - Deer

Unit 4 — 6 deer; however, female deer may be taken only from Sept. 15 – Jan. 31.	*Aug. 1 – Jan. 31*
Federal public lands of Admiralty Island draining into Chatham Strait south of the Thayer Creek drainage but excluding the Hasselborg Lake and Hasselborg Creek drainages are closed to deer hunting Nov. 1-15, except by federally qualified subsistence users hunting under these regulations.	

Existing State Regulation

Unit 4 - Deer

Chichagof Island east of Port Frederick and north of Tenakee Inlet

Residents - 3 deer total	*Bucks*	*Aug. 1 - Sept.14*
	Any deer	*Sept. 15 - Dec. 31*
Nonresidents – 2 Bucks	*Bucks*	*Aug. 1 – Dec. 31*
Remainder		
Residents - 6 deer total	*Bucks*	*Aug. 1 - Sept.14*
	Any deer	*Sept. 15 – Dec. 31*
Nonresidents – 2 Bucks	*Bucks*	*Aug. 1 – Dec. 31*

Extent of Federal Public Lands/Waters

Unit 4 is comprised of approximately 96% Federal Public Lands, of which of 99% are U.S. Forest Service (USFS) managed lands, and less than 1% National Park Service or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service managed lands (Error! Reference source not found.). Unit 4 consists primarily of Admiralty, Baranof, and Chichagof Islands, along with some smaller adjacent islands. The three proposed closure areas (WAAs 4041, 4042, and 4055) are all located on the southern end of Admiralty Island (see **Figure 2**). Together, WAA 4041, WAA 4042, and WAA 4055 compose approximately 24% of Admiralty Island (see **Table 1**).

Table 1. Proposed Closure Area in Relation to Admiralty Island

Location	**Area** (sq. mi.)
WAA 4041	108
WAA 4042	125
WAA 4055	157
Admiralty Island	1,646

Most of the area addressed in this proposal is within the Admiralty Island National Monument and the Kootznoowoo Wilderness. The most notable non-Federal land holdings are the area immediately surrounding the village of Angoon, and a strip of land surrounding most of Mitchell, Kanalku, and Favorite Bays, where the Kootznoowoo Corporation manages lands within 660 feet of tidewater (Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, Section 506(a)(3)(c)).

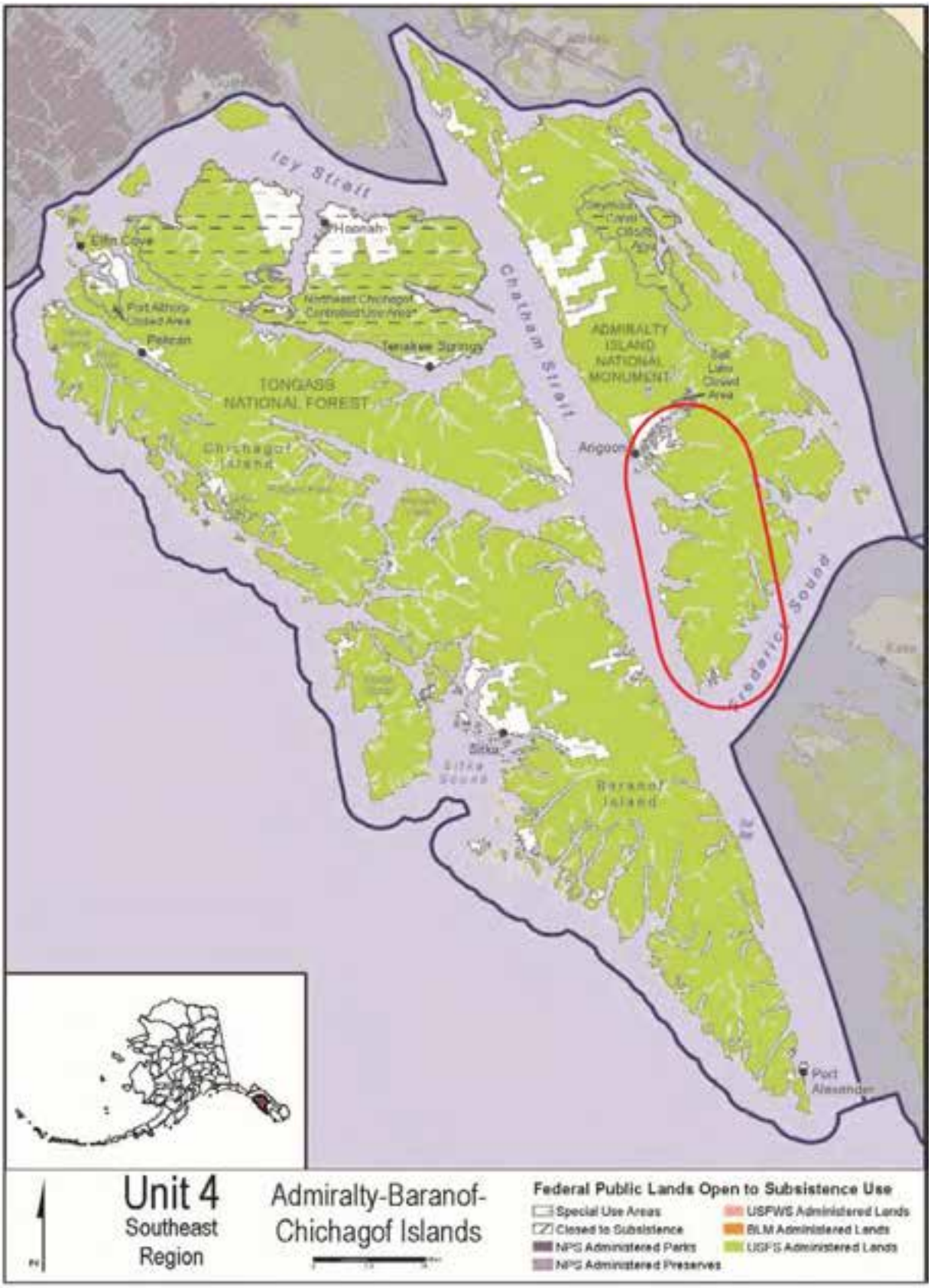

Figure 1. Unit 4 Map with Proposal Analysis Area Encircled in Red

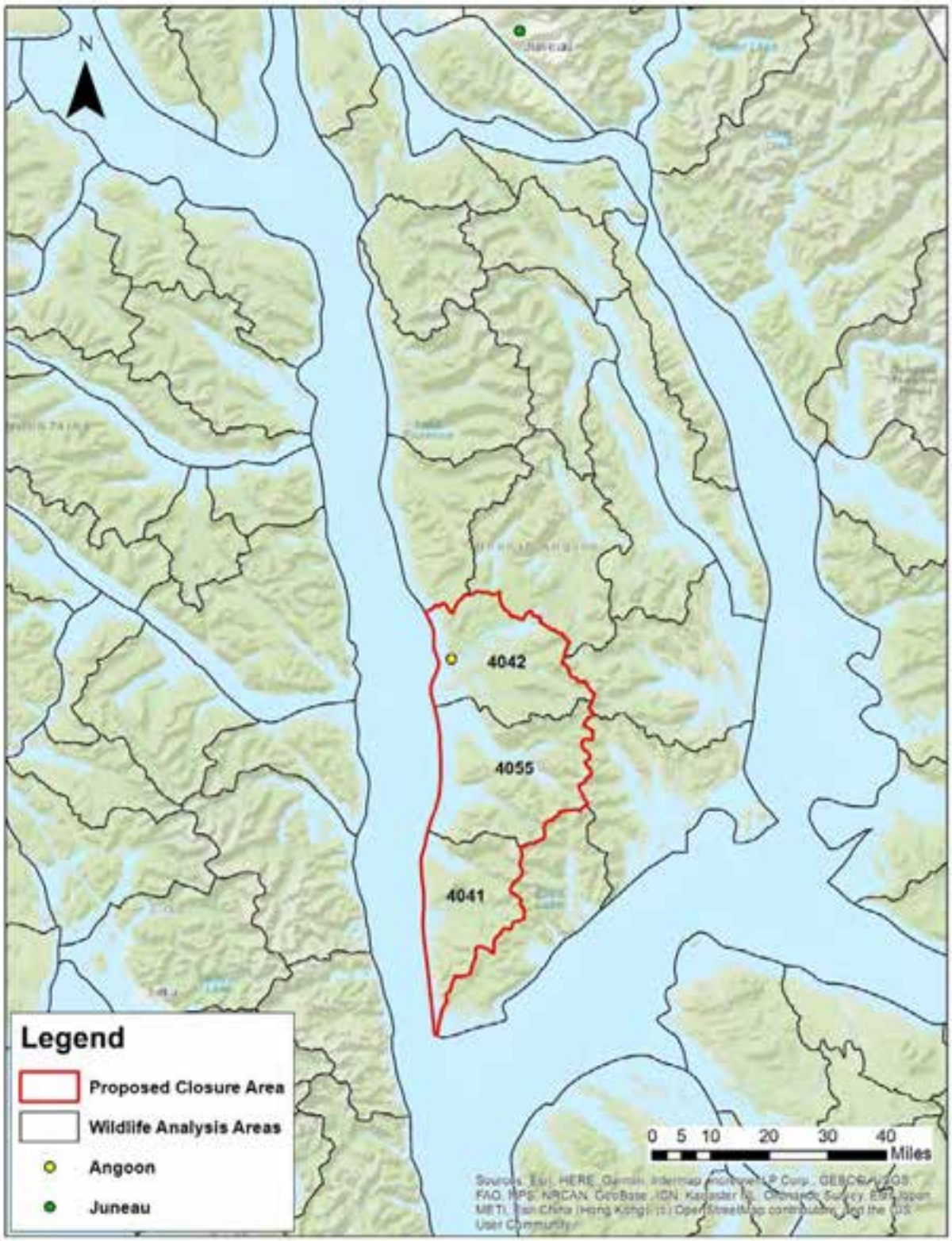

Figure 2. Angoon in Relation to Proposed Closure Area and Wildlife Analysis Areas 4042, 4055, and 4041 on Admiralty Island.

Customary and Traditional Use Determination

Rural residents of Units 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 have a customary and traditional use determination for deer in Unit 4.

Regulatory History

Except for the 1992/93 and 1993/94 regulatory years, the Federal harvest season for deer in Unit 4 has been from August 1 to January 31, with a harvest limit of six deer. However, harvest of antlerless deer has only been permitted from September 15 to January 31. In 1992, in response to several deep snow winters, the northern Baranof Island area harvest limit was reduced to four deer, the season was shortened to December 31, and the area closed to non-federally qualified users (NFQUs). In 1993, the northeast Chichagof Island area was closed to NFQUs after November 1 (OSM 2022a).

From the late 1980s through 1991, the State general season in the northeast Chichagof area had a harvest limit of three deer. However, during this time, the State subsistence season allowed for the harvest of six deer, with the season running from August 1 through January 31. Since 1992, the State deer season has been from August 1 through December 31, with the harvest of antlerless deer only permitted from September 15 through December 31. For Chichagof Island east of Port Frederick and north of Tenakee Inlet, including all drainages into Tenakee Inlet, the State harvest limit has been three deer. The State harvest limit for the remainder of Unit 4 was four deer, until 2019, when it was increased to six deer.

In 2000, two proposals addressing Unit 4 deer regulations were submitted by members of the public during the Federal wildlife regulatory cycle (WP00-08 and -09). These proposals were motivated by conservation concerns following heavy snow winters during the 1998-1999 season, the increased winter deer mortality typically associated with heavy snows, decreased deer habitat due to recent logging in the area, and increasing hunting pressure enabled by logging road construction (OSM 2000). One proposal requested to rescind the January Federal deer season in Unit 4, while the other requested to rescind the January deer season and reduce the harvest limit from six deer to four deer. Both proposals were rejected by the Federal Subsistence Board (Board), consistent with the recommendations of the Southeast Council. The stated justification was that the available deer population and harvest survey data for Unit 4 did not indicate a conservation concern, and that the proposed changes would unnecessarily restrict subsistence opportunity (FSB 2000).

In 2010, three proposals addressing Unit 4 deer regulations were submitted during the Federal wildlife regulatory cycle (WP10-13, -14, and -21). These proposals were submitted following significant deer population declines that had occurred during the deep snow winters of 2006 through 2009. WP10-13 was submitted by the Southeast Council, requesting to close the female deer season on January 15 in that portion of Unit 4 draining into Chatham Strait, Peril Strait, and Icy Strait, including Tenakee Inlet. WP10-14 was submitted by the Southeast Council, requesting to close Federal public lands in the Northeast Chichagof Controlled Use Area (NECCUA) to the harvest of female deer by NFQUs in December. WP10-21 was submitted by the Southeast Council, requesting that deer harvest on the Federal public lands of the NECCUA be restricted to residents of Hoonah. None of these proposals were adopted by the Board. Instead, Federal and State managers closed the female deer season in the

NECCUA for the 2010 regulatory year, and part of the 2011 and 2012 regulatory years. These closures were enacted to help the deer population recover from the deep-snow winters of 2006 through 2009.

In 2012, one proposal concerning Unit 4 deer regulations was submitted during the Federal wildlife regulatory cycle (WP12-06). This proposal sought to address population concerns following the deep snow winters of 2006 through 2009, by rescinding the January deer season in Unit 4. The Board rejected this proposal because it was determined that rescinding the January season would unnecessarily restrict subsistence users, while providing little conservation benefit (FSB 2012). Based on available survey and harvest data, Federal and State managers believed that the Unit 4 deer population had completely recovered from the previous deep-snow winters by the 2013 season (OSM 2022a).

In 2019, the Alaska Board of Game (BOG) adopted Proposal 18, increasing the State general season harvest limit from four deer to six deer in Unit 4 Remainder. The stated justification was that additional sustainable harvest opportunity could be provided because there were no conservation concerns.

In 2022, four proposals (WP22-07, -08, -09, -10) concerning Unit 4 deer regulations were submitted during the Federal wildlife regulatory cycle. WP22-07 was submitted by the Southeast Council, requesting that the Federal public lands of Admiralty Island draining into Chatham Strait between Point Marsden and Point Gardner be closed to deer hunting Sept. 15 – Nov. 30, except by federally qualified subsistence users (FQSUs). The current proposal, WP24-04, is similar to WP22-07 in that it requests a closure to deer hunting by NFQUs on a portion of Admiralty Island. However, the closure requested under WP24-04 is approximately half the size and nine weeks shorter in length than the closure originally requested under WP22-07.

WP22-08 was also submitted by the Southeast Council, requesting that the Northeast Chichagof Controlled Use Area (NECCUA) annual deer harvest limit for NFQUs be reduced to two male deer. WP22-09 was also submitted by the Southeast Council, requesting that the Federal public lands draining into Lisianski Inlet, Lisianski Strait, and Stag Bay south of the latitude of Mite Cove (58° 4' N) and north of the latitude of Lost Cove (57° 52' N) be closed to deer hunting Oct. 15 – Dec. 31, except by FQSUs. The stated intent for WP22-07, WP22-08, and WP22-09 was to protect local deer populations from further depletion by reducing hunting pressure from NFQUs. The proponents asserted that this change would help increase harvest opportunity and provide for a meaningful subsistence priority for FQSUs in these areas (OSM 2022a, 2022b, 2022c).

WP22-10 was submitted by Patricia Phillips of Pelican. This proposal requested that the deer harvest limit for NFQUs in Lisianski Inlet and Lisianski Strait be reduced to 4 deer. The stated intent of WP22-10 was to reduce deer hunting pressure, provide for a meaningful subsistence priority, and thereby increase the ability of FQSUs to meet their subsistence needs (OSM 2022d).

At its April 2022 meeting, the Board rejected WP22-09 as part of the consensus agenda. The Board deferred Proposals WP22-07, -08, and -10 to its winter 2023 regulatory meeting, requesting the various user groups in the area work together to create more mutually acceptable solutions to the issues surrounding deer harvest in Unit 4 (FSB 2022).

The Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) subsequently organized an open, public meeting regarding the deferred deer proposals for Unit 4 in August 2022. The meeting provided an opportunity for different user groups to discuss their recent deer hunting experiences in Unit 4, their plans for future harvest, and how the proposals might impact them. Additionally, participants were asked if they had specific recommendations on these proposals or if they had any other suggestions for the Board that would help resolve these issues. The outcomes from this meeting are summarized in detail in a previous OSM analysis (OSM 2022a).

The Southeast Council modified its recommendations for WP22-07 and WP22-10 following deferral and open meeting discussion. At its fall 2022 meeting, the Southeast Council supported WP22-07 with modification to remove Wildlife Analysis Areas (WAAs) 4043, 4044, and 4054 from the proposal area and create a harvest limit for NFQUs of two male deer within the remaining area (WAAs 4041, 4042, 4055) (OSM 2022a). This modification reduced the proposal area to roughly half of its original size and allowed for some harvest by NFQUs in the remaining proposal area (SERAC 2021b). This modification was recommended to focus the proposal on the area most utilized by FQSUs and to reduce the potential impact of the proposal on NFQUs (SERAC 2021b). This modified proposal area created under WP22-07 at the fall 2022 Southeast Council meeting is the same area currently being proposed for closure under WP24-04.

At the same meeting, The Southeast Council supported WP22-10 with modification to reduce the harvest limit for NFQUs to two male deer, and to maintain the same proposal area as recommended in Fall 2021. This modification was recommended because it was suggested that a harvest limit reduction of four deer or three male deer would not provide a significant conservation benefit or substantially enhance the success rates of FQSUs, but that the situation in the Northwest Chichagof might not warrant a full closure to NFQUs (SERAC 2021b). The Southeast Council also felt that reducing the harvest limit to two male deer for NFQUs would reduce administrative complexity and enforcement issues by aligning the proposed harvest limit reduction for the Northwest Chichagof area (WP22-10) with that of the Northeast Chichagof area (WP22-08) and Southwest Admiralty Island (SERAC 2022b). The Southeast Council retained its original Fall 2021 recommendation of support for WP22-08 without modification, to reduce the harvest limit for NFQUs hunting in the NECCUA to two male deer (OSM 2022b). The Southeast Council noted that all three proposals were still intended to help protect local deer populations from further depletion by reducing hunting pressure from NFQUs, and thereby increase harvest opportunity and provide for a meaningful subsistence preference for FQSUs in these areas (OSM 2022a, 2022b, 2022c).

All three proposals (WP22-07, -08, and -10) were subsequently rejected by the Board at its February 2023 regulatory meeting (FSB 2023). The stated justification was that the available data on deer populations in Unit 4 did not meet the criteria necessary to close land or implement harvest restrictions for the purposes of conservation or the continuance of subsistence uses under §815(3) of ANILCA (FSB 2023). Recent ADF&G survey and harvest data indicated that overall deer populations in Unit 4 were among the highest in the State and that FQSUs in these areas were generally effective and efficient deer harvesters (FSB 2023). However, the Board member from the Bureau of Indian Affairs dissented on the basis that local ecological knowledge and testimony had been provided through the regulatory process,

which indicated that FQSUs were having difficulty harvesting sufficient deer in the areas covered by the proposals (FSB 2023).

The BOG acted on State Proposals 10 and 11 at their January 2023 Southeast Region regulatory meeting (ADF&G 2022a). These proposals requested reducing the harvest limit for residents and nonresidents to four deer in Unit 4 Remainder. The proponents for both proposals listed the possible closure of Federal lands to deer hunting by NFQUs as a key factor in submitting their proposals. Both proponents suggested that a harvest limit reduction would protect deer populations, help reduce user conflicts in Unit 4, and avoid a closure of Federal public lands to NFQUs. The BOG adopted Proposal 10, with modification to reduce the nonresident harvest limit throughout all of Unit 4 to two male deer (ADF&G 2023a). The resident harvest limit remained three deer in Unit 4, Chichagof Island east of Port Frederick and north of Tenakee Inlet, and six deer in Unit 4 Remainder. The BOG took no action on Proposal 11, due to the action taken on Proposal 10.

Current Events

Two other proposals concerning deer regulations in Unit 4 were submitted for the 2024-2026 Federal subsistence wildlife regulatory cycle. WP24-05 was submitted by the Southeast Council, requesting to close the NECCUA surrounding Hoonah to deer harvest by NFQUs from Nov. 1-15. WP24-06 was also submitted by the Southeast Council, requesting to close a portion of northwest Chichagof Island around Pelican to deer harvest by NFQUs from Nov. 1-15.

The Hoonah Indian Association received funding through the USFS Southeast Alaska Sustainability Strategy program to collect community harvest and biological information about deer on the north end of Chichagof Island from 2022-2027. This project is scheduled to be carried out in the communities of Hoonah, Pelican, Gustavus, and Angoon. A North Unit 4 Deer Working Group has also been established under the guidance of the Hoonah Indian Association Environmental Programs (HIA Environmental 2023). The first meeting of this group was held on March 15, 2023. Information from subsistence surveys and the deer working group will be integrated into the analyses of WP24-04, WP24-05, and WP24-06 as it becomes available.

Biological Background

Sitka black-tailed deer spend the winter and early spring at low elevation where less snow accumulates, and forests provide increased foraging opportunities. Fawning occurs in late May and early June as vegetation greens-up, providing abundant forage to meet the energetic needs of lactating does. Migratory deer follow the greening vegetation up to alpine for the summer. Resident deer remain at lower elevations. The breeding season, or rut, generally occurs in October through November, and peaks in late November (ADF&G 2009). Wolves and black bears are not present in Unit 4, so their primary predators in the area are humans and brown bears. Brown bears are estimated to kill an amount of deer equal to 15%-20% of the total annual deer harvested by hunters (Mooney 2009). Significant changes in deer populations and localized deer density levels are relatively normal over time in Unit 4 (Bethune 2020). Periodic declines are often attributable to severe winter weather, particularly deep snow events (Bethune

2020; Olson 1979). This issue is clearly illustrated in the regulatory history, and the frequency with which proposals to change Unit 4 deer hunting regulations follow heavy snow winters.

Habitat

Unit 4, like most of Southeast Alaska, has a maritime climate characterized by high rainfall and moderate summer and winter temperatures (Bethune 2020). However, the amount of rain and snow received can vary significantly from year-to-year, and across the unit (Bethune 2020). The landscape of Unit 4 is characterized by steep and rugged terrain with mountains, fjords, estuaries, and short, swift rivers (Bethune 2020). Vegetative communities occurring at low to moderate elevations (<1,500 feet) "are dominated by western hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*) and Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*), with western red cedar (*Thuja plicata*) and Alaskan yellow cedar (*Chamaecyparis nootkatensis*) old-growth forests. Mixed conifer muskeg and deciduous riparian forests are also common. Mountain hemlock (*Tsuga mertensiana*) comprises a subalpine timberline band between 1,500 - 2,500 feet in elevation" (Bethune 2020: 4).

Old-growth forests are considered primary deer winter range, in part because the complex canopy cover allows sufficient sunlight through for forage plants to grow but intercepts snow, making it easier for deer to move and forage during winters when deep snow hinders access to other habitats (McCoy 2017). Some areas of Unit 4 have been significantly impacted by large-scale changes in habitat due to logging, while the habitat in other areas is largely intact (OSM 2022a). Areas with substantial timber harvest, such as northeastern Chichagof and northwestern Baranof Islands, are expected to have lower deer carrying capacity compared to pre-harvest conditions (OSM 2022a). Much of the area covered under this proposal is located in old-growth forests within Admiralty Island National Monument and the Kootznoowoo Wilderness that are considered more conducive to winter deer survival (OSM 2022a).

Population Information

Monitoring deer populations in forested habitat is challenging, as the total number of deer cannot be directly counted through ground or aerial surveys (Brinkman et al. 2013). Changes in deer populations in Unit 4 have historically been monitored using three complementary methods: deer pellet surveys, harvest reporting/hunter surveys, and aerial alpine surveys. Winter body condition and beach mortality surveys may also be conducted to understand changes in the health and abundance of area deer populations (Bethune 2020).

Deer pellet surveys have been used in the Southeast region since 1981 to monitor deer population trends and document substantial changes (≥ 30%) in deer density in specific watersheds (McCoy 2017). An average of <1.00 pellet group per survey plot generally indicates a low-density deer population, an average of 1.00 – 1.99 pellet groups per survey plot indicates a moderate-density population, and an average of >2.00 pellet groups per survey plot typically indicates a high-density population (Kirchoff and Pitcher 1988, Bethune 2022a). Deer pellet survey data, however, should be interpreted with caution, "as factors other than deer population size can affect deer pellet-group density" (McCoy 2017: 2). Issues such as winter severity and snowfall patterns, temperature and humidity, variability in survey effort, the length of time since the last survey, timing of vegetation green-up and changes in pellet group

detectability, and changes in habitat can all impact pellet-group density and/or detection (McCoy 2017). A recent deer pellet study conducted by Brinkman and colleagues (2013) on Prince of Wales Island using DNA-based methods found that current ADF&G/USFS deer pellet survey techniques did not provide an accurate index of deer populations when extrapolated across time, or beyond the local scale. As the researchers explained:

> Over the past three decades, ADF&G and USFS have used deer pellet counts as the primary tool to monitor deer population trends. Precise estimates of trends in deer abundance are needed because perceived fluctuations in the deer population size above or below a predetermined population objective set by ADF&G results in changes in harvest regulations. Despite heavy reliance on these data, pellet group counts of black-tailed deer were compared with an independent measure of [deer] population size only once. In that study, 13 radio-collared deer were introduced to a small (approx. 40 ha) island in southeast Alaska. Researchers returned to the island 264 days later and surveyed 1.9% of the island for pellet groups. Data from that study indicated that a pellet group density of 0.05 pellet groups/m² represented 12 deer/km² (95% CI = 10.7 deer/km² – 13.8 deer/km²). This estimate assumed constant pellet persistence, detection, and deposition rates. Unfortunately, data were obtained only during a single year, which prevented any evaluation of how well pellet groups deposited during winter tracked changes in deer population. Also, only 4 deer remained on the island (6 swam off and 3 died) when researchers returned to conduct pellet group counts, which complicated the association between deer numbers and number of pellet groups encountered. Moreover, the island was much smaller than typical deer home ranges (which likely concentrated deer activity) and habitat diversity was low when compared with typical deer ranges in southeast Alaska. Consequently, the usefulness of the study for evaluating the reliability of pellet-group surveys as conducted by ADF&G and USFS personnel was limited (Brinkman et al. 2013: 445).

Brinkman and colleagues (2013) also noted that though their deer pellet index was not directly comparable to that developed by ADF&G/USFS because of differing methodologies, their model suggested that a similar deer pellet density of 0.05 pellet groups/m² across a mix of habitat types on Prince of Wales Island would indicate a minimum deer count of 2.9 deer/ km², with a much wider margin of error (95% CI = 0.4 deer/km² – 24.3 deer/km²). Previous pellet group count studies conducted outside of Alaska that demonstrated the usefulness of pellet-group counts were conducted under conditions that are difficult to replicate with unenclosed populations of deer in unmanaged landscapes (Brinkman et al 2013). The researchers concluded:

> The variation we reported between estimates of pellet-group counts and deer counts at the transect level do not support the use of pellet-group count surveys to reliably monitor trends in deer populations at larger spatial scales. Indeed, during our study, pellet-group data aggregated within watersheds did not reflect the decline in deer count within those watersheds. For instance, in the Staney watershed, DNA results indicated a 24% decline in minimum deer count from 2006 to 2008, whereas pellet group counts indicated a 17% increase over the same years (Brinkman et al. 2013: 449).

There have been no recent deer pellet surveys conducted in the proposal area. However, recent pellet surveys conducted in other parts of Unit 4 have generally indicated increasing populations from prior years (McCoy 2019; Bethune 2020). The last surveys conducted on Admiralty Island took place in Pybus Bay in 2019, Barlow Cove in 2018, and Hawk Inlet in 2017 (Bethune 2022a). Each of these surveys exhibited an average pellet count greater than 2.00 (Bethune 2022a). As the ADF&G Regional Supervisor explained during a recent Southeast Council meeting, "deer pellet densities in Game Management Unit 4, no matter where you do them, are always the highest in the region" (SERAC 2021b: 476). However, he did also note that "The department does not monitor deer populations in these relatively small areas affected by the proposal. We monitor deer populations on a unit-wide level" (SERAC 2021b: 351). This statement, as well as the previously mentioned study by Brinkman and colleagues (2013), lends credence to local testimony presented at recent Southeast Council meetings that deer populations may not be tracked at a fine enough scale to capture periodic, localized declines (see SERAC 2021b).

Aerial alpine survey work began in 2013, as an effort to provide a new, timelier method to assess and monitor the abundance of deer in alpine areas (Bethune 2020). These surveys are intended to be flown each summer before the hunting season, with deer seen per survey hour constituting the standard unit of measurement (Bethune 2020). As Bethune (2020: 25) notes, "The alpine survey technique appears to be a useful tool for gauging deer abundance immediately prior to hunting season. However, research is needed to learn more about what alpine surveys tell us about the larger deer population."

Aerial alpine surveys were conducted over two locations in Unit 4 between 2015 and 2018 (Bethune 2022a). Surveys were flown over Southern Admiralty Island in 2015-2017, and Northeast Chichagof Island in 2017 and 2018 (Bethune 2022a). Southern Admiralty Island exhibited the highest deer seen per hour of any survey conducted in Southeast Alaska during this time (see **Figure 3**). It is not clear to what extent these aerial surveys covered the current proposal area. Aerial surveys were not conducted in 2019 and 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions (Bethune 2022a).

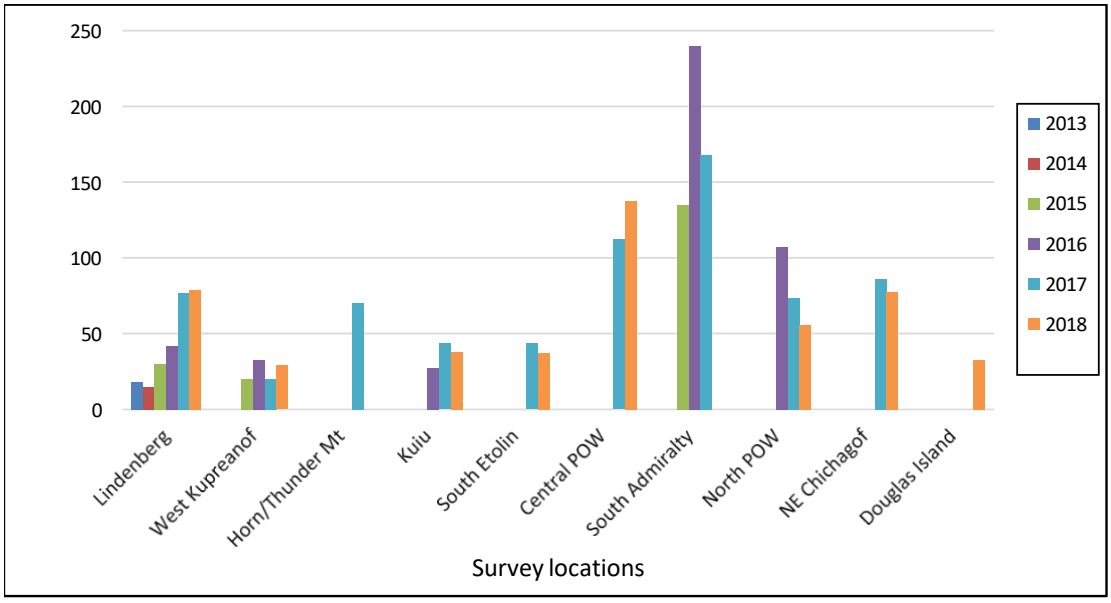

Figure 3. Average Number of Deer Counted per Hour during Mid-Summer Aerial Alpine Surveys in Southeast Alaska, 2013 – 2018 (Bethune 2022a).

Annual harvest data estimated from harvest reports and hunter surveys can also provide another indicator of deer population status, and potential change over time (Bethune 2022a). The most recently reported five-year average (2016-2020) for all harvests in Unit 4 was approximately 5,742 deer per year (see **Table 2**, Bethune 2022a). During this time, the greatest amount of harvest occurred on Chichagof Island, followed by Baranof Island and Admiralty Island (Bethune 2022a). The total estimated per year harvest average during this period was very similar to the average of 5,674 deer harvested each year during the previous five-year reporting period from 2011-2015 (**Table 2**). The greatest amount of harvest during the 2011-2015 reporting period also took place on Chichagof Island, followed by Baranof Island and Admiralty Island (Bethune 2020). The estimated average number of all hunters hunting in Unit 4 each year increased slightly between these five-year reporting periods (+4% or +126 hunters), while the average number of total hunter days per year decreased slightly (-3% or -446 hunter days) (**Table 2**). Still, the harvest levels estimated for the two most recent five-year reporting periods (2011-2015 & 2016-2020) are substantially lower than those estimated for the 2001-2005 reporting period (**Table 2**). Yet, the estimated average number of users hunting each year during these three reporting periods (2011-2005; 2011-2015; 2016-2020) is quite similar (**Table 2**). Recently reported five-year harvest and hunting efforts in the proposal area follow different trends (see **Table 9**). This issue is discussed in detail in the harvest history section of the analysis because it is important to consider in light of the proponents' statements about increased competition impacting Angoon residents' deer hunting efforts in the proposal area.

Table 2. Estimated Total Harvests and Hunting Effort in Unit 4 during Recent Five-Year Reporting Periods (ADF&G 2005-2006, 2006-2007; Mooney 2007, 2009, 2011, 2015; Bethune 2020, 2022a).

Year	Total Hunters	Total Hunter Days	Total Harvests in Unit 4
2001	3581	-	7457
2002	3414	-	5117
2003	3637	-	7621
2004	3363	-	6787
2005	3166	-	6983
5 Year Average	**3432**	**-**	**6793**
2006	3057	-	7741
2007	1999	-	1846
2008	2378	-	3855
2009	2280	-	3909
2010	2709	-	4688
5 Year Average	**2485**	**-**	**4408**
2011	3157	14020	6909
2012	3103	12214	4853
2013	3248	13094	5409
2014	3435	13815	4694
2015	3733	15183	6505
5 Year Average	**3335**	**13665**	**5674**
2016	3742	14535	7192
2017	3478	12555	5255
2018	3449	13425	5229
2019	3382	12870	5979
2020	3252	12712	5055
5 Year Average	**3461**	**13219**	**5742**
Overall Average	**3178**	**13442**	**5654**

Recently reported five-year harvest and hunting efforts in the proposal area follow somewhat different trends (see **Table 3**). The estimated average yearly harvest in this area increased by approximately 13% (11 deer) between the 2011-2015 and 2016-2020 reporting periods (**Table 3**). This increase in harvest was accompanied by an increase in the average number of reported hunters (+8% or +5 hunters) and a

substantial increase in the average number of reported hunter days (+40% or +66 hunter days) witnessed in the proposal area between these two reporting periods (**Table 3**). Overall, however, there has been a 3% (+2 hunters) increase in average reported hunters per year, a 10% (+22 hunter days) increase in average reported hunter days per year, and a 13% (-14 deer) decrease in average reported harvests per year in the proposal area between the 2001-2005 reporting period and the 2016-2020 reporting period (**Table 3**). Increased hunting effort combined with decreasing harvests would tend to indicate that hunting conditions have become somewhat more difficult over time in the proposal area, or that the 2001-2005 reporting period was not as representative of typical hunting conditions as other reporting periods (**Table 3**). Among the different user groups in this area, only non-federally qualified users (NFQUs) reported increases in average yearly hunters (+44% or +9 hunters), hunter days (+101% or +67 days), or harvests (+163% or +27 deer) between the 2001-2005 reporting period and the 2016-2020 reporting period (see **Table 9**). This issue is discussed in greater detail in the ensuing sections of the analysis.

Table 3. Estimated Total Harvests and Hunting Effort in the Proposal Area during Recent Five-Year Reporting Periods (ADF&G 2021).

Year	Total Hunters	Total Hunter Days	Total Harvests in Proposal Area
2001	69	367	110
2002	53	227	92
2003	28	41	41
2004	57	151	80
2005	102	264	203
5 Year Average	**62**	**210**	**105**
2006	86	390	176
2007	57	134	39
2008	30	222	89
2009	33	76	29
2010	65	190	151
5 Year Average	**54**	**202**	**97**
2011	59	198	135
2012	62	163	89
2013	50	117	53
2014	52	134	50
2015	71	218	74
5 Year Average	**59**	**166**	**80**
2016	97	358	141
2017	44	159	64
2018	51	181	76
2019	63	205	93

2020	63	255	81
5 Year Average	**64**	**232**	**91**
Overall Average	**60**	**203**	**93**

Based on the combination of harvest data, pellet survey data, aerial surveys, and related information, managers in the area assert that the overall deer population in Unit 4 has recovered from the population declines suffered during the severe winters of 2006-2008 (**Tables 2** & **3**), and it may be reaching winter carrying capacity in some areas (Bethune 2022a). Most recently, the heavy snowfall that took place in December 2021 led to some concerns about over-winter mortality. However, the rest of the 2021-2022 winter exhibited mild to average weather conditions and the mortality surveys conducted in the spring of 2022 found that over-winter mortality was not higher than normal, and that the body condition of live deer was similar to that seen in previous years (Bethune 2022b).

Cultural Knowledge and Traditional Practices

Community Characteristics

Angoon is a Tlingit community of long standing located on the southwestern shore of Admiralty Island, at the entrance to Kootznahoo Inlet. It is now one of the older and more remote communities in Alaska, with a history that can be traced back hundreds of years, when smaller Tlingit villages and camps in the area became more concentrated (Garfield 1947). It is the only permanent community on Admiralty Island (ADCCED 2023). Angoon is located about fifty-five miles southwest of Juneau, and it is only accessible by floatplane or boat. An Alaska State ferry is scheduled to visit Angoon up to twice a week from March through December (Grant and Sill 2017; Juneau Empire 2022, State of Alaska 2023). However, ferry runs are occasionally canceled due to poor weather, mechanical issues, and other reasons. The ferry is not scheduled to visit Angoon in January or February (Juneau Empire 2022). Members of the Southeast Council and other residents of the area have also noted that the ferry system has not been as dependable as it was before the COVID-19 pandemic and State budget cuts (SERAC 2021b).

Commercial economic opportunities have historically been limited to resource industries in the Angoon area. Maritime fur trading was the major commercial activity in this area during the Russian America period (1799-1867) (ADCCED 2023). In 1878, shortly after the Alaska Purchase, the Northwest Trading Company established a trading post and whaling station on nearby Killisnoo Island (ADCCED 2023). Angoon residents were employed as whalers during this time. Angoon first appeared in the US Census in 1880, as the Native Village of "Augoon" [sic], having a population of 420 residents (see **Table 4**). The Northwest Trading Company soon converted its operations on Killisnoo Island from whaling to herring fishing and processing. Commercial fishing and processing have been economic mainstays and key sources of employment and income for residents of the area since this period (Grant and Sill 2017, ADLWD 2021). These commercial activities have become important complements to the more traditional subsistence hunting and fishing practices that have taken place in the area for generations and remain key to local livelihoods and lifestyles (Grant and Sill 2017).

Table 4. The population of Angoon from 1880 to 2022. (Note that Census data was not collected for Angoon from 1890 to 1910) (ADCCED 2023).

Year	1880	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	2022
Population	420	114	319	342	429	395	400	465	638	572	459	357	340

Subsistence Practices

Although subsistence hunting and fishing practices have been highly important for food provisioning in Angoon, the Tlingit and many other indigenous and rural Alaskan communities regard subsistence as much more than the acts of harvesting, preparing, and eating the food required for nourishment (Thornton 2008). As Thornton (2008: 117) notes, the Tlingit "regard subsistence as an intricate and profound set of relationships with particular geographic settings where their social groups have dwelled historically. For them subsistence is *haa Kusteeyí*, 'our way of living,' 'real being,' and 'enriching existence,' and not just 'the minimum (food, etc.) necessary to support life.'" In Angoon, this type of perspective on subsistence still holds sway, and proposals to provide for a meaningful subsistence priority against increased hunting competition should be approached with this in mind (SERAC 2021b). As the Southeast Council member from Angoon recently commented on a similar deer proposal, "When you look at this proposal [WP22-07], it appears the federally qualified community is trying to protect our way of life and access to the [deer] resource" (SERAC 2021b: 505). "We don't ask for anything but an opportunity to hunt in peace off the resources that our fathers and grandfathers decided were here when they settled here. We didn't settle in Juneau. We didn't settle anywhere else. We settled here" (SERAC 2021b: 411).

Deer have been a key subsistence resource utilized by Angoon community members for generations (Goldschmidt and Haas 2000), and generally represent the most significant terrestrial source of meat for rural residents of southeast Alaska (Brinkman et al. 2009). Angoon residents have historically hunted deer on Admiralty, Baranof, and Chichagof Islands, traveling farther in pursuit of deer than any other subsistence resource (Goldschmidt and Haas 2000). In comprehensive household subsistence surveys conducted in Angoon over the past four decades, deer consistently ranked as the first or second resource in terms of bulk contribution to local subsistence diets, trailing only salmon or non-salmon fish (see **Table 5**, George and Kookesh 1982, George and Bosworth 1988, Grant and Sill 2017). These studies also illustrated the cultural importance of reciprocity and sharing of subsistence resources within the community, as sharing of subsistence resources and knowledge promotes sociality and future harvest success, while preventing potential wastage when subsistence resources are harvested in abundance (see **Table 5**, Langdon and Worl 1981, Langdon 2021). Over all four comprehensive subsistence studies, an average of 42% of Angoon households reported giving deer to others, while 45% of Angoon households reported receiving deer from others (**Table 5**). An average of 54% of the households in Angoon reported attempting to harvest deer, while an average of 87% of households reported using deer (**Table 5**). This data conforms to findings from subsistence studies conducted in many other rural Alaskan communities, where a smaller proportion of households often harvest a greater percentage of local subsistence resources, which they typically share or trade with other households (Wolfe and Walker 1987).

Table 5. Estimated Harvest, Use, and Sharing of Deer by Angoon Households in 1984, 1987, 1996, and 2012 (ADF&G 2023b, George and Kookesh 1982, George and Bosworth 1988, Grant and Sill 2017)

	1984	1987	1996	2012
Population of Angoon	622	521	581	342
Percent Attempting to Harvest Deer	63%	N/A	50%	49%
Percent Harvesting Deer	60%	75%	50%	45%
Percent Giving Deer	50%	40%	26%	38%
Percent Receiving Deer	45%	46%	49%	51%
Percent Using Deer	90%	100%	74%	84%
Total Number of Deer Harvested	454	474	370	218
Average Harvest per Household (lbs.)	251	272	184	143
Average Harvest per Person (lbs.)	58	73	51	51
Deer Rank in Contribution to Subsistence	2nd	1st	2nd	2nd

In Angoon, deer hunting strategies align with the species' yearly lifecycle (George and Kookesh 1982). Fawns are born in late spring in trees edging muskeg or beach (George and Kookesh 1982). In summer, deer move into the alpine areas until the fall when they enter mature forests (George and Kookesh 1982). During winter, deer live in the forest below the snow line until heavy snows drive them down to the beaches where the forest fringe of old growth timber keeps the ground relatively snow free (George and Kookesh 1982). Therefore, Angoon residents describe using three different hunting strategies that are associated with specific seasons, weather, geographic locations, and deer behavior (George and Kookesh 1982). These strategies are broadly described as the Alpine Hunt, the Muskeg and Forest Hunt, and the Beach Hunt (George and Kookesh 1982). However, due to the generally steep and rugged landscape of the area, beach hunting is the dominant strategy used in Angoon and many other parts of Unit 4 (George and Kookesh 1982). Beach hunting takes place throughout the deer hunting season, as this hunting strategy is typically more efficient than the others (George and Kookesh 1982). In addition to trips focused on deer hunting, hunters opportunistically hunt the beaches whenever travelling by boat along the coastline (George and Kookesh 1982; SERAC 2021a, 2021b). Where and when Angoon residents hunt deer is influenced by deer presence, competition from other hunters, proximity to Angoon, need, knowledge of the area, weather, and beaches suitable for boat landing (SERAC 2021b).

Angoon residents previously harvested significant numbers of deer along west Chatham Strait and northwest Admiralty Island, during the years when the commercial fishing industry was stronger and fish canneries operated in these areas (Goldschmidt and Haas 2000). Broad participation in the commercial seine fishery allowed many Angoon fishers to travel long distances safely and harvest various subsistence foods, like deer, while in the process of catching and delivering their commercial harvests. Unfortunately, the Angoon cannery burned down in 1961, and the loss of the cannery was at least partially responsible for many Angoon residents selling their seine boats. Local boat owners no longer had their own company to fish for, to receive credit from, or a place to store and repair their boats (George and Bosworth 1988). The continued decline of the local commercial fishing industry and loss of

associated income has contributed to the population decline witnessed in Angoon since the mid-1990s, as people have moved away in search of employment and other economic opportunities (see **Table 4**). For example, in 1986 there were 162 commercial fishing permits issued to Angoon residents for all commercial fisheries (Grant and Sill 2017). In 2012, however, only 17 commercial fishing permits were issued to Angoon residents (Grant and Sill 2017). The loss of income from commercial fishing, coupled with the rising costs of fuel, the rising costs of store-bought food, and supply chain problems have all contributed to the food security issues and human population declines witnessed in Angoon and similar rural Alaskan communities in recent years (Grant and Sill 2017). The Southeast Council member from Angoon described these important changes at a recent Council meeting:

> In 1988, we had ferry service you could rely on. The price of food was reasonable. Every home in Angoon had a commercial permit so we were able to support ourselves with financial opportunity through fishing. We had food security because we could go out and rely on the resources our elders decided were here when we stopped in and decided this is where we're going to be (SERAC 2021b: 335–336).

An increase in the hand troll fleet and the use of skiffs paralleled the decline of large seiners in the community and in the commercial fishing industry throughout Southeast Alaska (George and Bosworth 1988; SERAC 2021a, 2021b). Loss of seiners and declines in fishing as a commercial activity also required a shift in subsistence harvest technologies to smaller boats making shorter trips (George and Bosworth 1988; SERAC 2021a, 2021b). Small vessels for commercial fishing, mainly hand trolling, along with 16- or 17-foot outboard motor skiffs, are now used extensively in the fall for hunting trips to destinations that are reached along the marine passages in all directions from Angoon (George and Bosworth 1988; SERAC 2021a, 2021b). A small skiff can negotiate intertidal areas while looking for deer. Also, skiffs may be pulled onto shore or anchored in shallow embayments while a hunting party walks along the beach or further inland. These hunting trips can be particularly important in November, as food security can often become an issue around this time (Grant and Sill 2017).

The use of smaller boats and the recent rise in fuel prices, however, has restricted the distances that many local hunters can travel to harvest deer and other subsistence resources (Grant and Sill 2017; SERAC 2021a, 2021b). Residents of Angoon and similar communities in Unit 4 have noted that their increasing reliance upon smaller boats navigating narrow embayments closer to home has made hunter competition and user conflict in these areas a significant issue (SERAC 2021b, SERAC 2023). Overall, approximately 80% of all recent deer harvests in Unit 4 have been made by boat-based hunters (Bethune 2022a). Though boat-based beach hunting is typically the most efficient method of deer harvest in Unit 4, it can be restricted by issues of access and competition (SERAC 2021b). Local knowledge attests that only one or two boats can hunt in narrow embayments without negatively affecting hunting success because access in some inlets is very limited and localized depletions of deer are possible (SERAC 2021b). Therefore, even a relatively small increase in hunting competition can seriously impact the effort and success rates of subsistence hunts (SERAC 2021b). As one Southeast Council member put it, "There's plenty of water, but there's not enough elbow room at the bar" (SERAC 2021b: 525). Another Unit 4 resident related the story of a friend who boated to a preferred deer hunting location with "all his hopes on ten gallons of gas" only to find three or four other boats with hunters already hunting there

(SERAC 2021b: 367). Collectively, these sorts of issues have also made local hunting efforts more weather dependent (Grant and Sill 2017; SERAC 2021a, 2021b). As the Southeast Council member from Angoon noted,

> What you don't hear in the [recent hunter harvest and effort] data is the economy of Angoon. I mentioned earlier that everyone in Angoon had a permit hand troll [in years past]. We all fished halibut. It was a fun time, but that stuff isn't here anymore. So, the hunter effort is based on the price of gas [now]. For example, if I have five gallons of gas, I'm definitely not going to go out today and look for deer, because it's raining. Those things like that are missing from the equation (SERAC 2021b: 355).

A recent study of eight rural Alaskan communities in the Yukon Flats region quantified the significant impacts of rising fuel costs and depressed local economies among subsistence harvesters (Brinkman et al. 2014). Overall, 81% of the subsistence harvesters participating in the study noted that they had reduced the distance they traveled to conduct subsistence activities over the past ten years because of gasoline costs (Brinkman et al. 2014). Similarly, 89% of the study participants noted that they had reduced the number of yearly trips they took to conduct subsistence activities for the same reason (Brinkman et al. 2014). As the researchers explained:

> During the last ten years [2002 – 2012], the median distance traveled to perform subsistence decreased by 60%, and the median number of annual trips taken to perform subsistence decreased by 75%. The change in subsistence activity was similar across and within communities. Eighty-five percent of the people interviewed reported that they were making sacrifices with serious consequences, such as putting off paying monthly bills, to buy gasoline for subsistence activities. To adapt to high gasoline prices, most [study] participants said that they were using more efficient modes of transportation (69%), followed by more sharing of gasoline costs with family and friends (37%), and conducting more multipurpose subsistence trips (20%). With subsistence practices being critical to food security and cultural identity…our results suggest that unaffordable fuel has threatened social resilience [in this area] (Brinkman et al 2014: 18).

Consequently, recent reductions in deer hunters, hunter days, and harvests reported by Angoon residents during the most recent five-year reporting period are at least partially related to the impact of rising fuel prices in an area with declining commercial fisheries employment and income earning opportunities (**Table 9**). Reductions in the number and distance of trips that Angoon residents can afford to take to harvest subsistence resources would almost certainly contribute to issues of user conflict and competition in the proposal area. Many Angoon residents focus their subsistence activities within a smaller core area now, mainly shoreline around the community (OSM 2022a). As the Council member explained, "We've learned from our father and our grandfathers, that we hunt these areas because there's always somewhere to hide from the weather in a small boat, and [these areas] have become important to us" (SERAC 2021b: 386). Similarly, "The [local] people that can afford to hunt away from Angoon do that and leave it [Angoon] for the guys that are hunting in 14-foot Lunds with 9-horsepower motors on them. We do that because the price of gas is six dollars a gallon [here]" (SERAC 2021b: 335, Grant and Sill 2017). However, "[Non-local hunters] can go into

a bay [near Angoon] and eliminate all the deer in that bay. You don't see that in the data" (SERAC 20221b: 422).

Available harvest and effort data also does not specifically account for the impact of declining, ageing populations in communities like Angoon (SERAC 2021b). It would be reasonable to expect that a community's harvests, total number of hunters, and total days hunted would decrease as their population decreases. As the Southeast Council member from Angoon explained, "My interpretation of that [hunter effort] data is that there's less of an effort [by FQSUs] because there's less of a population here [in Angoon]" (SERAC 2021b: 384). However, the number of reported Angoon hunters as a percentage of overall community population has remained relatively stable for the years where this data exists. Still, an ageing population of hunters might be more reliant upon beach and low elevation hunts in an otherwise steep and rugged landscape, as described below. Declining community populations, however, do not explain local perceptions of increased hunting pressure. Echoing the sentiments of several other testimonies, one Unit 4 resident noted:

> I kind of live for deer and I wasn't able to get any last year. I'm getting too old to climb up to the top of the mountain so, you know, I do rely for them to be on the beaches. Anyway, last year I wasn't able to score any. So, I've been saying that the [deer] population, I don't know, it seems to be decreasing, if you ask me, and there's more pressure on them all the time (SERAC 2021b: 172).

However, some federally qualified and non-federally qualified users have suggested that observed declines in the local deer populations could be related to recent mild winters, which resulted in deer being spread-out through the forests rather than concentrated and easily visible on beaches. A resident of Juneau explained:

> I was out there [Unit 4] for six weeks last year…and you know, it was cold. It was cold and there wasn't much snow last year. So, if you wanted to get deer, you had to go into the woods. It's as simple as that… So, I thought we were pretty successful…When you did get into the woods and tried to walk around up in there, you were crunching through the little bit of frozen snow that was there…but there was a lot of sign [of deer] … Very seldom did we run the beaches. I mean that's, to me, not really hunting, but I understand for folks who are a little older. (SERAC 2021b: 174).

As this statement by the Juneau hunter alludes, hunting for some NFQUs is not just about the efficiency with which one can harvest a deer for food; it is also about the experience and sporting nature of the hunt. Likewise, some residents of the smaller communities in Unit 4 believe that non-local, sport-oriented, and/or younger hunters should focus their efforts on alpine areas because alpine hunting is a more recreational pursuit that is less efficient than hunting in lower elevations, or along shorelines (SERAC 2021a, SERAC 2021b). As one resident explained, "You know, people that come in from…that don't know the area, they're just doing it [hunting] for fun. They don't have any idea what subsistence is about" (SERAC 2021a: 201). Similarly, the Council member from Angoon noted, "We don't do it [hunting] for fun…. everything goes in our freezer," but then "you see a big boat towing several other

boats and they're just out having a good time" (SERAC 2021a: 195). There is also a local perception that non-local hunters, and particularly unguided hunters, often waste or improperly process much of the deer that they harvest (SERAC 2021a). As the Council member from Angoon explained, "We run into a problem where people from Juneau come out and then they just take part of the deer and not the whole deer, you know, and I always say, whenever we strip a deer, we always boil…even boil the bones, just for something to eat. So, the subsistence way of life is that way, you know, use as much as possible" (SERAC 2021a: 201).

For some FQSUs, there are also concerns that non-local hunters impact the success of local hunters in ways that go beyond competition and crowding. Some FQSUs assert that non-local hunters, including hunters primarily seeking bear, often shoot at deer and miss, causing the deer to become more skittish and wary of all hunting presence. As the Council member from Angoon noted, "You used to be able to drive up to a deer, get out of the boat within reasonable range and take the deer. Now, you have to stop 400 or 500 yards away" (SERAC 2021a: 59), and "this is something my dad taught me, his dad taught him, and my mother's father taught me. If you shoot at a deer [and miss], you're never going to see that deer again. That's the nature of deer" (SERAC 2021b: 397).

Though prey switching among subsistence users has been a recorded method for coping with issues of competition and fluctuations in the availability of primary subsistence resources, a recent study among nineteen rural communities in the Yukon River drainage suggests that such strategies often do not provide substantial compensation for declining harvests of primary subsistence resources, and that the overall utility of prey switching may be complicated by policy restrictions, the increased time and effort required to harvest sufficient amounts of secondary resources, and/or simultaneous declines in secondary resources (Hansen et al. 2013).

Food Security and Contemporary Economic Conditions

During the most recent subsistence study conducted by ADF&G in 2012, nearly half (42%) of the households in Angoon were considered to be experiencing low or very low food security (Grant and Sill 2017). The percentage of food insecure households in Angoon (42%) was roughly three times higher than the average for the state of Alaska (12%), and the nation overall (15%) (Grant and Sill 2017). Angoon households experiencing low food security (31%) reported reduced quality, variety, or desirability of their diet, whereas Angoon households experiencing very low food security (11%) reported multiple instances of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake (Grant and Sill 2017). The rate of very low food security experienced by Angoon households was greater than that experienced in any of the other four rural, Southeast Alaskan communities (Haines, Hoonah, Whale Pass, and Hydaburg) surveyed in the ADF&G study (Grant and Sill 2017).

Overall, 52% of Angoon households reported worrying about having enough food, 73% indicated they lacked the resources necessary to get either store-bought or subsistence foods, and 54% noted that their food did not last in 2012 (Grant and Sill 2017). Food insecure conditions increased significantly during the winter months in Angoon, with the highest levels of food insecurity typically occurring in November (Grant and Sill 2017). As Grant and Sill noted (2017: 214), "with less than one-half of the employed

adults working full-time and 38% employed year-round, the presumably highly varied employment status of households throughout the year combined with the seasonal availability of wild foods likely affects food security." In the winter months there are fewer seasonal jobs available and subsistence foods are not as plentiful (Grant and Sill 2017). Consequently, food insecurity increases (Grant and Sill 2017). These findings could also indicate that hunting conditions and similar subsistence harvesting activities have become more difficult in the Angoon area in recent years. Regardless, this study underscores the importance of successful deer hunting in November for FQSUs in the area, as deer have consistently ranked as the first or second resource in terms of bulk contribution to subsistence diets in Angoon during previous study years (see **Table 5**). In fact, November has been the month when the majority of deer harvest and deer harvest effort has taken place throughout Unit 4 in recent years (see **Table 6**). This trend is consistent for both FQSUs and NFQUs (**Table 6**).

Table 6. Percentage of Unit 4 Deer Harvest by Month and User Type, 2000-2019 (ADF&G 2021).

Hunter type	August	September	October	**November**	December	January
Federally qualified	6%	8%	16%	**40%**	23%	8%
Non-Federally qualified	5%	6%	13%	**53%**	22%	0%
Overall	6%	7%	15%	**45%**	22%	5%

In 2020, there were 357 individuals living in 154 households in Angoon (US Census 2020a). The median age of Angoon residents was approximately 46 at this time, about ten years older than the median age for all Alaskan residents (US Census 2020a). Angoon also had a significantly larger proportion of residents 65 and older when compared to the median figure for the entire state (US Census 2020a). The median household income in Angoon was $44,167 in 2020, approximately $34,000 less than the median household income for Alaska overall (US Census 2020a). The employment rate in Angoon was roughly 47%, about 10% lower than the median employment rate across the state (US Census 2020a). The primary employment sectors in Angoon were education, healthcare, and social work (38%), and recreation and the service industry (22%). Agriculture, forestry, and fishing only employed about 5% of the population in 2020 (US Census 2020a). The poverty rate for families in Angoon was approximately 20% in 2020, and about 37% of Angoon households qualified for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (see **Table 7**). This socioeconomic information for Angoon in 2020 is compared to that of the previous two US Census periods in **Table 7** below.

Table 7. Angoon Socioeconomic Statistics for 2000, 2010, and 2020 (US Census 2000, 2010, 2020a, 2020b)

Year	Population	Median Age	Percent of Population 65+	Median Household Income	Employment Rate	Family Poverty Rate	Households Qualified for SNAP
2000	572	34	6%	$29,861	50%	27%	n/a
2010	459	33	10%	$23,350	46%	50%	47%
2020	357	46	19%	$44,167	47%	20%	37%

Harvest History

Hunter harvest and effort reporting is another one of the suite of methods that managers use in combination to monitor deer population trends in Unit 4. As Bethune (2020: 15) notes, hunter harvest trends, particularly those observed at larger scales, typically reflect current deer population levels. However, hunter self-reported harvest and effort data should be analyzed cautiously, as reporting rates can be less than ideal (Bethune 2020). This is particularly the case in smaller rural communities, like Angoon, where reporting rates are often much lower than elsewhere, sometimes less than 30% (Bethune 2020, SERAC 2010). Management staff typically call hunters to ask about their hunting efforts and harvests to try to achieve a 60% reporting rate when response rates are low. However, to account for hunters who do not report, data are proportionally expanded by community size (Bethune 2020). Therefore, "in small communities with low reporting rates, expanded data may be based on the reports of only a handful of hunters, resulting in a good deal of uncertainty about the [accuracy of] expanded data" (Bethune 2020: 16). Additionally, as described below, calculations of hunter effort and success may be misleading because subsistence users often only document their successful hunts (SERAC 2021b). As one Unit 4 resident explained, "I question this [harvest success] information. When I complete a deer hunter survey, I only list actual deer harvested, and it is always a one-day hunt. I never list the number of times I hunt without success, and it may be three, four, or five times before I shoot a deer" (SERAC 2021b: 73). Another resident noted, "It's tough to sit here and listen to someone who's looking at data that was given to them and not actually living in Angoon and sees it for himself or lives the life of the people who live here" (SERAC 2021b: 315). Though harvest reports and comprehensive subsistence survey data are often the only sources of quantitative information available on the harvest and use of wild resources by residents of small rural communities in Alaska, it is important to consider this type of quantitative information holistically, in combination with qualitative testimony of local users' observations and traditional ecological knowledge (SERAC 2021b).

ADF&G estimated harvest data from 2000 through 2021 (ADF&G 2022c, ADF&G 2021) were used to try to gain some understanding of the deer harvest patterns and trends of FQSUs and NFQUs in the proposal area. Likewise, hunter effort was also measured as a function of the overall number of hunters and hunter-days. It should be noted that these measurements of hunter effort do not specifically account for potential confounding factors such as community population decline, weather, the price of gas, or hunter competition. Hunter harvest and effort measurements were grouped by Wildlife Analysis Area (WAA), which roughly correspond to major watersheds or other distinct geographic areas (see **Figure 2**). Since effort was calculated by WAA, individual hunters using multiple WAAs in a single regulatory year may have been counted multiple times and over-represented in these calculations.

Proximity to Angoon appears to be a key factor for residents when selecting deer hunting locations. According to the available data, from 2000 to 2021, approximately 38% of Angoon residents' reported deer harvests, and 41% of their reported hunting days took place within the WAAs covered by the proposal area (see **Table 8**). The Angoon Area (4042) and Hood Bay/Chaik (4055) WAAs accounted for almost all of these reported harvests and hunting days, while a relatively minimal amount of Angoon hunting effort and deer harvest took place within Whitewater Bay/Wilson Cove (4041). Angoon residents utilized the Pybus Bay (3939) and the Fishery/Thayer Creeks (4054) areas the most of any WAAs located outside the proposal area (**Table 8**). Additionally, the location of about 20% of the total harvest and 18% of the hunting days reported by Angoon residents during this time could not be

determined from the information returned and is unknown (**Table 8**). It is possible that some of this unknown harvest and harvest effort may have also taken place within the proposal area. Regardless, the data supports previous statements from residents of Angoon that suggest that they primarily hunt in areas close to home.

Table 8. Distribution of Unit 4 Deer Hunting Effort and Harvest by Angoon Residents by Wildlife Analysis Area (WAA), 2000-2021 (ADF&G 2021, 2022c).

WAAs within Proposal Area	Hunter Days	Total Harvest	Percent Days	Percent Harvest
4041 WHITEWATER BAY, WILSON COVE	25.4	59.2	1%	2%
4042 ANGOON AREA	933.5	562.8	20%	22%
4055 HOOD BAY, CHAIK BAY DRAINAGES	962	369	20%	14%
Total within Proposal Area	1920.9	991	41%	38%
WAAs Outside of Proposal Area	**Hunter Days**	**Total Harvest**	**Percent Days**	**Percent Harvest**
3308 KOOK LAKE, SITKOH BAY, FALSE IS.	190.1	108.4	4%	4%
3315 CATHERINE ISLAND, LAKE EVA, HANUS BAY	157.9	72.8	3%	3%
3417 WEST COAST CHICHAGOF	22.6	18.1	<1%	<1%
3525 FRESHWATER BAY DRAINAGES	8.3	8.3	<1%	<1%
3526 NORTH SHORE TENAKEE INLET	31.9	0	<1%	0%
3551 WHITESTONE HARBOR, FALSE BAY DRAINAGES	88.6	7.4	2%	<1%
3731 KELP BAY-TAKATZ BAY	15.6	9.4	<1%	<1%
3733 WHALE BAY DRAINAGES, WILDERNESS COAST	5.4	5.4	<1%	<1%
3835 NORTHERN MANSFIELD PENIN.	6.2	6.2	<1%	<1%
3837 WHEELER, GREENS CREEKS DRAINAGES	24.7	24.7	<1%	<1%
3939 PYBUS BAY DRAINAGES	598.7	360.6	13%	14%
3940 PT. GARDNER, ELIZA HARBOR	53.8	33.6	1%	1%
4043 CENTRAL ADMIRALTY LAKES	28.9	18.1	1%	1%
4044 SHEE-ATIKA DRAINAGES	66.3	22.8	1%	1%
4054 FISHERY, THAYER CREEKS	504.6	341.3	11%	13%
4145 TIEDEMAN IS.-MOLE HARBOR AREA	69.7	30.6	1%	1%
4149 EAST SIDE GLASS PENIN.	4.1	0	<1%	0%
4150 GRAND IS., OLIVER INLET, STINK CREEK	20.7	8.3	<1%	<1%
4222 PT. ADOLPHUS, MUD BAY AREA	52.6	26.3	1%	1%
Total Outside Proposal Area	1950.7	1102.3	41%	42%
Total (Known Harvest Area)	3871.6	2093.3	82%	80%
Unknown Harvest Area	875.9	516.2	18%	20%

Based on the reported data, an average of approximately 59 users hunted for 207 days, harvesting 94 deer within the proposal area each year from 2000 to 2021 (see **Table 9**). However, the total number of

hunters, hunter days, and deer harvested in the proposal area by both FQSUs and NFQUs was variable between years (see **Table 9**). In most years, FQSUs harvested more deer from the proposal area due to the larger number of hunters. On average, roughly 45% of all hunters utilizing the proposal area each year were FQSUs from Angoon (**Table 9**). The second largest proportion of hunters each year were NFQUs (39%). Other FQSUs from communities outside Angoon typically composed about 16% of hunters in the proposal area each year (**Table 9**).

The available yearly data on reported hunter days and harvests within the proposal area shows similar trends between 2000 and 2021 (see **Table 9**). On average, Angoon residents were responsible for 49% of reported hunter days and 53% of reported harvests in the proposal area each year (**Table 9**). Other FQSUs were generally responsible for about 10% of reported hunter days and 16% of reported harvests (**Table 9**). NFQUs were responsible for about 41% of reported hunter days and 31% of reported harvests in the proposal area each year (**Table 9**). The average reported hunter effort and deer harvest by non-residents within the proposal area each year during this time-period was relatively small (ADF&G 2021). However, the location of approximately 28% of the reported hunter days, and 24% of the harvests by non-residents in Unit 4 could not be determined from the information returned and is unknown (ADF&G 2021).

It is important to note that the proportion of NFQU hunter effort and harvest within the proposal area increased fairly substantially over the two most recent reporting periods (2011-2015 & 2016-2020). During this ten-year period, NFQUs accounted for an average of 48% of all reported hunters, 57% of all reported hunter days, and 47% of all reported harvests taken from the proposal area each year (**Table 9**). This change also corresponded with a substantial decline in the human population of Angoon, a substantial decline in the average number of hunter days and harvests reported by Angoon residents, but a relatively small reduction in the average number of reported Angoon hunters (see **Tables 4** & **9**).

Among the different user groups in this area, only NFQUs reported increases in average yearly hunters (+44% or +9 hunters), hunter days (+101% or +67 days), or harvests (+163% or +27 deer) between the 2001-2005 reporting period and the 2016-2020 reporting period (see **Table 9**).

Table 8. Estimated hunting effort and harvest by user group within the proposal area during recent five-year reporting periods (ADF&G 2021).

Year	Angoon Hunters	Angoon Hunter Days	Angoon Harvests	Other FQSU Hunters	Other FQSU Hunter Days	Other FQSU Harvests	NFQU Hunters	NFQU Hunter Days	NFQU Harvests	Total Hunters	Total Hunter Days	Total Harvests
2000	30	126	74	5	5	1	25	81	22	60	212	97
2001	37	267	87	8	8	8	24	92	15	69	367	110
2002	26	118	39	7	39	33	20	70	20	53	227	92
2003	12	12	12	11	5	24	5	24	5	28	41	41
2004	11	21	21	18	45	40	28	85	19	57	151	80
2005	67	168	143	9	40	37	26	56	23	102	264	203
5 Year Average	**31**	**117**	**60**	**11**	**27**	**28**	**21**	**65**	**16**	**62**	**210**	**105**
2006	59	338	144	6	6	6	21	46	26	86	390	176
2007	25	50	8	13	16	16	19	68	15	57	134	39
2008	13	177	76	11	30	5	6	15	8	30	222	89
2009	11	45	23	12	12	6	10	19	0	33	76	29
2010	32	88	88	15	23	15	18	79	48	65	190	151
5 Year Average	**28**	**140**	**68**	**11**	**17**	**10**	**15**	**45**	**19**	**54**	**202**	**97**
2011	36	145	91	5	5	6	18	48	38	59	198	135
2012	32	73	51	7	18	11	23	72	27	62	163	89
2013	13	13	7	8	21	18	29	83	28	50	117	53
2014	16	38	0	5	10	10	31	86	40	52	134	50
2015	14	14	0	11	16	14	46	188	60	71	218	74
5 Year Average	**22**	**57**	**30**	**7**	**14**	**12**	**29**	**95**	**39**	**59**	**166**	**80**
2016	43	159	69	11	26	12	43	173	60	97	358	141
2017	15	15	15	4	16	6	25	128	43	44	159	64
2018	8	8	8	10	26	16	33	147	52	51	181	76
2019	23	45	36	9	47	23	31	113	34	63	205	93
2020	34	140	41	13	18	13	16	97	27	63	255	81
5 Year Average	**25**	**73**	**34**	**9**	**27**	**14**	**30**	**132**	**43**	**64**	**232**	**91**
2021	31	188	58	9	12	11	12	97	24	52	297	93
Overall Average	**27**	**102**	**50**	**9**	**20**	**15**	**23**	**85**	**29**	**59**	**207**	**94**

The overall number of deer reported harvested by FQSUs from Angoon has remained relatively stable in recent years, but a larger proportion has been taken from outside the proposal area or from unknown locations (OSM 2022a). Between 2013 and 2019, a substantial amount of the reported Angoon harvest shifted out of the proposal area (OSM 2022a). This change corresponded with a larger proportion of NFQUs, NFQU hunter days, and NFQU harvests taking place within the proposal area around the same time (see **Table 9**). At a recent Southeast Council meeting, the Council member from Angoon suggested that this trend was the result of increasing competition in and around the community:

> On the one hand he [the analyst] says there's enough deer here [in the WP22-07 Proposal Area] to not warrant a conservation concern, but on the other hand, his data shows him that we have to go hunt somewhere else. Does that data say why we have to go hunt somewhere else? Is it possible we're hunting somewhere else because there's so much competition on this side of the island [near Angoon] that we have to go hunt somewhere else? Does the data show that? Traditional knowledge needs to be implemented at some point. I'd like to see the data that shows that all this deer that's supposed to be here is here and where that information comes from (SERAC 2021b: 315).

In 2020 and 2021, however, the majority of deer harvests by FQSUs from Angoon took place within the proposal area again, as the proportion of NFQUs, NFQU hunter days, and NFQU harvests decreased (ADF&G 2021). Yet, despite reports of favorable hunting conditions throughout Unit 4, the average number of days hunted per deer harvested increased for both Angoon users and NFQUs in the proposal area in 2020 and 2021 (OSM 2022a). This may suggest that deer hunting has been more difficult in the Angoon area during recent years and that competition exacerbates this issue.

Though NFQUs composed a significant proportion of the hunters utilizing the proposal area between 2000 and 2021, the proposal area accounted for a relatively small amount of NFQUs overall hunting efforts and harvests within Unit 4 as a whole (ADF&G 2021, 2022c). Approximately 1.5% (509 users) of all NFQUs reported hunting in the proposal area from 2000 – 2021. NFQUs spent about 1.6% (1,865 days) of all their hunting days in Unit 4 within the proposal area during this same time (ADF&G 2021, 2022c). Likewise, roughly 1.8% (630 deer) of all deer harvested by NFQUs within Unit 4 from 2000 – 2021 were taken from the proposal area (ADF&G 2021, 2022c). NFQUs tended to focus their deer hunting efforts in the northern areas of Admiralty Island closest to Juneau during this time (ADF&G 2021, 2022c). WAAs 3835, 3836, and 4150 on northern Admiralty Island accounted for approximately 23% of NFQU's overall hunter days and harvests within Unit 4 from 2000 – 2021 (ADF&G 2021, 2022c). Approximately 32% of all NFQUs hunted in at least one of these WAAs during this period (ADF&G 2021, 2022c). These WAAs on northern Admiralty Island would remain open during the proposed closure.

Other Alternatives Considered

Harvest limit reduction: The current proposal (WP24-04) responds to critiques of a previous, modified version of WP22-07 where a proposed harvest limit reduction to two male deer for NFQUs was not considered sufficient to provide for a meaningful conservation benefit or substantially improve the success rates of FQSUs (SERAC 2021b). Recently reported harvest data shows that relatively few NFQUs currently take their full harvest limit (OSM 2022a). A harvest limit reduction that allows for the

taking of more than one deer by NFQUs would probably not reduce issues of competition and crowding in and around the proposal area during the proposed closure period.

Reduce extent of closure area and/or period of closure: The current proposal represents the outcome of significant consideration of this option. The current proposal, WP24-04, reduces the size of the closure area previously proposed under WP22-07 by roughly 50%. It is intended to limit the proposed closure to the WAAs most hunted by Angoon residents (**Table 7**). The current proposal also reduces the length of the closure previously proposed under WP22-07 by approximately nine weeks, to focus on the period most important to local subsistence users. These measures could help minimize competition and conflicts between user groups in Angoon's most heavily utilized deer hunting areas, while displacing fewer NFQUs. However, there are portions of the proposed closure area, such as WAA 4041, that do not appear to be essential to recent local subsistence deer hunting efforts from the data reported (**Table 7**). It may be worth considering removing WAA 4041 from the proposed closure area to reduce impacts on NFQUs.

Working Group: One alternative considered during previous deliberations on a similar proposal, WP22-07, was to establish a Unit 4 deer working group. This suggestion was mentioned by some Southeast Council members and public testifiers during the fall 2021 Southeast Council meeting (OSM 2022a). Developing a "Unit 4 deer management strategy," was also recommended multiple times during the fall 2021 Southeast Council meeting (OSM 2022a). It was suggested that this alternative would allow consideration of deer harvest and hunter competition issues in Unit 4 on a more holistic and longer timescale. It would also enable all alternatives to be considered and could help bring user groups together for discussion and compromise.

Since this time, a "North Unit 4 Deer Working Group" has been established under the guidance of the Hoonah Indian Association Environmental Programs (HIA Environmental 2023). The first meeting of this group was held on March 15. The stated goals for the group are to:

> (1) Complete annual community surveys on deer harvest and use by training people in the communities to do the work; (2) Understand if/how competition is impacting subsistence use of deer on north Chichagof; (3) Collect deer data through camera traps in overwintering areas to begin to get trend data for deer numbers; (4) Host meetings where managers, community members, and non-community members can discuss their deer harvest needs; and (5) Increase community understanding of how harvest reporting is used in management with the goal of increasing community reporting (HIA Environmental 2023).

Unfortunately, the focus on north Chichagof Island means that some of this work may not be as relevant to Admiralty Island, the Angoon community, and deliberations on this proposal.

Effects of the Proposal

The proponents have asserted that the continuation of subsistence and meaningful rural subsistence preference is under threat from increasing competition from NFQUs in and around Angoon. If the Board adopts this proposal, it will restrict NFQUs from hunting deer on a portion of southwestern Admiralty

Island from Nov. 1-15. This could potentially provide FQSUs in the area with an enhanced subsistence harvest opportunity, by reducing user competition and conflict during a period of peak hunter effort and harvest that is particularly important for a community that has regularly faced winter food security issues. The proponents have noted that competition can significantly restrict access to favored deer hunting sites located in narrow embayments. November is the month when the greatest amount of federally qualified and non-federally qualified hunter effort and harvest has taken place in Unit 4 in recent years. Weather conditions are typically favorable for hunting and meat processing, deer provide the highest quality and amount of meat, and deer are generally more susceptible to harvest during this time.

Adopting the proposed closure could lead to increased harvest effort by NFQUs before and after the closure period. The proposed closure could also lead to increased hunting pressure and user conflicts along beaches, as areas below the high tide line are State-managed lands. The proponents, however, note that beach hunting generally takes place above the high tide line in this area. Still, the proposed closure could also create enforcement concerns in this area. The proposal will prevent NFQUs with local ties to the area from directly participating in deer hunting during the period of closure, but they may help in other ways such as with meat processing. Some people from Angoon and other rural communities in the southeast region move to Juneau for employment but return to these communities to participate in subsistence hunts with family and friends. As one Southeast Council member explained, "A lot of the young men and women that have moved away will come out when it's [the season is] first opened so they can climb the mountain" (SERAC Oct. 7, 2021: 385).

While deliberating similar proposals (WP22-07, -08, -09/10) during the previous wildlife cycle, some Southeast Council members expressed concern over the potential displacement of NFQUs to other parts of Unit 4 if these types of proposals were to be adopted. These Council members were particularly concerned about potential displacement creating similar problems elsewhere if all three deer proposals (WP22-07, -08, and -09/-10) under consideration at the time were to be adopted (SERAC 2021b). However, the size and length of the closure currently under consideration, WP24-04, is significantly smaller than the previous proposal (WP22-07). These reductions were made in an effort to optimize benefits to federally qualified subsistence users and mitigate impacts on NFQUs that might lead to displacement concerns.

OSM PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

Oppose WP24-04

Justification

Deer have been and continue to be very important to local subsistence livelihoods and lifestyles for FQSUs living in the Angoon area. Many residents of Angoon and similar Unit 4 communities have noted that they have had to change their deer hunting methods to focus their efforts closer to home, as it has become too expensive and dangerous to travel further without appropriate boats and fuel. Local knowledge attests to the fact that only a limited number of boats and users can hunt in narrow bays and other preferred locations due to issues of access and resource competition in these areas. Residents of

Angoon and similar communities have also noted that deer populations within Unit 4 may not be tracked at a fine enough scale to consistently capture localized depletions that exacerbate issues of competition and user conflict. Residents have also explained that hunter effort and harvest reporting tend to underestimate the amount of hunting effort taking place, and overestimate hunting success rates. There is data presented in this analysis that supports these arguments, suggesting that rates of competition for deer in the proposal area have increased in recent years and that this may be impacting the success and efficiency of Angoon residents who have had to focus their deer hunting efforts closer to home.

However, it is still not clear that the current levels of competition created by NFQUs in the proposal area pose an imminent threat to the continuation of subsistence at this time, or that the current proposal is the best way to solve the issues being faced by Angoon residents. It is also not clear that the proposed closure would significantly curtail beach hunting by NFQUs, as the area of the beach located below the mean high tide mark is state-managed land and would remain open during the proposed closure period. Beach hunting appears to be a favored means of hunting for many types of users throughout Unit 4. A closure in the proposal area may have the unintended consequence of promoting increased hunting of the beaches below the mean high tide line by NFQUs. There may be more effective avenues to address this issue. It is also not clear to what extent NFQUs engage in other hunting methods such as muskeg/forest and alpine hunts, and whether these hunting efforts also represent a substantial source of competition for FQSUs in the proposal area. Adopting this proposal would also prevent NFQUs with local ties to the area from directly participating in deer hunting with local family and friends during the period of closure.

Interpretations of the information presented in this analysis are also complicated by a number of interrelated issues. Recent mild winters in the area may have resulted in fewer deer being easily visible on beaches, giving the appearance of localized declines in the deer population and/or increased competition for deer. There are limitations in the hunter harvest and effort reporting framework, as well as the regularity and reliability of reported data. Recent human population declines in communities like Angoon exacerbate issues with harvest and effort analyses, as population declines may be misinterpreted as a lack of hunting effort when compared to the harvest and effort data compiled for previous years. Overall, the Office of Subsistence Management feels that more information is still needed from a greater sample of the local population to determine whether a closure to NFQUs is necessary, and exactly where that closure should be located. OSM hopes to receive this type of information through additional meetings of the Southeast Council and the North Unit 4 Deer Working Group.

WRITTEN PUBLIC COMMENTS

To whom it may concern,

I am writing in regards to the following proposals:

Admiralty: WP24-04
Chichagof (Hoonah): WP24-05
Lisianski (Pelican): WP24-06

I am a lifelong Alaskan who lives in Juneau. I hunt in the Pelican area described in the proposal, but would like to speak to all of the proposals. I would suggest, as someone who hunts the Pelican area every year for last ~10 years, that the last few years have been much more difficult to harvest deer during the fall. This has likely caused these communities for look for someone to blame. Juneau (or non-local) hunters are an easy target; however, I do not believe the correct one.

I am deeply sympathetic to the needs of individuals living in the small communities of Southeast Alaska. The hardships endured by these folks are very real. However, I do not see limiting hunting access as a solution. Every study that has ever looked at the topic has found that hunter predation on the Sitka Blacktail Deer population in Southeast Alaska has found that hunting is an insignificant contribution to loss of deer. I certainly understand that it would be challenging for a local from any of these communities to see hunters not from their town leaving with deer, when they themselves haven't been able to harvest deer.

I believe the explanation for the apparent "shortage" of deer has been warmer winter weather not producing as much snow, especially in the early season. For many of these small communities, hunting is performed by driving a boat around looking for deer on beaches. Without enough snow to drive the deer down off of the mountains, I have seen less deer on beaches in the last few years. However, if one is willing to go into the woods, there are plenty of deer to be found at higher elevations. This matches with any of the recent deer surveys suggesting there are no major drops in deer populations in these regions.

I believe that these smaller communities hope for plentiful, easy to shoot deer on the beaches will not happen regardless of whether these proposals are passed or not. It will depend more on whether there are early and heavy snowfalls. I would respectfully request that you reject all of these proposals as I believe they would not address the proposed concerns, and would unfairly limit one group of Alaskan's access to a plentiful resource.

-Justin Dorn
Juneau, Alaska

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WP24-05 Executive Summary	
General Description	WP24-05 requests to close the Northeast Chichagof Controlled Use Area (NECCUA) to deer hunting by non-federally qualified users from Nov. 1-15 *Submitted by: Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council*
Proposed Regulation	**Unit 4 Deer** *Unit 4 — 6 deer; however, female deer may be taken only from Sept. 15 – Jan. 31* — *Aug. 1 – Jan. 31* ***Federal public lands of the Northeast Chichagof Controlled Use Area are closed to deer hunting Nov. 1-15, except by federally qualified subsistence users hunting under these regulations.***
OSM Preliminary Conclusion	**Oppose**
Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Recommendation	
Interagency Staff Committee Comments	
ADF&G Comments	
Written Public Comments	**1 Oppose**

DRAFT STAFF ANALYSIS
WP24-05

ISSUES

Proposal WP24-05 was submitted by the Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Southeast Council). The proponents are requesting to close the Northeast Chichagof Controlled Use Area (NECCUA) to deer hunting by non-federally qualified users (NFQUs) from Nov. 1-15 (see **Figure 1**). The NECCUA is located on northeastern Chichagof Island and corresponds approximately to Wildlife Analysis Areas (WAAs) 3523, 3524, 3525, 3526, 3551, 4222, 4252, and 4253 (see **Figure 2**).

DISCUSSION

The proponents submitted WP24-05 to establish a meaningful preference for the continuation of subsistence uses of deer by federally qualified subsistence users (FQSUs) in the Hoonah area. Hoonah residents depend on deer as a key component of their subsistence lifestyles. However, the proponents assert that residents in this area have been experiencing difficulty harvesting enough deer to meet their subsistence needs because of increasing competition and user conflicts with non-federally qualified users (NFQUs). Large numbers of NFQUs come to Hoonah via ferry during the deer hunting season. The proponents assert that the amount of non-federally qualified hunters utilizing the area in recent years has often clogged the roads with large campers, trailers, and tents that remain in the area for long periods of time. Both FQSUs and NFQUs prefer hunting the road system around Hoonah because it is safer than hunting by boat. This creates issues of over-crowding and hunting safety concerns as well as inhibits access to hunting areas by FQSUs who cannot find a place to park or camp. This influx of NFQUs also substantially increases competition for deer. Whitestone Harbor and Freshwater Bay are examples of areas where these issues regularly occur. NFQUs may also decrease the success of FQSUs if they shoot at deer and miss, causing the deer to be more skittish and wary of hunting presence.

Subsistence livelihoods depend upon effective and efficient harvests. The proponents explain that the proposed two-week closure window in early November is the most efficient time for subsistence deer hunting in Unit 4 for several reasons. First, the deer are still fat, providing the highest quality and amount of meat. Second, the deer are in rut, making them more susceptible to harvest. Third, weather conditions are typically favorable for hunting and proper meat processing.

The proponents assert that this two-week closure would allow for the continuation of subsistence uses and provide a meaningful subsistence priority, enhancing opportunity for subsistence users and helping them meet their subsistence needs by reducing competition and improving access to hunting areas during the most important time of year for subsistence deer hunting. Additionally, the proponents note that the proposed closure area is limited in scope but represents the area most hunted by Hoonah residents. The proponents believe this closure will have a relatively small impact on NFQUs who would maintain significant time and space to hunt deer in Unit 4, but it will provide vital benefits to local subsistence users.

Existing Federal Regulation

Unit 4 - Deer

Unit 4 — 6 deer; however, female deer may be taken only from Sept. 15 – Jan. 31.	*Aug. 1 – Jan. 31*

Proposed Federal Regulation

Unit 4 - Deer

Unit 4 — 6 deer; however, female deer may be taken only from Sept. 15 – Jan. 31.	*Aug. 1 – Jan. 31*

Federal public lands of the Northeast Chichagof Controlled Use Area are closed to deer hunting Nov. 1-15, except by federally qualified subsistence users hunting under these regulations.

Existing State Regulation

Unit 4 - Deer

Chichagof Island east of Port Frederick and north of Tenakee Inlet

Residents - 3 deer total	*Bucks*	*Aug. 1 - Sept.14*
	Any deer	*Sept. 15 - Dec. 31*
Nonresidents – 2 Bucks	*Bucks*	*Aug. 1 – Dec. 31*

Remainder

Residents - 6 deer total	*Bucks*	*Aug. 1 - Sept.14*
	Any deer	*Sept. 15 – Dec. 31*
Nonresidents – 2 Bucks	*Bucks*	*Aug. 1 – Dec. 31*

Extent of Federal Public Lands/Waters

Unit 4 is comprised of approximately 96% Federal Public Lands, of which of 99% are U.S. Forest Service (USFS) managed lands, and less than 1% National Park Service or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service managed lands (Error! Reference source not found.). Unit 4 consists primarily of Admiralty, Baranof, and Chichagof Islands, along with some smaller adjacent islands. The proposed closure area (The NECCUA) is located on northeastern Chichagof Island and corresponds approximately to Wildlife

Analysis Areas (WAAs) 3523, 3524, 3525, 3526, 3551, 4222, 4252, and 4253 (see **Figure 2**). Combined, this proposed closure area would compose roughly 48% of Chichagof Island (see **Table 1**).

Table 1. Proposed Closure Area in Relation to Chichagof Island

Location	**Total Area** (sq. mi.)
WAA 3523	108.3
WAA 3524	84.4
WAA 3525	149.3
WAA 3526	110.3
WAA 3551	115.8
WAA 4222	225.1
WAA 4252	105.6
WAA 4253	90.0
Chichagof Island	2048.6

Customary and Traditional Use Determination

Rural residents of Units 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 have a customary and traditional use determination for deer in Unit 4.

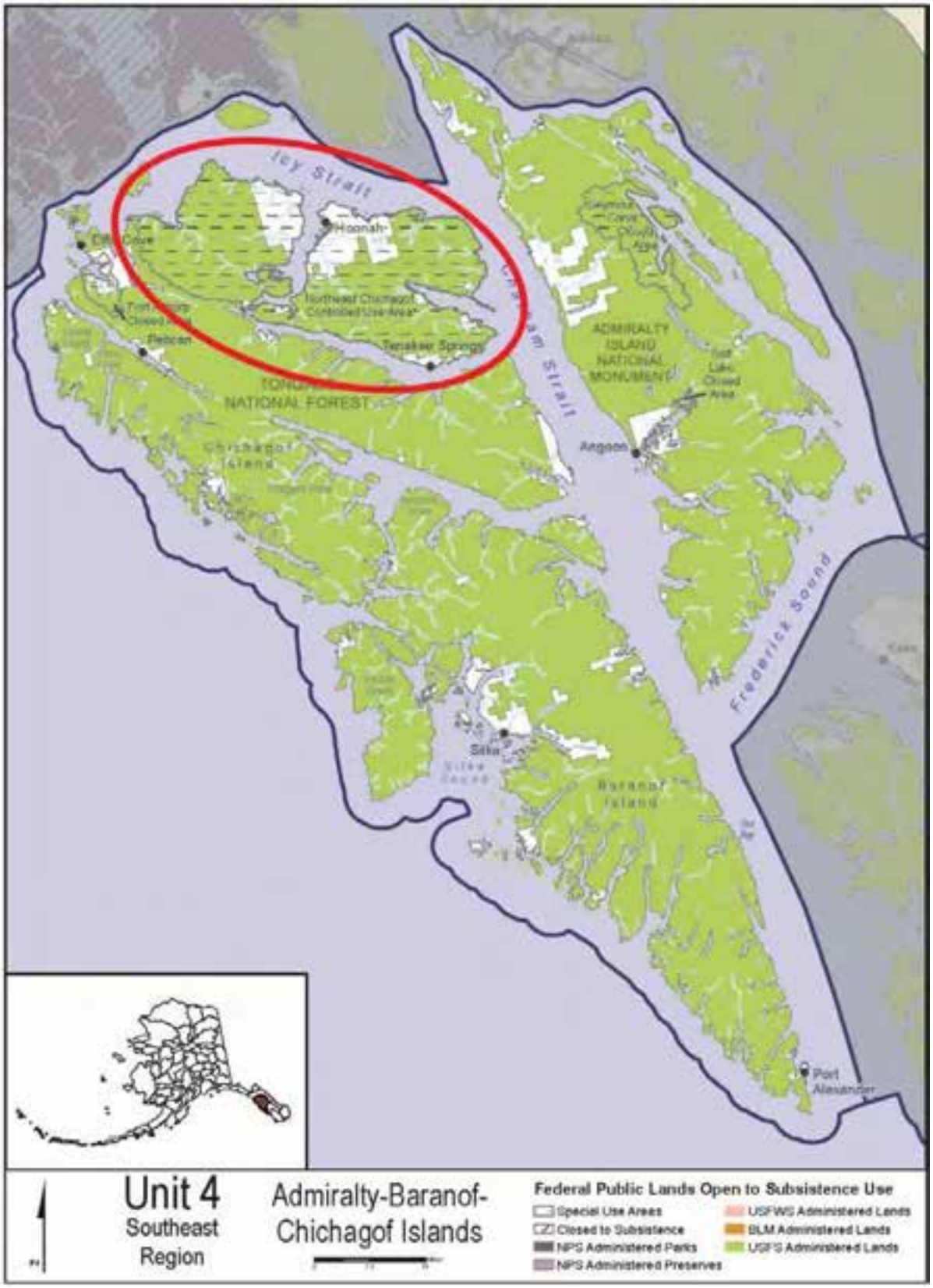

Figure 1. Unit 4 management map with proposal analysis area (NECCUA) encircled in red.

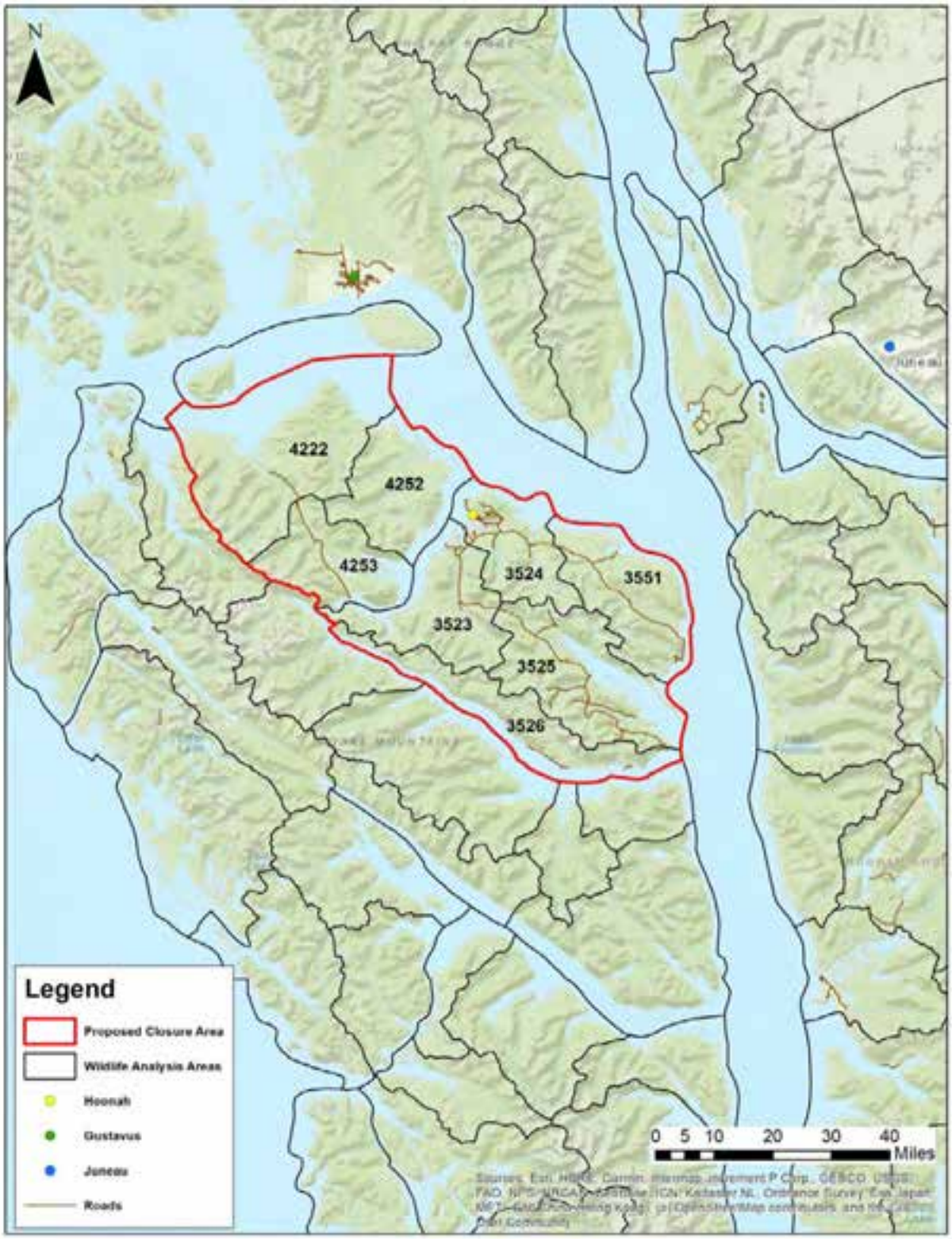

Figure 2. Proposed Closure Area (NECCUA) in relation to Hoonah, Gustavus, and Wildlife Analysis Areas.

Regulatory History

Except for the 1992/93 and 1993/94 regulatory years, the Federal harvest season for deer in Unit 4 has been from August 1 to January 31, with a harvest limit of six deer. However, harvest of antlerless deer has only been permitted from September 15 to January 31. In 1992, in response to several deep snow winters, the northern Baranof Island area harvest limit was reduced to four deer, the season was shortened to December 31, and the area closed to non-federally qualified users (NFQUs). In 1993, the northeast Chichagof Island area was closed to NFQUs after November 1 (OSM 2022a).

Since 1992, the State general deer season has been from August 1 through December 31, with the harvest of antlerless deer only permitted from September 15 through December 31. For Chichagof Island east of Port Frederick and north of Tenakee Inlet, including all drainages into Tenakee Inlet, the general harvest limit has been three deer. The general harvest limit for the remainder of Unit 4 was four deer, until 2019. From the late 1980s through 1991, the State general season in the northeast Chichagof area had a harvest limit of three deer. However, the State subsistence season allowed for the harvest of six deer, with the season running from August 1 through January 31.

In 2000, two proposals addressing Unit 4 deer regulations were submitted by members of the public during the Federal wildlife regulatory cycle (WP00-08 and -09). These proposals were motivated by conservation concerns following heavy snow winters during the 1998-1999 season, the increased winter deer mortality typically associated with heavy snows, decreased deer habitat due to recent logging in the area, and increasing hunting pressure enabled by logging road construction (OSM 2000). One proposal requested to rescind the January Federal deer season in Unit 4, while the other requested to rescind the January deer season and reduce the harvest limit from six deer to four deer. Both proposals were rejected by the Federal Subsistence Board (Board), consistent with the recommendations of the Southeast Council. The stated justification was that the available deer population and harvest survey data for Unit 4 did not indicate a conservation concern, and that the proposed changes would unnecessarily restrict subsistence opportunity (FSB 2000).

In 2010, three proposals addressing Unit 4 deer regulations were submitted during the Federal wildlife regulatory cycle (WP10-13, -14, and -21). These proposals were submitted following significant deer population declines that had occurred during the deep snow winters of 2006 through 2009. WP10-13 was submitted by the Southeast Council, requesting to close the female deer season on January 15 in that portion of Unit 4 draining into Chatham Strait, Peril Strait, and Icy Strait, including Tenakee Inlet. WP10-14 was submitted by the Southeast Council, requesting to close Federal public lands in the Northeast Chichagof Controlled Use Area (NECCUA) to the harvest of female deer by non-federally qualified users in December. WP10-21 was submitted by the Southeast Council, requesting that deer harvest on the Federal public lands of the NECCUA be restricted to residents of Hoonah. None of these proposals were adopted by the Board. Instead, Federal and State managers closed the female deer season in the NECCUA for the 2010 regulatory year, and part of the 2011 and 2012 regulatory years. These closures were enacted to help the deer population recover from the deep-snow winters of 2006 through 2009.

In 2012, one proposal concerning Unit 4 deer regulations was submitted during the Federal wildlife regulatory cycle (WP12-06). This proposal sought to address population concerns following the deep snow winters of 2006 through 2009, by rescinding the January deer season in Unit 4. The Board rejected this proposal because it was determined that rescinding the January season would unnecessarily restrict subsistence users, while providing little conservation benefit (FSB 2012). Based on available survey and harvest data, Federal and State managers believed that the Unit 4 deer population had completely recovered from the previous deep-snow winters by the 2013 season (OSM 2022a).

In 2019, the Alaska Board of Game (BOG) adopted Proposal 18, increasing the State general season harvest limit from four deer to six deer in Unit 4 Remainder. The stated justification was that additional sustainable harvest opportunity could be provided because there were no conservation concerns.

In 2022, four proposals (WP22-07, -08, -09, -10) concerning Unit 4 deer regulations were submitted during the Federal wildlife regulatory cycle. WP22-07 was submitted by the Southeast Council, requesting that the Federal public lands of Admiralty Island draining into Chatham Strait between Point Marsden and Point Gardner be closed to deer hunting Sept. 15 – Nov. 30, except by federally qualified subsistence users (FQSUs).

WP22-08 was also submitted by the Southeast Council, requesting that the Northeast Chichagof Controlled Use Area (NECCUA) annual deer harvest limit for NFQUs be reduced to two male deer. The current proposal, WP24-05, is similar to WP22-08 in that it also requests a change to deer hunting regulations for NFQUs in the NECCUA. However, WP24-05 requests a fifteen-day closure to deer hunting by NFQUs instead of a harvest limit reduction in this area.

WP22-09 was also submitted by the Southeast Council in 2022, requesting that the Federal public lands draining into Lisianski Inlet, Lisianski Strait, and Stag Bay south of the latitude of Mite Cove (58° 4' N) and north of the latitude of Lost Cove (57° 52' N) be closed to deer hunting Oct. 15 – Dec. 31, except by FQSUs. The stated intent of WP22-07, WP22-08, and WP22-09 was to protect local deer populations from further depletion by reducing hunting pressure from NFQUs. The proponents asserted that this change would help increase harvest opportunity and provide for a meaningful subsistence preference for FQSUs in these areas (OSM 2022a, 2022b, 2022c).

WP22-10 was submitted by Patricia Phillips of Pelican in 2022. This proposal requested that the deer harvest limit for NFQUs in Lisianski Inlet and Lisianski Strait in Northwest Chichagof be reduced to 4 deer. The stated intent of WP22-10 was to reduce deer hunting pressure, provide for a meaningful subsistence priority, and thereby increase the ability of FQSUs to meet their subsistence needs (OSM 2022d).

At its April 2022 meeting, the Board rejected WP22-09 as part of the consensus agenda. The Board deferred Proposals WP22-07, -08, and -10 to its winter 2023 regulatory meeting, requesting the various user groups in the area work together to create more mutually acceptable solutions to the issues surrounding deer harvest in Unit 4 (FSB 2022).

The Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) subsequently organized an open, public meeting regarding the deferred deer proposals for Unit 4 in August 2022. The meeting provided an opportunity for different user groups to discuss their recent deer hunting experiences in Unit 4, their plans for future harvest, and how the proposals might impact them. Additionally, participants were asked if they had specific recommendations on these proposals or if they had any other suggestions for the Board that would help resolve these issues (OSM 2022a).

The Southeast Council modified its recommendations for WP22-07 and WP22-10 following deferral and open meeting discussion. At its fall 2022 meeting, the Southeast Council supported WP22-07 with modification to remove Wildlife Analysis Areas (WAAs) 4043, 4044, and 4054 from the proposal area and create a harvest limit for NFQUs of two male deer within the remaining area (WAAs 4041, 4042, 4055) (OSM 2022a). This modification reduced the proposal area to roughly half of its original size and allowed for some harvest by NFQUs in the remaining proposal area (SERAC 2021b). This modification was recommended to focus the proposal on the area most utilized by FQSUs and to reduce the potential impact of the proposal on NFQUs (SERAC 2021b).

At the same meeting, The Southeast Council supported WP22-10 with modification to reduce the harvest limit for NFQUs to two male deer, and to maintain the same proposal area as recommended in Fall 2021. This modification was recommended because it was suggested that a harvest limit reduction of four deer or three male deer would not provide a significant conservation benefit or substantially enhance the success rates of FQSUs, but that the situation in the Northwest Chichagof proposal area might not warrant a full closure to NFQUs (SERAC 2021b). The Southeast Council also felt that reducing the harvest limit to two male deer for NFQUs would reduce administrative complexity and enforcement issues by aligning the proposed harvest limit reduction for the Northwest Chichagof area (WP22-10) with that of the Northeast Chichagof area (WP22-08) and Southwest Admiralty Island (SERAC 2022b). The Southeast Council retained its original Fall 2021 recommendation of support for WP22-08 without modification, to reduce the harvest limit for NFQUs hunting in the NECCUA to two male deer (OSM 2022b). The Southeast Council noted that all three proposals were still intended to help protect local deer populations from further depletion by reducing hunting pressure from NFQUs, and thereby increase harvest opportunity and provide for a meaningful subsistence preference for FQSUs in these areas (OSM 2022a, 2022b, 2022c).

All three proposals (WP22-07, 08, and -10) were subsequently rejected by the Board at its February 2023 regulatory meeting (FSB 2023). The stated justification was that the available data on deer populations in Unit 4 did not meet the criteria necessary to close land or implement harvest restrictions for the purposes of conservation or the continuance of subsistence uses under §815(3) of ANILCA (FSB 2023). Recent ADF&G survey and harvest data indicated that overall deer populations in Unit 4 were among the highest in the State and that FQSUs in these areas were generally effective and efficient deer harvesters (FSB 2023). However, the Board member from the Bureau of Indian Affairs dissented on the basis that local ecological knowledge and testimony had been provided through the regulatory process, which indicated that FQSUs were having difficulty harvesting sufficient deer in the areas covered by the proposals (FSB 2023).

The BOG acted on State Proposals 10 and 11 at their January 2023 Southeast Region regulatory meeting (ADF&G 2022a). These proposals requested reducing the harvest limit for residents and nonresidents to four deer in Unit 4 Remainder. The proponents for both proposals listed the possible closure of Federal lands to deer hunting by NFQUs as a key factor in submitting their proposals. Both proponents suggested that a harvest limit reduction would protect deer populations, help reduce user conflicts in Unit 4, and avoid a closure of Federal public lands to NFQUs. The BOG adopted Proposal 10, with modification to reduce the nonresident harvest limit throughout all of Unit 4 to two male deer (ADF&G 2023a). The resident harvest limit remained three deer in Unit 4, Chichagof Island east of Port Frederick and north of Tenakee Inlet, and six deer in Unit 4 Remainder. The BOG took no action on Proposal 11, due to the action taken on Proposal 10.

Current Events

Two other proposals concerning deer regulations in Unit 4 were submitted for the 2024 Federal subsistence wildlife regulatory cycle. WP 24-04 was submitted by the Southeast Council, requesting to close a portion of southwestern Admiralty Island around Angoon to deer hunting by NFQUs, from Nov. 1-15. WP24-06 was submitted by the Southeast Council, requesting to close a portion of northwest Chichagof Island around Pelican to deer harvest by NFQUs from Nov. 1-15.

The Hoonah Indian Association received funding through the USFS Southeast Alaska Sustainability Strategy program to collect community harvest and biological information about deer on the north end of Chichagof Island from 2022-2027. This project is being carried out in the communities of Hoonah, Pelican, Gustavus, and Angoon. A North Unit 4 Deer Working Group has also been established under the guidance of the Hoonah Indian Association Environmental Programs (HIA Environmental 2023). The first meeting of this group was held on March 15, 2023. Data from subsistence surveys and the deer working group will be integrated into the analyses of WP24-04, WP24-05, and WP24-06 as it becomes available.

Biological Background

Sitka black-tailed deer spend the winter and early spring at low elevation where less snow accumulates, and forests provide increased foraging opportunities. Fawning occurs in late May and early June as vegetation greens-up, providing abundant forage to meet the energetic needs of lactating does. Migratory deer follow the greening vegetation up to alpine for the summer. Resident deer remain at lower elevations. The breeding season, or rut, generally occurs in October through November, and peaks in late November (ADF&G 2009). Wolves and black bears are not present in Unit 4, so their primary predators in the area are humans and brown bears. Brown bears are estimated to kill an amount of deer equal to 15%-20% of the total annual deer harvested by hunters (Mooney 2009). Significant changes in deer populations and localized deer density levels are relatively normal over time in Unit 4 (Bethune 2020). Periodic declines are often attributable to severe winter weather, particularly deep snow events (Bethune 2020; Olson 1979). This issue is illustrated in the regulatory history, and the frequency with which proposals to change Unit 4 deer hunting regulations follow heavy snow winters.

Habitat

Unit 4, like most of Southeast Alaska, has a maritime climate characterized by high rainfall and moderate summer and winter temperatures (Bethune 2020). However, the amount of rain and snow received can vary significantly from year-to-year, and across the unit (Bethune 2020). The landscape of Unit 4 is characterized by steep and rugged terrain with mountains, fjords, estuaries, and short, swift rivers (Bethune 2020). Vegetative communities occurring at low to moderate elevations (<1,500 feet) "are dominated by western hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*) and Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*), with western red cedar (*Thuja plicata*) and Alaskan yellow cedar (*Chamaecyparis nootkatensis*) old-growth forests. Mixed conifer muskeg and deciduous riparian forests are also common. Mountain hemlock (*Tsuga mertensiana*) comprises a subalpine timberline band between 1,500 - 2,500 feet in elevation" (Bethune 2020: 4).

Old-growth forests are considered primary deer winter range, in part because the complex canopy cover allows sufficient sunlight through for forage plants to grow but intercepts snow, making it easier for deer to move and forage during winters when deep snow hinders access to other habitats (McCoy 2017). Some areas of Unit 4 have been significantly impacted by large-scale changes in habitat due to logging, while the habitat in other areas is largely intact. Areas with substantial timber harvest, such as the NECCUA, are expected to have lower deer carrying capacity compared to pre-harvest conditions. As Brinkman and colleagues (2009) have noted for a similarly logged area on Prince of Wales Island, deer may shift their activity patterns in response to intensive logging and subsequent forest succession. The density of deer in these areas may decline as even-aged young-growth stands progress beyond shrub and sapling stages to stem exclusion forests characterized by thick canopies and sparse understory browse (Brinkman et al. 2009: 39).

Population Information

Monitoring deer populations in forested habitat is challenging, as the total number of deer cannot be directly counted through ground or aerial surveys (Brinkman et al. 2013). Changes in deer populations in Unit 4 have historically been monitored using three complementary methods: deer pellet surveys, hunter harvest and effort reporting, and aerial alpine surveys. Winter body condition and beach mortality surveys may also be conducted to understand changes in the health and abundance of area deer populations (Bethune 2020).

Deer pellet surveys have been used in the Southeast region since 1981 to monitor deer population trends and document substantial changes (≥ 30%) in deer density in specific watersheds (McCoy 2017). An average of <1.00 pellet group per survey plot generally indicates a low-density deer population, an average of 1.00 – 1.99 pellet groups per survey plot indicates a moderate-density population, and an average of >2.00 pellet groups per survey plot typically indicates a high-density population (Kirchoff and Pitcher 1988, Bethune 2022a). Deer pellet survey data, however, is typically interpreted with caution, "as factors other than deer population size can affect deer pellet-group density" (McCoy 2017: 2). Issues such as winter severity and snowfall patterns, temperature and humidity, variability in survey

effort, the length of time since the last survey, timing of vegetation green-up and changes in pellet group detectability, and changes in habitat can all impact pellet-group density and/or detection (McCoy 2017).

A recent deer pellet study conducted by Brinkman and colleagues (2013) on Prince of Wales Island using DNA-based methods found that current ADF&G/USFS deer pellet survey techniques did not provide an accurate index of deer populations when extrapolated across time, or beyond the local scale. As the researchers noted:

> Over the past 3 decades, ADF&G and USFS have used deer pellet counts as the primary tool to monitor deer population trends. Precise estimates of trends in deer abundance are needed because perceived fluctuations in the deer population size above or below a predetermined population objective set by ADF&G results in changes in harvest regulations. Despite heavy reliance on these data, pellet group counts of black-tailed deer were compared with an independent measure of [deer] population size only once. In that study, 13 radio-collared deer were introduced to a small (approx. 40 ha) island in southeast Alaska. Researchers returned to the island 264 days later and surveyed 1.9% of the island for pellet groups. Data from that study indicated that a pellet group density of 0.05 pellet groups/m² represented 12 deer/km² (95% CI = 10.7 deer/km² – 13.8 deer/km²). This estimate assumed constant pellet persistence, detection, and deposition rates. Unfortunately, data were obtained only during a single year, which prevented any evaluation of how well pellet groups deposited during winter tracked changes in deer population. Also, only 4 deer remained on the island (6 swam off and 3 died) when researchers returned to conduct pellet group counts, which complicated the association between deer numbers and number of pellet groups encountered. Moreover, the island was much smaller than typical deer home ranges (which likely concentrated deer activity) and habitat diversity was low when compared with typical deer ranges in southeast Alaska. Consequently, the usefulness of the study for evaluating the reliability of pellet-group surveys as conducted by ADF&G and USFS personnel was limited (Brinkman et al. 2013: 445).

Brinkman and colleagues (2013) also noted that though their deer pellet index was not directly comparable to that developed by ADF&G/USFS because of different methodologies, their model suggested that a similar deer pellet density of 0.05 pellet groups/m² across a mosaic of habitat types on Prince of Wales Island would indicate a minimum deer count of 2.9 deer/ km², with a much wider margin of error (95% CI = 0.4 deer/km² – 24.3 deer/km²). Previous pellet group count studies conducted outside of Alaska that demonstrated the usefulness of pellet-group counts were conducted under conditions that are difficult to replicate with unenclosed populations of deer in unmanaged landscapes (Brinkman et al 2013). The researchers concluded:

> The variation we reported between estimates of pellet-group counts and deer counts at the transect level do not support the use of pellet-group count surveys to reliably monitor trends in deer populations at larger spatial scales. Indeed, during our study, pellet-group data aggregated within watersheds did not reflect the decline in deer count within those watersheds. For instance, in the Staney watershed, DNA results indicated a 24% decline in minimum deer count from 2006

to 2008, whereas pellet group counts indicated a 17% increase over the same years (Brinkman et al. 2013: 449).

A deer pellet survey was conducted at Pavlof Harbor in 2019, along the southern portion of the proposal area, near Tenakee Springs (McCoy 2019). The average of 2.47 pellet groups per plot counted for this survey is considered to indicate a high-density deer population in the area (see **Table 2**). This count also represented a 39% increase in average pellet-groups counted during the last survey conducted at Pavlof Harbor in 2010 (McCoy 2010). There have been no recent deer-pellet surveys conducted closer to Hoonah. Yet, as the ADF&G Regional Supervisor explained during a recent Southeast Council meeting, "deer pellet densities in Game Management Unit 4, no matter where you do them, are always the highest in the region" (SERAC 2021b: 476). However, he also noted that "The department does not monitor deer populations in these relatively small areas affected by the proposal. We monitor deer populations on a unit-wide level" (SERAC 2021b: 351). This statement, as well as the previously mentioned study by Brinkman and colleagues (2013), lends credence to local testimony presented at recent Southeast Council meetings that deer populations may not be tracked at a fine enough scale to capture periodic, localized depletions (see SERAC 2021b).

Before 2019, the most recent deer pellet surveys conducted on Chichagof Island were taken at Finger Mountain in 2011, 2015, 2017, and 2018. Results from the 2015 survey at Finger Mountain indicated a 55% decrease in pellet groups from the survey conducted in 2011 (see **Table 2**, Bethune 2022a). However, results from the 2017 pellet survey at Finger Mountain indicated a slight increase in pellet groups from 2011 levels (**Table 2**). Results from the 2018 survey at Finger Mountain indicated a 13% decrease from 2011 levels (**Table 2**). It should also be noted that results from the 2019 survey at Pavlof Harbor were approximately 32% lower than the levels reported for Finger Mountain in 2018 (**Table 2**).

Table 2. Average Deer Pellet Groups per Plot from Surveys recently conducted in Unit 4 (Bethune 2022a).

Area	Specific Location/VCU	Survey Year	Average Pellet Groups per Plot	Number of Plots
Chichagof Island	Finger Mountain/247	2011	4.13	209
	Finger Mountain/247	2015	1.86	197
	Finger Mountain/247	2017	4.29	217
	Finger Mountain/247	2018	3.61	261
Chichagof Island	Pavlof Harbor/218	2019	2.47	295
Baranof Island	Nakwasina/300	2011	3.87	192
	Nakwasina/300	2015	2.02	207
	Nakwasina/300	2016	4.37	230
	Nakwasina/300	2017	3.24	229
	Range Creek/288	2018	2.01	375
	Kelp Bay/298	2021	2.44	257

Area	Specific Location/VCU	Survey Year	Average Pellet Groups per Plot	Number of Plots
Admiralty Island	Hawk Inlet/128	2017	2.11	279
	Barlow Cove/125	2018	2.38	351
	Pybus Bay/182	2019	2.82	234

Aerial alpine deer survey work began in 2013, as an effort to provide a new, timelier method to assess and monitor the abundance of deer in alpine areas (Bethune 2020). These surveys are intended to be flown each summer before the hunting season, with deer seen per survey hour constituting the standard unit of measurement (Bethune 2020). As Bethune (2020: 25) notes, "The alpine survey technique appears to be a useful tool for gauging deer abundance immediately prior to hunting season. However, research is needed to learn more about what alpine surveys tell us about the larger deer population."

Aerial alpine surveys were conducted over two locations in Unit 4 between 2016 and 2020 (Bethune 2022a). Surveys were flown over Southern Admiralty Island in 2015-2017, and Northeast Chichagof Island in 2017 and 2018 (Bethune 2022a). Southern Admiralty Island exhibited the highest deer seen per hour of any survey location in Southeast Alaska, while Northeast Chichagof exhibited numbers similar to north Prince of Wales Island (POW) (see **Figure 3**). Aerial surveys were not conducted in 2019 and 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions (Bethune 2022a).

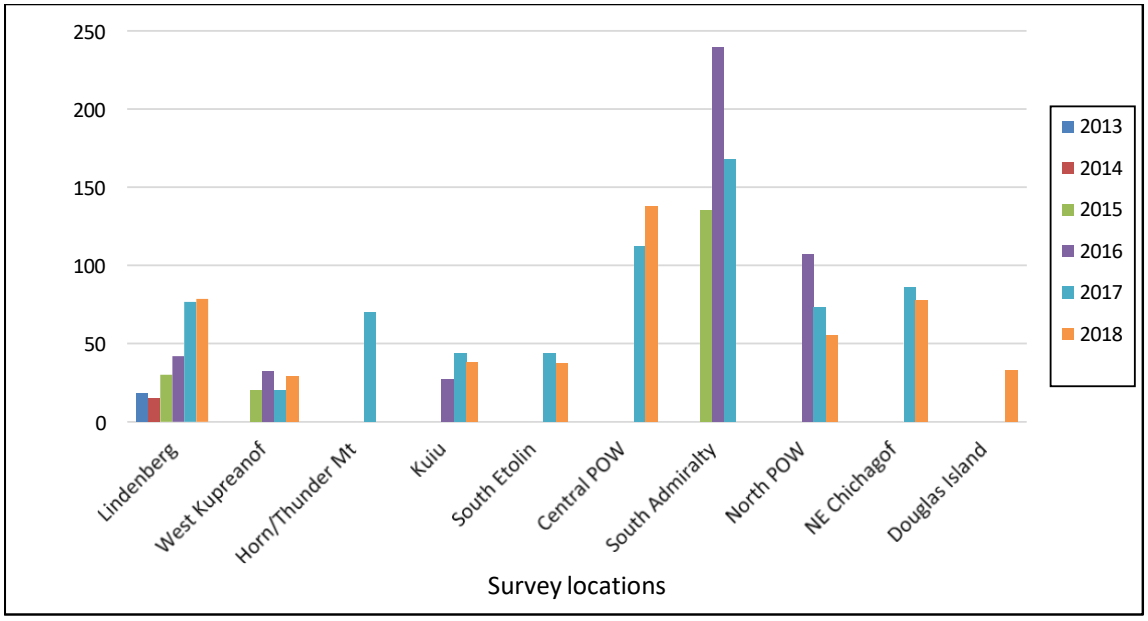

Figure 3. Average Number of Deer Counted per Hour during Mid-Summer Aerial Alpine Surveys in Southeast Alaska, 2013 – 2018 (Bethune 2022a).

Annual harvest data estimated from harvest reports and hunter surveys can also provide another indicator of deer population status, and potential change over time (Bethune 2022a). The most recently estimated five-year average (2016-2020) for all reported harvests in Unit 4 was approximately 5,742 deer per year

(see **Table 3**). During this time, the greatest amount of harvest occurred on Chichagof Island, followed by Baranof Island and Admiralty Island (Bethune 2022a). The total estimated per year harvest average during this period was very similar to the average of 5,674 deer harvested each year during the previous five-year reporting period from 2011-2015 (**Table 3**). The greatest amount of harvest during the 2011-2015 reporting period also took place on Chichagof Island, followed by Baranof Island and Admiralty Island (Bethune 2020). The average number of all hunters hunting in Unit 4 each year increased slightly between these five-year reporting periods (+4%), while the average number of total hunter days per year decreased slightly (-3%) (**Table 3**). Still, the harvest levels estimated for the two most recent five-year reporting periods (2011-2015 & 2016-2020) are substantially lower than those estimated for the 2001-2005 reporting period (**Table 3**). Yet, the estimated average number of hunters hunting each year during these three reporting periods (2011-2005; 2011-2015; 2016-2020) is quite similar (**Table 3**).

Table 3. Estimated Total Harvests and Hunting Effort in Unit 4 during Recent Five-Year Reporting Periods (ADF&G 2005-2006, 2006-2007; Mooney 2007, 2009, 2011, 2015; Bethune 2020, 2022a).

Year	Total Hunters	Total Hunter Days	Total Harvests in Unit 4
2001	3581	-	7457
2002	3414	-	5117
2003	3637	-	7621
2004	3363	-	6787
2005	3166	-	6983
5 Year Average	**3432**	**-**	**6793**
2006	3057	-	7741
2007	1999	-	1846
2008	2378	-	3855
2009	2280	-	3909
2010	2709	-	4688
5 Year Average	**2485**	**-**	**4408**
2011	3157	14020	6909
2012	3103	12214	4853
2013	3248	13094	5409
2014	3435	13815	4694
2015	3733	15183	6505
5 Year Average	**3335**	**13665**	**5674**
2016	3742	14535	7192
2017	3478	12555	5255
2018	3449	13425	5229
2019	3382	12870	5979
2020	3252	12712	5055
5 Year Average	**3461**	**13219**	**5742**
Overall Average	**3178**	**13442**	**5654**

Recently reported five-year harvest and hunting efforts in the proposal area follow somewhat different trends (see **Table 4**). The estimated average yearly harvest in the proposal area increased by approximately 14% (85 deer) between the two most recent reporting periods (**Table 4**). This increase in average reported yearly harvest corresponded with a slight increase in average reported yearly hunters (+6% or +32 hunters) and a decrease in average reported yearly hunter days (-11% or -294 hunter days) witnessed between the two reporting periods (**Table 4**). Overall, there has been a substantial decline in the average reported hunters per year (-17% or -116 hunters), average reported hunter days per year (-29% or -670 hunter days), and average reported harvests per year (-30% or -293 deer) in the proposal area between the 2001-2005 reporting period and the 2016-2020 reporting period (**Table 4**). These declines in total hunters, hunter days, and harvests in the area are certainly interrelated, and possibly correlated with the impacts of rising gas prices and depressed local economies (see Brinkman et al. 2014). Among the different user groups in this area, Hoonah hunters reported the most substantial declines in average yearly hunters (-44% or -138 hunters), hunter days (-76% or -888 hunter days), and harvests (-56% or -295 deer) between the 2001-2005 reporting period and the 2016-2020 reporting period (see **Table 9**). NFQUs were the only user group reporting increases in average yearly hunters (+12% or +32 hunters), hunter days (+26% or +232 hunter days), or harvests (+12% or +38 deer) in the proposal area between the same periods (**Table 9**). This issue is discussed in greater detail in the ensuing sections.

Based on the combination of harvest data, pellet survey data, aerial surveys, and related information, managers in the area assert that the overall deer population in Unit 4 has recovered from the population declines suffered during the severe winters of 2006-2008 (see **Tables 3 & 4**), and it may be reaching winter carrying capacity in some areas (Bethune 2022a). Most recently, the heavy snowfall that took place in December 2021 led to concerns about over-winter mortality. However, the rest of the 2021-2022 winter exhibited mild to average weather conditions and the mortality surveys conducted in the spring of 2022 found that over-winter mortality was not higher than normal, and that the body condition of live deer was similar to that seen in previous years (Bethune 2022b).

Table 4. Total Reported Harvests and Hunting Effort in the Proposal Area during Recent Five-Year Reporting Periods (ADF&G 2021).

Year	Total Hunters	Total Hunter Days	Total Harvests in Proposal Area
2001	703	2886	940
2002	827	3352	1107
2003	615	1804	991
2004	548	1712	863
2005	653	1965	1033
5 Year Average	**669**	**2344**	**987**
2006	814	3124	1068
2007	398	1381	175
2008	426	1367	260
2009	315	1058	225
2010	453	1758	465
5 Year Average	**481**	**1738**	**439**
2011	394	1654	492
2012	501	1810	475
2013	497	1766	579
2014	565	2067	618
2015	651	2541	880
5 Year Average	**522**	**1968**	**609**
2016	627	2030	894
2017	562	1765	646
2018	586	1713	717
2019	507	1396	612
2020	486	1465	602
5 Year Average	**554**	**1674**	**694**
Overall Average	**556**	**1931**	**682**

Cultural Knowledge and Traditional Practices

Community Characteristics

Four communities are located within the proposed closure area (the NECCUA): Hoonah, Game Creek Census Designated Place (CDP), Tenakee Springs, and Whitestone Logging Camp CDP (see **Table 5**). Hoonah is a Tlingit community of long standing, situated at the entrance to Port Frederick, about 40 miles west of Juneau. Hoonah first appeared in the US Census in 1890, though the Tlingit occupied and utilized the area for thousands of years (Ream and Sill 2017). Hoonah is now the largest and oldest community in the area. Whitestone Logging Camp and Game Creek are more recently developed

communities, located along the road system a few miles southwest of Hoonah (OSM 2022b). Game Creek was founded as a religious community, first appearing in the US Census in 1990. Whitestone Logging Camp was founded by loggers and their families, also first appearing in the US Census in 1990 (OSM 2022b). Tenakee Springs is an older community located on Tenakee Inlet, about 20 miles south of Hoonah. It first appeared in the US Census in 1910 (OSM 2022b). Tenakee Springs has a year-round population, but also serves part-time residents and recreational tourists who arrive in the summer from other places within and outside of Alaska (OSM 2022b). The four communities in this area can only be accessed from the outside by plane or boat, and Tenakee Springs is not road-connected to the other communities (OSM 2022b). The State ferry system provides passenger transportation only, and local transportation is primarily by bicycle or ATV (ADCCED 2022).

Gustavus is a community located outside the NECCUA, across Icy Strait from Hoonah, near the entrance to Glacier Bay National Park. Gustavus is also heavily reliant on the proposed closure area for deer hunting (OSM 2022b), as Glacier Bay National Park is closed to subsistence hunting, fishing, and trapping. Gustavus can also only be reached by plane or boat, but it is considered the gateway to Glacier Bay National Park (OSM 2022b). Similar to Tenakee Springs, the population of Gustavus increases substantially during the summer months with the arrival of part-time residents and tourists (ADCCED 2022).

An Alaska State ferry is scheduled to visit Hoonah and Gustavus up to twice a week from October through December, and from March through April (OSM 2022b). However, ferry runs are occasionally canceled due to poor weather, mechanical issues, and other reasons (OSM 2022b). Hoonah residents also sometimes find themselves unable to secure a place on the State ferry because of the high number of people and vehicles bound for Hoonah during the deer season (SERAC 2009). Members of the Southeast Council and other residents of the area have also noted that the ferry system has not been as dependable as it was before the COVID-19 pandemic and State budget cuts (SERAC 2021b).

The populations of all five of the coastal communities located in and around the NECCUA have regularly fluctuated, primarily in response to changing opportunities for local employment through fishing, logging, tourism/service, and other industries (Ream and Sill 2017). Their combined population, however, has nearly doubled since 1960, to an estimated 1,727 people in 2020 (see **Table 5**). Hoonah and Gustavus in particular have shown upward trends in population since the census first started collecting data for these two communities (**Table 5**). The population of Tenakee Springs has remained relatively stable for the past several decades, while the populations of Game Creek and Whitestone Camp have generally declined since the 1990s (**Table 5**).

Table 5. The Population Over Time of Communities Primarily Utilizing the NECCUA to Harvest Deer (ADCCED 2022).

Community	1890	1900	1910	1920	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
Game Creek	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	61	35	18	23
Gustavus	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	107	64	98	258	429	442	655
Hoonah	438	447	462	402	514	716	563	686	748	680	795	860	760	931
Tenakee Springs	0	0	126	174	210	188	140	109	86	138	94	104	131	116
Whitestone Camp	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	164	116	17	2
Total	**438**	**447**	**588**	**576**	**724**	**904**	**703**	**902**	**898**	**916**	**1372**	**1544**	**1368**	**1727**

The commercial economy in the Hoonah area focused on fur, fishing, and timber in the period following the Alaska Purchase (Schroeder and Kookesh 1990, Ream and Sill 2017). The development of these industries changed Huna Tlingits' control over their traditional territory and access to subsistence resources (Schroeder and Kookesh 1990, Ream and Sill 2017). Hoonah residents became heavily involved in the commercial fishing industry after World War I, working as fishers and cannery employees (Schroeder and Kookesh 1990). Hoonah developed a strong commercial salmon seining and trolling fleet during this time (Ream and Sill 2017). The most recent period of logging took place in the area in the 1980s, and an extensive network of logging roads were built around Hoonah to facilitate timber harvest (Ream and Sill 2017). These roads changed how Hoonah residents access certain subsistence resources, as well as how non-local people hunt and use the land. Active logging has been greatly reduced in recent years, but the effects of past timber harvest and road building continue to be felt in Hoonah today (Ream and Sill 2017: 110). Commercial salmon and halibut fishing remain important industries in the area, however, tourism has been growing as an economic driver (Ream and Sill 2017). One of the original canneries in the area, The Hoonah Packing Company, was recently converted to a tourist destination named Icy Strait Point, which employs many residents (Ream and Sill 2017). Icy Strait Point offers day excursions for wildlife viewing and outdoor recreation. These commercial activities have become important complements to the more traditional subsistence hunting and fishing practices that have taken place in the area for generations and remain key to local livelihoods and lifestyles (Ream and Sill 2017).

Subsistence Practices

The Tlingit and many other indigenous and rural Alaskan communities regard subsistence as much more than the mere acts of harvesting, preparing, and eating the food required for nourishment (Thornton 2008). As Thornton (2008: 117) notes, the Tlingit "regard subsistence as an intricate and profound set of relationships with particular geographic settings where their social groups have dwelled historically. For them subsistence is *haa Kusteeyí*, 'our way of living,' 'real being,' and 'enriching existence,' and not 'the minimum (food, etc.) necessary to support life.'" In Hoonah and other rural communities in Unit 4, this type of perspective on subsistence still holds sway, and proposals to provide for a meaningful subsistence priority against increased hunting competition should be approached with this in mind (SERAC 2021b).

Deer have been a key subsistence resource utilized by Hoonah residents and residents of other NECCUA communities for many years (OSM 2022b), and generally represent the most significant terrestrial source of meat for rural residents of southeast Alaska (Brinkman et al. 2009). Like other Unit 4 communities, hunters in the proposal area typically utilize three general hunting strategies that are associated with specific seasons, weather, geographical locations, and deer behavior (see George and Kookesh 1982). These strategies are broadly described as the Alpine Hunt, the Muskeg and Forest Hunt, and the Beach Hunt (George and Kookesh 1982). However, due to the generally steep and rugged landscape in Unit 4, beach hunting is often a preferred hunting strategy (OSM 2022b, George and Kookesh 1982). Alpine deer hunts often require overnight camping and considerable hiking (OSM 2022b). Hunting below the timberline involves tracking, as well as luring deer to clearings (including the edges of clear-cuts) with various locally or commercially manufactured calls (OSM 2022b). Beach hunting is commonly undertaken in the early morning or at dusk, or during a minus tide when deer are feeding on beach vegetation (OSM 2022b). Hunting on beaches involves "beach combing" by boat or hiking under cover of the forest fringe (OSM 2022b). Locals also commonly harvest deer opportunistically, while engaged in other activities such as fishing (Doerr and Sigman 1986, Ream and Sill 2017).

Hoonah residents participated in comprehensive household subsistence surveys documenting their harvest and use of deer and other wild resources in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2010s (see **Table 6**, Schroeder and Kookesh 1990; Ream and Sill 2017). The other four NECCUA reliant communities participated in comprehensive subsistence surveys in the 1980s and/or the 1990s (**Tables 6**). In all these studies, the vast majority of households utilized deer, and deer consistently ranked as a primary resource in terms of bulk contribution to subsistence, at times trailing only salmon, non-salmon fish, and/or berries (**Table 6**). These studies also illustrated the cultural importance of reciprocity and sharing of subsistence resources within each community, as sharing of subsistence resources and knowledge promotes sociality and future harvest success, while preventing potential wastage when subsistence foods are harvested in abundance (**Table 6**, Langdon and Worl 1981, Langdon 2021). This is particularly the case in Hoonah, where households have generally shown a higher propensity for sharing deer meat than households in nearby communities (**Table 6**). The role of sharing to distribute subsistence-caught food within the community, and its contribution to people's survival over the generations has been described in detail by Hoonah residents during previous Southeast Council meetings and subsistence studies (SERAC 2009, 2010, 2021a; Ream and Sill 2017).

Over the five comprehensive studies conducted in Hoonah, an average of 42% of Hoonah households reported giving deer to others, while 47% of Hoonah households reported receiving deer from others (**Table 6**). An average of approximately 55% of the households in Hoonah reported harvesting deer, while an average of 85% of households reported using deer (**Table 6**). This data conforms to findings from subsistence studies conducted in many other rural Alaskan communities, where a smaller proportion of households often harvest a larger percentage of local subsistence resources, which they share or trade with other households (Wolfe and Walker 1987).

Table 6. Estimated Harvest, Use, and Sharing of Deer by Communities in or near the NECCUA 1984 – 2016 (ADF&G 2023b).

Community	Study Year	Community Population	Percent Attempting to Harvest	Percent Harvesting Deer	Percent Giving Deer	Percent Receiving Deer	Percent Using Deer	Estimated Total Deer Harvested	Harvest per Household (lbs.)	Harvest per Person (lbs.)	Deer Rank in Contribution to Subsistence
Hoonah	1985	895	59%	52%	38%	54%	86%	584	167	52	1st
	1987	700	n/a	65%	46%	48%	94%	786	287	90	2nd
	1996	891	60%	56%	39%	31%	74%	829	237	74	2nd
	2012	732	59%	48%	40%	45%	77%	470	134	51	3rd
	2016	736	63%	55%	48%	55%	94%	560	93	33	4th
Gustavus	1987	152	n/a	48%	27%	32%	70%	122	151	64	2nd
Game Creek	1996	64	50%	33%	33%	100%	100%	32	173	41	2nd
Tenakee Springs	1984	94	50%	50%	42%	58%	83%	76	130	65	2nd
	1987	95	n/a	55%	39%	45%	87%	160	288	135	1st
Whitestone Camp	1996	142	71%	71%	4%	13%	83%	101	197	57	2nd

Before logging roads were constructed, Hoonah residents accessed deer hunting areas almost exclusively by foot or boat, and hunting by non-locals was limited (OSM 2022b). After 1980, the newly constructed logging roads became the main means of accessing deer hunting locations (OSM 2022b). The Hoonah road system quickly gained the reputation of being a relatively inexpensive, productive, and easy place to hunt deer for both locals and non-locals (OSM 2022b). NFQUs from larger communities now regularly utilize the Alaska State ferry to bring their trucks, three-wheelers, and other recreational vehicles over to Hoonah to facilitate deer hunting along this road system (SERAC 2010, 2021a, 2021b). Competition from NFQUs has become an increasingly significant issue along these roads now, as the extensive road system allows hunters to access some beaches and many other preferred hunting areas by road, making a boat unnecessary (Schroeder and Kookesh 1990, SERAC 2010, 2021a, 2021b).

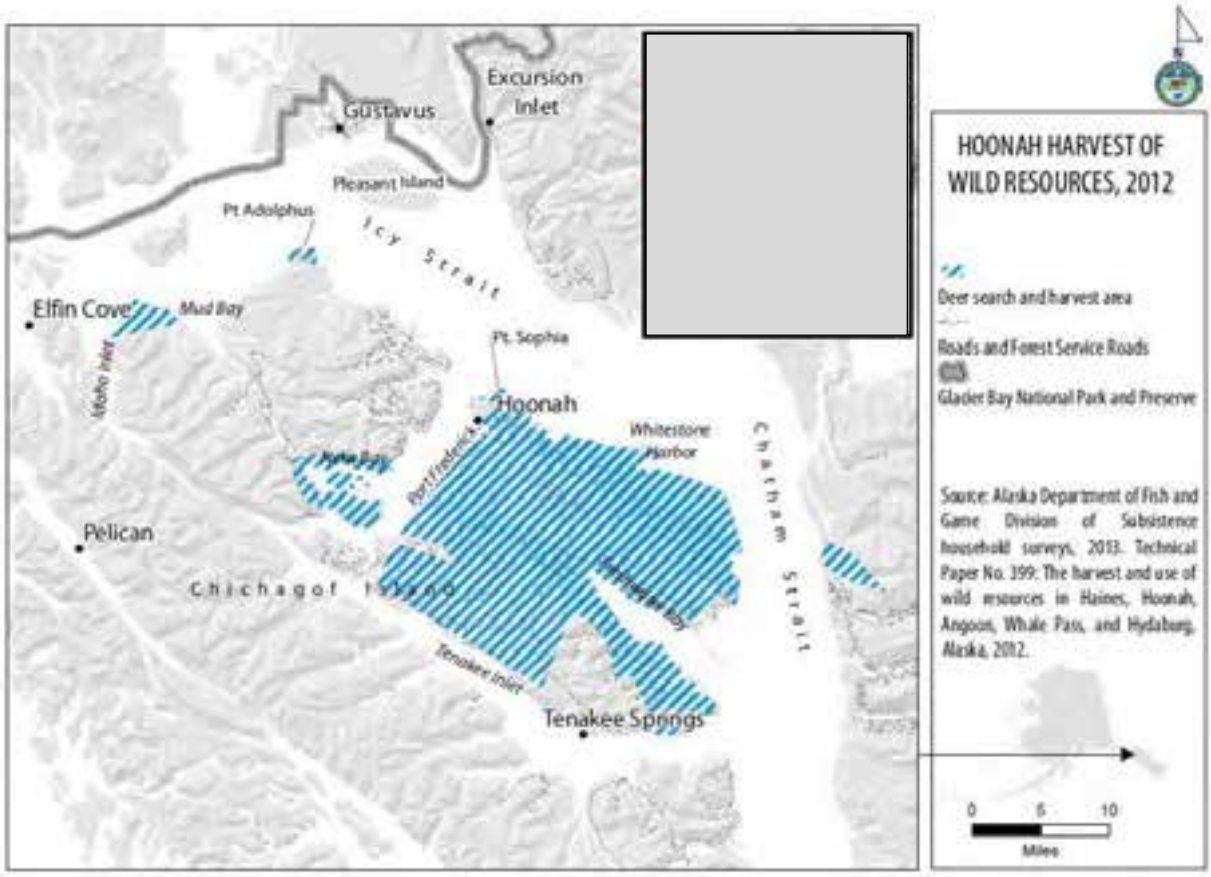

Figure 4. Reported deer hunting locations used by residents of Hoonah in 2012 (Ream and Sill 2017).

Some area residents assert that past logging operations and over-harvest are still limiting quality deer habitat in and around Hoonah (OSM 2022b, SERAC 2010, 2021a). Now, when it snows, deer are left with no place to go, precipitating higher than normal over-winter mortality (OSM 2022b, SERAC 2010, 2021a). While clear-cut areas initially provided good browse for deer, making Hoonah popular with non-local hunters, dense regeneration has now become difficult for deer to pass through and does not supply as much browse (OSM 2022b, SERAC 2010, 2021a). This issue is negatively impacting deer populations in some parts of the NECCUA (SERAC 2010, 2021a).

Changing, less predictable weather patterns are also affecting local deer populations and associated hunting strategies. During periods of heavy snowfall, deer typically move to the beaches and forest fringe to seek food. In 2012, however, Hoonah residents reported changing weather patterns (Ream and Sill 2017). One resident noted that, "Whereas twenty years ago winters used to reliably have snowfall, now there are years of high snowfall followed by years where it mainly rains. There is more rain during winters with less consistent snowfall" (Ream and Sill 2017: 198). This issue was noted again at a Southeast Council meeting in 2021 when a resident explained, "We'll get a dump of snow and a bunch of rain for six weeks, and deer disappear until the snow comes back. In the future we're going to have more of this" (SERAC 2021a: 339). More traditional beach hunting methods may not be as favorable under these changing weather conditions.

The rising cost of fuel for boats and vehicles has also impacted the hunting strategies of Hoonah residents. In 2012, Ream and Sill (2017: 193) observed, "As the cost of fuel has risen since the mid-1990s, hunters and fishers may elect to search closer to town in order to conserve fuel" and money. One Hoonah resident told the researchers, "With current economic conditions and high fuel prices, it is very important to be efficient when going out to harvest. It's too expensive to not bring back a harvest" (Ream and Sill 2017: 198). Some Hoonah community members and residents of other Unit 4 communities cannot afford to hunt outside of their local, core subsistence area. As one Southeast Council member noted, "They can't afford to go anywhere [else] because it's just too expensive, that's not really subsistence, you're spending everything that you have to try to get anywhere, and it just doesn't make sense" (SERAC 2021a: 389).

A recent study of eight rural Alaskan communities in the Yukon Flats region quantified the significant impacts of rising fuel costs and depressed local economies among subsistence harvesters (Brinkman et al. 2014). Overall, 81% of the subsistence harvesters participating in the study noted that they had reduced the distance they traveled to conduct subsistence activities over the past ten years because of gasoline costs (Brinkman et al. 2014). Similarly, 89% of the study participants noted that they had reduced the number of yearly trips they took to conduct subsistence activities for the same reason (Brinkman et al. 2014). As the researchers explained:

> During the last ten years [2002 – 2012], the median distance traveled to perform subsistence decreased by 60%, and the median number of annual trips taken to perform subsistence decreased by 75%. The change in subsistence activity was similar across and within communities. Eighty-five percent of the people interviewed reported that they were making sacrifices with serious consequences, such as putting off paying monthly bills, to buy gasoline for subsistence activities. To adapt to high gasoline prices, most [study] participants said that they were using more efficient modes of transportation (69%), followed by more sharing of gasoline costs with family and friends (37%), and conducting more multipurpose subsistence trips (20%). With subsistence practices being critical to food security and cultural identity…our results suggest that unaffordable fuel has threatened social resilience [in this area] (Brinkman et al 2014: 18).

Consequently, the reductions in deer hunting efforts and harvests reported by Hoonah residents during the most recent five-year reporting period are at least partially related collective impacts of declining

human populations, rising gas prices, and depressed local economies in this area (see **Table 10**). Recent declines in local commercial fishing industries and generalized inflation in the price of store-bought food and other goods have led some Hoonah residents to reiterate concerns over food security, and the necessity of efficiently harvesting wild resources to offset the high costs associated with living in small, rural Alaskan communities (Ream and Sill 2017, SERAC 2010, 2021b). Residents note that increasing hunter competition and user conflict over access to favored hunting locations close to home is impacting local peoples' ability to harvest sufficient subsistence resources (SERAC 2010, 2021b).

Increasing Competition for Deer in the Proposal Area

Reports of increasing hunter competition and localized depletions of deer have been common in the Hoonah area since the most recent period of logging and road construction began in the 1980s (Schroeder and Kookesh 1990, OSM 2022b). As early as 1986, Schroeder and Kookesh (1990) observed Hoonah hunters having difficulty harvesting deer in some parts of Hoonah's core harvest area. Hoonah residents who were successfully harvesting deer had abandoned areas near roads as competition from other hunters had significantly increased in these areas (Schroeder and Kookesh 1990). Similar concerns were documented in 2009, 2010, 2012, and 2021 (Sill and Koster 2017, SERAC 2009, 2010, 2021a, 2021b). For example, Sill and Koster (2017) noted in 2012, "The issue of how many deer are taken by non-local hunters was a concern due to the effect it has on local hunters, as was simply the number of deer hunters out hunting, making local areas and roads too crowded to hunt" (Sills and Koster 2017: 196). Overall, approximately 80% of all recent deer harvests in Unit 4 have been made by boat-based hunters (Bethune 2022a). The proposal area may be a particularly popular destination for non-local hunters because it is accessible via the ferry system, and it offers the opportunity to hunt along the road or by boat. At a Southeast Council meeting in 2021, an area resident explained that "last season was particularly hard, competition-wise. There were days I'd go out and I'd have to hop over three bays [before seeing any sign of deer]," suggesting the deer population in these bays had been hunted out (SERAC 2021b: 456). A Southeast Council member noted, "There is a documented concern about, and it's held up by local traditional knowledge that there is competition on the Hoonah road system from NFQUs (SERAC 2021b: 458)." Another Council member explained that the extensive road network around Hoonah allows people "to get to coastlines that you don't have to take a skiff to" (SERAC 2021b: 456). This Council member continued, "Whitestone Harbor experienced really, really high pressure from skiffs and from, what I presume is . . . NFQUs…The hunters from Hoonah who would drive out to Whitestone Harbor and basically not be able to hunt there because of . . . having three boats parked up at Whitestone Harbor hunting the entire thing, like every weekend, and during the week too" (SERAC 2021b: 456). However, as a member of the public testified during the same Southeast Council meeting, "There are a lot of cabin owners in Freshwater Bay who don't really compete with the road system hunters from Hoonah, who [proposal WP22-08] would adversely effect. . . I think this [potential regulation change] is unnecessary for those folks…There's a lot of deer there. You just have to get out of your truck to go get them." (SERAC 2021b: 450). Yet, as this statement alludes, hunting for some NFQUs is not just about the efficiency with which one can harvest a deer for food; it is also about the experience and sporting nature of the hunt.

Other comments received during the Fall 2021 Southeast Council meetings noted that reduced subsistence harvests of deer in the area could stem from localized depletions that ADF&G unit-wide data was too coarse to detect, or from competition and crowding from NFQUs who were displacing local, FQSUs from preferred and traditional hunting areas (SERAC 2021b). Some FQSUs also noted that hunter effort and harvest reporting data tend to underestimate the amount of hunting activity that actually takes place in an area (SERAC 2021b). Hoonah residents have also explained that localized population declines and increased hunting pressure may still be related to the legacy of logging and road construction in the area (SERAC 2021a, 2021b). Together, these issues have exacerbated user conflicts around Hoonah (SERAC 2021a. 2021b). As one Unit 4 resident noted:

> I kind of live for deer, and I wasn't able to get any last year. I'm getting too old to climb up to the top of the mountain so, you know, I do rely for them to be on the beaches. Anyway, last year I wasn't able to score any. So, I've been saying that the population, I don't know, it seems to be decreasing if you ask me, and there's more pressure on them all the time (SERAC 2021b: 172).

However, some federally qualified and NFQUs have suggested that deer hunting issues currently being experienced in places like Hoonah stem from local preferences for beach and road accessible hunting (SERAC 2021b). An ageing population of hunters in communities like Hoonah might be more reliant upon beach and low elevation hunts in an otherwise steep and rugged landscape. As one Juneau resident explained, the perception of increased competition leading to localized declines in the Unit 4 deer population may be due to recent mild winters, which resulted in deer being spread-out through the forests rather than concentrated and easily observable on beaches and near roads:

> I was out there [in Unit 4] for six weeks last year…and you know, it was cold. It was cold and there wasn't much snow last year. So, if you wanted to get deer, you had to go into the woods. It's as simple as that… So, I thought we were pretty successful…When you did get into the woods and tried to walk around up in there, you were crunching through the little bit of frozen snow that was there…but there was a lot of sign [of deer] … Very seldom did we run the beaches. I mean that's, to me, not really hunting, but I understand for folks who are a little older… (SERAC 2021b: 174).

As this statement by the Juneau hunter also suggests, hunting for some NFQUs is not just about the efficiency with which one can harvest a deer for food; it is also about the experience and sporting nature of the hunt. Still, for some FQSUs, there are also concerns that non-local hunters impact the success of local hunters in ways that go beyond competition, crowding, and/or localized depletions. Some residents assert that non-local hunters, including hunters primarily seeking bear, often shoot at deer and miss, causing the deer to become more skittish and wary of all hunting presence (SERAC 2021a). As one resident noted, "You used to be able to drive up to a deer, get out of the boat within reasonable range and take the deer. Now, you have to stop 400 or 500 yards away" (SERAC 2021a: 59), and "this is something my dad taught me, his dad taught him, and my mother's father taught me. If you shoot at a deer [and miss], you're never going to see that deer again. That's the nature of deer" (SERAC 2021b: 397).

There is also a local perception that non-local hunters, and particularly unguided hunters, engage in hunting as more of a recreational activity than a way of life (SERAC 2021a). Residents note that they have seen non-local hunters wasting or improperly processing their deer harvests (SERAC 2021a). As one resident explained, "We run into a problem where people from Juneau come out and then they just take part of the deer and not the whole deer, you know, and I always say, whenever we strip a deer, we always boil…even boil the bones, just for something to eat. So, the subsistence way of life is that way, you know, use as much as possible" (SERAC 2021a: 201). This has been an important ethic for rural communities in Unit 4 where winter food security has been an issue (see Ream and Sill 2017).

Though prey switching among subsistence users has been a recorded method for coping with issues of competition and fluctuations in the availability of primary subsistence resources, a recent study among nineteen rural communities in the Yukon River drainage suggests that such strategies often do not provide substantial compensation for declining harvests of primary subsistence resources, and that the overall utility of such strategies may be complicated by policy restrictions, the increased time and effort required to harvest sufficient amounts of secondary resources, and/or simultaneous declines in secondary resources (Hansen et al. 2013).

Food Security and Contemporary Economic Conditions

During the most recently published subsistence study conducted by ADF&G in 2012, approximately 31% of the households in Hoonah were considered to be experiencing low or very low food security (Ream and Sill 2017). The percentage of food insecure households in Hoonah (31%) was roughly two-and-a-half times higher than the average for the state of Alaska (12%), and the nation overall (15%) (Ream and Sill 2017). Hoonah households experiencing low food security (28%) reported reduced quality, variety, or desirability of their diet, whereas Hoonah households experiencing very low food security (3%) reported multiple instances of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake (Ream and Sill 2017). A greater percentage of Hoonah households (45%) identified subsistence foods as the primary source of food insecurity as compared to store-bought foods (Ream and Sill 2017).

Overall, 33% of Hoonah households reported worrying about having enough food, 45% indicated they lacked the resources necessary to get either store-bought or subsistence foods, and 12% reported cutting the size of meals or skipping meals due to food insecurity (Ream and Sill 2017). Food insecure conditions tended to increase during the winter months in Hoonah, with a lack of subsistence foods being the greatest contributor to food insecure conditions (Ream and Sill 2017). These findings underscore the importance of successful deer hunting for FQSUs in the area, as deer have consistently ranked as one of the most important resources in terms of bulk contribution to subsistence in Hoonah and surrounding communities during previous study years (see **Table 6**). The vast majority of deer harvest and deer harvest effort takes place during October, November, and December in Unit 4 (see **Table 7**). This trend is consistent for both FQSUs and NFQUs (**Table 7**).

Table 7. Percentage of Unit 4 deer harvest by month and user type, 2000-2019 (ADF&G 2021).

Hunter type	August	September	October	**November**	December	January
Federally qualified	6%	8%	16%	**40%**	23%	8%
Non-Federally qualified	5%	6%	13%	**53%**	22%	0%
Overall	6%	7%	15%	**45%**	22%	5%

In 2020, there were approximately 931 individuals living in 275 households in Hoonah (US Census 2020a). The median age of Hoonah residents was approximately 47 at this time, about ten years older than the median age for all Alaskan residents (US Census 2020a). Hoonah also had a significantly larger proportion of residents 65 and older (20%) when compared to the median figure for the entire state (13%) (US Census 2020a). The median household income in Hoonah was $64,432 in 2020, approximately $13,000 less than the median household income for Alaska overall (US Census 2020a). The employment rate in Hoonah was roughly 54%, about 3% lower than the median employment rate across the state (US Census 2020a). The primary employment sectors in Hoonah were Public Administration/Government (18%); Education, Healthcare, and Social Work (17%), Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, and Mining (16%); and Recreation and the Service Industry (16%) (US Census 2020a). The poverty rate for families in Hoonah was approximately 8% in 2020, and about 17% of Hoonah households qualified for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (see **Table 7**). This socioeconomic information for Hoonah in 2020 is compared to that of the previous two US Census periods in **Table 8** below.

Table 8. Hoonah Socioeconomic Statistics for 2000, 2010, and 2020 (US Census 2000, 2010, 2020a, 2020b)

Year	Population	Median Age	Percent of Population 65+	Median Household Income	Employment Rate	Family Poverty Rate	Households Qualified for SNAP
2000	860	35	8%	$39,028	48%	14%	n/a
2010	760	46	12%	$50,511	57%	4%	18%
2020	931	47	20%	$64,432	54%	8%	17%

Harvest History

Hunter harvest and effort reporting is another one of the suite of methods that managers use in combination to monitor deer population trends in Unit 4. As Bethune (2020: 15) notes, hunter harvest trends, particularly those observed at larger scales, typically reflect current deer population levels. However, hunter self-reported harvest and effort data should be analyzed cautiously, as reporting rates can be less than ideal (Bethune 2020). This is particularly the case in smaller rural communities where reporting rates are often much lower than elsewhere, sometimes less than 30% (Bethune 2020). Management staff typically call hunters to ask about their hunting efforts and harvests in an effort to achieve a 60% reporting rate when response rates are low. However, to account for hunters who do not report, data are proportionally expanded by community size (Bethune 2020). Therefore, "in small communities with low reporting rates, expanded data may be based on the reports of only a handful of

hunters, resulting in a good deal of uncertainty about the [accuracy of] expanded data" (Bethune 2020: 16).

Additionally, there are several other reasons why harvest estimates often do not accurately represent the hunting efforts and success rates of residents in small, rural communities. First, residents of rural communities often under-report their harvesting statistics because of differences in their interpretations of survey questions. This is a common phenomenon with survey questions, in which the particular lived experiences of respondents leads them to interpret questions differently than intended. For example, residents have noted that the State harvest reporting system used to measure hunting effort and success may be misleading because subsistence users often only document their successful hunts (SERAC 2021b). As one Unit 4 resident explained, "I question this [harvest success] information. When I complete a deer hunter survey, I only list actual deer harvested, and it is always a one-day hunt. I never list the number of times I hunt without success, and it may be three, four, or five times before I shoot a deer" (SERAC 2021b: 73). Likewise, Hoonah residents have noted that data on harvest success rates are often different than local peoples' observations. "In many cases hunter success rate, especially average hunter success rate, is lower than indicated in the analysis, and I think that tends to be attributed to just the competition factor" (SERAC 2021b: 456). Though harvest reports and comprehensive subsistence survey data are often some of the only sources of quantitative information available on the harvest and use of wild resources by residents of small rural communities in Alaska, it is important to consider this type of quantitative information holistically, in combination with qualitative testimony of local users' observations and traditional ecological knowledge (SERAC 2021b).

ADF&G harvest data from 2000 through 2021 (ADF&G 2022b) were used to try to gain some understanding of the deer harvest patterns and trends of federally qualified and NFQUs in the portion of northeastern Chichagof Island addressed by the proposal (i.e., the "proposal area"). Likewise, hunter effort was also measured as a function of the overall number of hunters and hunter-days. It should be noted that these measurements of hunter effort do not specifically account for potential confounding factors such as community population change, weather, the price of gas, or hunter competition. Hunter harvest and effort measurements were grouped by Wildlife Analysis Area (WAA), which roughly correspond to major watersheds or other distinct geographic areas (see **Figure 2**). Since effort was calculated by WAA, individual hunters using multiple WAAs in a single regulatory year may have been counted multiple times and over-represented in these calculations.

According to the available data, from 2000 to 2021, approximately 80% of Hoonah residents' reported deer harvests, and 79% of their reported hunting days took place within the WAAs covered by the proposal area (see **Table 9**). The East Side Port Frederick/Game Creek (3523), Hoonah Area (3524), Whitestone Harbor/False Bay Drainages (3551), Freshwater Bay Drainages (3525), and Humpback/Gallagher Creeks (4252) WAAs accounted the vast majority of these harvests and hunting days (**Table 9**). A relatively small amount of hunting and harvest took place in the remaining WAAs within the proposal area (**Table 9**). Hoonah residents also reported minimal hunting and harvest occurring in WAAs located outside the proposal area (**Table 9**). However, the location of about 18% of the total reported harvest and 19% of the hunting days reported by Hoonah residents during this time could not be determined from the information returned and is unknown. It is possible that some of this

unknown harvest and harvest effort may have also taken place within the proposal area. Based on the distribution of reported deer harvest and hunting days by Hoonah residents, proximity to Hoonah appears to be a primary factor in selecting hunting locations.

Table 9. Distribution of Unit 4 Deer Hunting Effort and Harvest by Hoonah Residents by Wildlife Analysis Area (WAA), 2000-2021 (ADF&G 2022b, ADF&G 2021).

WAAs within Proposal Area	Total Harvest	Days Hunted	Percent Harvest	Percent Days Hunted
3523 EAST SIDE PORT FREDERICK, GAME CREEK	1448.8	3951.6	17%	18%
3524 HOONAH AREA	1261.5	4096	15%	19%
3525 FRESHWATER BAY DRAINAGES	986.4	2576.6	12%	12%
3526 NORTH SHORE TENAKEE INLET	13.1	45.1	<1%	<1%
3551 WHITESTONE HARBOR, FALSE BAY DRAINAGES	1098.1	2933.8	13%	13%
4222 PT. ADOLPHUS, MUD BAY AREA	236.6	337.6	3%	2%
4252 HUMPBACK, GALLAGHER CREEKS	1045.5	2314.6	12%	11%
4253 NEKA BAY DRAINAGES	755.4	1121	9%	5%
Total within Proposal Area (Inside NECCUA)	6845.4	17376.3	80%	79%

WAAs outside Proposal Area	Total Harvest	Days Hunted	Percent Harvest	Percent Days Hunted
3001 NAKWASINA, NEVA STRAIT AREA	2.3	4.5	<1%	<1%
3002 SITKA ROAD SYSTEM	10.3	12	<1%	<1%
3104 NORTHERN KRUZOF IS.	18	13.4	<1%	<1%
3207 CRAWFISH INLETS, NECKAR BAY	3.1	3.1	<1%	<1%
3308 KOOK LAKE, SITKOH BAY, FALSE IS.	22.5	252	<1%	<1%
3314 FISH BAY DRAINAGES	0	16.8	<1%	<1%
3417 WEST COAST CHICHAGOF	11.7	8.7	<1%	<1%
3418 YAKOBI IS.	4.6	6.9	<1%	<1%
3420 IDAHO INLET DRAINAGES	32.1	75.1	<1%	<1%
3421 PORT ALTHORP, LOWER LISIANSKI, INIAN IS.	7.5	16.9	<1%	<1%
3627 CORNER BAY, TRAP BAY	2.9	5.2	<1%	<1%
3629 SOUTHERN SHORE TENAKEE INLET	5.8	2.9	<1%	<1%
3732 WARM SPRINGS COAST	3.1	3.1	<1%	<1%
3836 HAWK INLET, YOUNG BAY DRAINAGES	3.1	3.1	<1%	<1%
3939 PYBUS BAY DRAINAGES	8.1	18.9	<1%	<1%
4041 WHITEWATER BAY, WILSON COVE	3.2	6.4	<1%	<1%
4043 CENTRAL ADMIRALTY LAKES	6.4	6.4	<1%	<1%
4044 SHEE-ATIKA DRAINAGES	14.6	14.6	<1%	<1%
4055 HOOD BAY, CHAIK BAY DRAINAGES	3.2	6.4	<1%	<1%
4150 GRAND IS., OLIVER INLET, STINK CREEK	0	9.9	<1%	<1%
4256 LEMESURIER, PLEASANT ISLANDS	18.2	16.4	<1%	<1%

WAAs outside Proposal Area	Total Harvest	Days Hunted	Percent Harvest	Percent Days Hunted
Total Outside Proposal Area (Outside NECCUA)	180.7	502.7	2%	2%
Total (Known Harvest Area)	7026	17879	82%	81%
Unknown Harvest Area	1485	4133	18%	19%

Based on the reported data, an average of approximately 568 users hunted for 2,017 days, harvesting a total of 693 deer within the proposal area each year from 2000 to 2021 (see **Table 10**). However, the total number of hunters, hunter days, and deer harvested in the proposal area by both FQSUs and NFQUs was variable between years (**Table 10**). In most years, FQSUs harvested more deer from the proposal area due to the larger number of hunters present in this group. On average, roughly 55% of all reported hunters utilizing the proposal area each year were FQSUs (**Table 10**). About 77% of these FQSUs were Hoonah residents (**Table 10**). NFQUs accounted for an average of approximately 45% of all reported hunters utilizing the proposal area each year from 2000 – 2021 (**Table 10**). Most of these users came from Juneau (ADF&G 2021).

The available yearly data on hunter days and harvests within the proposal area shows similar trends between 2000 and 2021 (**Table 10**). On average, Hoonah residents were responsible for about 39% of reported hunter days and 45% of reported harvests in the proposal area each year (**Table 10**). Other FQSUs were generally responsible for about 13% of reported hunter days and 15% of reported harvests each year (**Table 10**). NFQUs were responsible for an average of about 48% of reported hunter days and 40% of reported harvests in the proposal area each year (**Table 10**). However, the proportion of NFQU hunter effort and harvest within the proposal area increased fairly substantially over the two most recent reporting periods (2011-2015 & 2016-2020). During the 2016 – 2020 reporting period, NFQUs accounted for an average of 54% of all reported hunters, 67% of all reported hunter days, and 50% of all reported harvests taken from the proposal area.

Overall, NFQUs were the only user group reporting increases in average yearly hunters (+12% or +32 hunters), hunter days (+26% or +232 hunter days), or harvests (+12% or +38 deer) in the proposal area between the 2001-2005 reporting period and the 2016-2020 reporting period (**Table 10**). Hoonah hunters reported the most substantial declines in average hunters (-44% or -138 hunters), hunter days (-76% or -888 hunter days), and harvests per year (-56% or -295 deer) between these two reporting periods (see **Table 10**). For all user groups and reporting periods, years of declining harvest were generally correlated with declines in reported hunters and hunter days (**Table 10**). This issue complicates the analysis, though there may be numerous contextual factors such as those previously discussed that are not reflected in this data.

Table 10. Estimated hunting effort and harvest by user group within the proposal area during recent five-year reporting periods (ADF&G 2021).

Year	Hoonah Hunters	Hoonah Hunter Days	Hoonah Harvests	Other FQSU Hunters	Other FQSU Hunter Days	Other FQSU Harvests	NFQU Hunters	NFQU Hunter Days	NFQU Harvests	Total Hunters	Total Hunter Days	Total Harvests
2000	454	2255	555	81	348	68	318	1066	365	853	3669	988
2001	373	1609	523	92	343	164	238	934	253	703	2886	940
2002	360	1720	604	95	407	145	372	1225	358	827	3352	1107
2003	269	613	437	88	351	161	258	840	393	615	1804	991
2004	243	860	495	46	112	67	259	740	301	548	1712	863
2005	327	1028	570	108	245	222	218	692	241	653	1965	1033
5 Year Average	**314**	**1166**	**526**	**86**	**292**	**152**	**269**	**886**	**309**	**669**	**2344**	**987**
2006	355	1155	444	114	674	161	345	1295	463	814	3124	1068
2007	152	593	90	84	183	46	162	605	39	398	1381	175
2008	193	615	137	49	104	19	184	648	104	426	1367	260
2009	182	544	133	36	116	34	97	398	58	315	1058	225
2010	215	786	220	49	177	93	189	795	152	453	1758	465
5 Year Average	**219**	**739**	**205**	**66**	**251**	**71**	**195**	**748**	**163**	**481**	**1738**	**439**
2011	201	703	239	36	124	71	157	827	182	394	1654	492
2012	219	637	238	31	117	30	251	1056	207	501	1810	475
2013	200	548	232	54	228	77	243	990	270	497	1766	579
2014	224	632	269	55	229	53	286	1206	296	565	2067	618
2015	250	797	307	87	440	157	314	1304	416	651	2541	880
5 Year Average	**219**	**663**	**257**	**53**	**228**	**78**	**250**	**1077**	**274**	**522**	**1968**	**609**
2016	217	366	352	83	366	139	327	1298	403	627	2030	894
2017	180	276	189	70	276	86	312	1213	371	562	1765	646
2018	198	269	270	75	269	111	313	1175	336	586	1713	717
2019	157	219	221	72	219	109	278	958	282	507	1396	612
2020	129	260	120	84	260	139	273	945	343	486	1465	602
5 Year Average	**176**	**278**	**230**	**77**	**278**	**117**	**301**	**1118**	**347**	**554**	**1674**	**694**
2021	183	518	200	76	256	105	246	938	303	505	1712	608
Overall Average	**240**	**790**	**311**	**71**	**266**	**103**	**256**	**961**	**279**	**568**	**2017**	**693**

The proposal area accounted for a relatively substantial amount NFQUs' overall hunting efforts and harvests within Unit 4 between 2000 and 2021 (ADF&G 2021, 2022c). Approximately 19% (5,639 users) of all NFQUs' hunted in the proposal area from 2000 – 2021. NFQUs also spent about 19% (21,146 days) of their hunting days in Unit 4 within the proposal area during this time (ADF&G 2021, 2022c). Likewise, roughly 18% (6,134 deer) of all deer harvested by NFQUs within Unit 4 during this period were taken from the proposal area (ADF&G 2021, 2022c). WAAs 3525 (Freshwater Bay Drainages), 3526 (North Shore Tenakee Inlet), and 3524 (Hoonah Area) were the portions of the proposal area most heavily utilized NFQUs, accounting for over 58% of all NFQU hunting effort and harvest in the proposal area from 2000 – 2021 (ADF&G 2021, 2022c).

Other Alternatives Considered

Harvest limit reduction: The current proposal (WP24-05) responds to critiques of earlier, similar proposals (WP22-08, -10) where proposed harvest limit reductions for NFQUs were not considered sufficient to provide for a meaningful conservation benefit or substantially improve the success rates of FQSUs (SERAC 2021b). Recently reported data shows that relatively few NFQUs harvest their full harvest limit in this area (OSM 2022b). A harvest limit reduction that allows for the taking of more than one deer by NFQUs would probably not reduce issues of competition and crowding in and around the proposal area during the proposed closure period.

Reduce extent of closure area and/or period of closure: The current proposal represents the outcome of significant consideration of this option. It is intended to limit the proposed closure area to the WAAs most utilized by Hoonah residents and other nearby communities (**Table 9**). The current proposal (WP24-05) also limits the length of the closure to a relatively short period of time considered most important to local subsistence users. These reductions could help minimize competition and conflicts between user groups in Hoonah's most heavily utilized deer hunting areas, while displacing fewer NFQUs. However, there are portions of the proposed closure area, such as WAA 3526 and WAA 4222 that do not appear to be essential to local subsistence deer hunting efforts from the data reported (**Table 9**). It may be worth considering removing these two WAAs from the proposed closure area, particularly in light of another current proposal, WP24-06, seeking to close a portion of northwest Chichagof Island to NFQUs during the same time period.

Working Group: One alternative considered during previous deliberations on similar proposals was to establish a Unit 4 deer working group. This suggestion was mentioned by some Southeast Council members and public testifiers during the fall 2021 Southeast Council meeting (OSM 2022a). Developing a "Unit 4 deer management strategy," was also recommended multiple times during the fall 2021 Southeast Council meeting (OSM 2022a). It was suggested that this alternative would allow consideration of deer harvest and hunter competition issues in Unit 4 on a more holistic and longer timescale. It would also enable all alternatives to be considered and could help bring user groups together for discussion and compromise.

Since this time, a "North Unit 4 Deer Working Group" has been established under the guidance of the Hoonah Indian Association Environmental Programs (HIA Environmental 2023). The first meeting of this group was held on March 15. The stated goals for the group are to:

> Complete annual community surveys on deer harvest and use by training people in the communities to do the work; (2) Understand if/how competition is impacting subsistence use of deer on north Chichagof; (3) Collect deer data through camera traps in overwintering areas to begin to get trend data for deer numbers; (4) Host meetings where managers, community members, and non-community members can discuss their deer harvest needs; and (5) Increase community understanding of how harvest reporting is used in management with the goal of increasing community reporting (HIA Environmental 2023).

This working group should provide important information to consider regarding current and future proposals to change Unit 4 deer regulations. It will be important to integrate this information into analyses and deliberations as it becomes available.

Effects of the Proposal

The proponents have asserted that the continuation of subsistence and meaningful rural priority is under threat from increasing competition from NFQUs in and around Hoonah. If the Board adopts this proposal, it will restrict NFQUs from hunting deer within the NECCUA on northeastern Chichagof Island from Nov. 1-15. This could potentially provide federally qualified users in the area with an enhanced subsistence harvest opportunity, by reducing user competition and conflict during a period of peak hunter effort and harvest that is particularly important for a community that does face winter food security issues. The proponents have noted that competition can significantly restrict access and overall hunting success at favored deer hunting sites located along the road system. November is the month when the greatest amount of federally qualified and non-federally qualified hunter effort and harvest has taken place within Unit 4 in recent years. Weather conditions are typically favorable for hunting and meat processing, deer provide the highest quality and amount of meat, and deer are generally more susceptible to harvest during this time.

Adopting the proposed closure could lead to increased harvest effort by NFQUs before and after the closure period. The proposed closure could also lead to increased hunting pressure and user conflicts along beaches, as areas below the high tide line are State-managed lands. The proponents, however, note that beach hunting generally takes place above the high tide line in this area. Still, the proposed closure could also create enforcement concerns in this area. The proposal will prevent NFQUs with local ties to the area from directly participating in deer hunting during the period of closure, but they may help in other ways such as with meat processing. Some people from Hoonah and other rural areas move to Juneau for employment but often return to these communities to participate in subsistence harvesting with family and friends.

While deliberating similar proposals (WP22-07, -08, -09/10) during the previous wildlife cycle, some Southeast Council members expressed concern over the potential displacement of NFQUs to other areas of Unit 4 if these types of proposals were to be adopted. These Council members were particularly

concerned about potential displacement creating similar problems elsewhere if all three deer proposals (WP22-07, -08, and -10) under consideration at the time were to be adopted (SERAC 2021b). This issue remains a concern with the current proposal (WP24-05) and a similar proposal (WP24-06) to close an area of northwestern Chichagof Island to NFQUs during the same time-period.

OSM PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

Oppose WP24-05

Justification

Deer have been and continue to be very important to local subsistence livelihoods and lifestyles for FQSUs living in the Hoonah area. Many area residents have noted that they have had to change their deer hunting methods to focus their efforts closer to home, as it has become too expensive and dangerous to travel further without the necessary fuel or equipment. Residents have noted that recently increasing numbers of NFQUs utilizing the Hoonah road system and/or anchoring boats in narrow embayments to hunt for deer are increasing issues of competition and user conflict in the area. Residents of Hoonah and similar communities have also noted that deer populations within Unit 4 may not be tracked at a fine enough scale to consistently capture localized depletions that exacerbate issues of competition and user conflict. Residents have also explained that hunter effort and harvest reporting tend to underestimate the amount of hunting effort taking place, and overestimate hunting success rates. There is data presented in this analysis that supports these arguments, suggesting that rates of competition for deer in the proposal area in recent years may be impacting the success and efficiency of residents of the Hoonah area who have had to focus their deer hunting efforts closer to home.

However, it is still not clear that the current levels of competition created by NFQUs in the proposal area pose an imminent threat to the continuation of subsistence at this time, or that the current proposal is the best way to solve the issues being faced by Hoonah residents. Though Hoonah residents' deer harvests have generally declined over the past twenty-two years analyzed for this proposal, these declining harvests have typically been associated with declines in reported hunting effort that cannot always be explained by associated declines in the community's population. Despite the noteworthy limitations in the hunter harvest and effort reporting framework, this issue complicates the analysis. More information is required to better understand local hunter harvest reporting practices and the potential relationships between declining economies, rising fuel costs, local hunter effort, the residual impacts of logging, and increasing rates of competition from NFQUs in the proposal area.

Overall, the Office of Subsistence Management feels that more information is still needed from a greater sample of the local population to determine whether a closure to NFQUs is necessary, and exactly where that closure should be located. OSM hopes to receive this type of information through additional meetings of the Southeast Council and the North Unit 4 Deer Working Group.

WRITTEN PUBLIC COMMENTS

To whom it may concern,

I am writing in regards to the following proposals:

Admiralty: WP24-04
Chichagof (Hoonah): WP24-05
Lisianski (Pelican): WP24-06

I am a lifelong Alaskan who lives in Juneau. I hunt in the Pelican area described in the proposal, but would like to speak to all of the proposals. I would suggest, as someone who hunts the Pelican area every year for last ~10 years, that the last few years have been much more difficult to harvest deer during the fall. This has likely caused these communities for look for someone to blame. Juneau (or non-local) hunters are an easy target; however, I do not believe the correct one.

I am deeply sympathetic to the needs of individuals living in the small communities of Southeast Alaska. The hardships endured by these folks are very real. However, I do not see limiting hunting access as a solution. Every study that has ever looked at the topic has found that hunter predation on the Sitka Blacktail Deer population in Southeast Alaska has found that hunting is an insignificant contribution to loss of deer. I certainly understand that it would be challenging for a local from any of these communities to see hunters not from their town leaving with deer, when they themselves haven't been able to harvest deer.

I believe the explanation for the apparent "shortage" of deer has been warmer winter weather not producing as much snow, especially in the early season. For many of these small communities, hunting is performed by driving a boat around looking for deer on beaches. Without enough snow to drive the deer down off of the mountains, I have seen less deer on beaches in the last few years. However, if one is willing to go into the woods, there are plenty of deer to be found at higher elevations. This matches with any of the recent deer surveys suggesting there are no major drops in deer populations in these regions.

I believe that these smaller communities hope for plentiful, easy to shoot deer on the beaches will not happen regardless of whether these proposals are passed or not. It will depend more on whether there are early and heavy snowfalls. I would respectfully request that you reject all of these proposals as I believe they would not address the proposed concerns, and would unfairly limit one group of Alaskan's access to a plentiful resource.

-Justin Dorn
Juneau, Alaska

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WP24-06 Executive Summary	
General Description	WP24-06 requests to close the Federal public lands within drainages flowing into Lisianski Inlet, Lisianski Strait, and Stag Bay south of a line connecting Soapstone and Column points and north of a line connecting Point Theodore and Point Urey to deer hunting by non-federally qualified users from Nov. 1-15. *Submitted by: Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council*
Proposed Regulation	**Unit 4 Deer** *Unit 4 — 6 deer; however, female deer may be taken only from Sept. 15 – Jan. 31* — *Aug. 1 – Jan. 31* ***Federal public lands within drainages flowing into Lisianski Inlet, Lisianski Strait, and Stag Bay south of a line connecting Soapstone and Column points and north of a line connecting Point Theodore and Point Uray are closed to deer hunting Nov. 1-15, except by federally qualified subsistence users hunting under these regulations.***
OSM Preliminary Conclusion	**Oppose**
Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Recommendation	
Interagency Staff Committee Comments	
ADF&G Comments	
Written Public Comments	**6 Oppose**

DRAFT STAFF ANALYSIS
WP24-06

ISSUES

Proposal WP24-06 was submitted by the Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Southeast Council). The proponents request to close a portion of northwest Chichagof Island around Pelican to deer hunting by non-federally qualified users (NFQUs) from Nov. 1-15 (see **Figure 1**). The specific closure area would include Federal public lands within drainages flowing into Lisianski Inlet, Lisianski Strait, and Stag Bay south of a line connecting Soapstone and Column points and north of a line connecting Point Theodore and Point Urey (see **Figure 2**). This proposed closure area encompasses parts of Wildlife Analysis Areas (WAAs) 3417, 3418, 3419, and 3421.

DISCUSSION

The proponents submitted WP24-06 to establish a meaningful preference for the continuation of subsistence uses of deer by federally qualified subsistence users (FQSUs) in the Pelican area. Pelican residents depend on deer as a key component of their subsistence lifestyles. However, the proponents assert that residents in this area have been experiencing difficulty harvesting enough deer to meet their subsistence needs because of increasing competition and user conflict with non-federally qualified users (NFQUs). The proponents assert that NFQUs anchor boats in small bays, often inhibiting access to subsistence users' primary hunting areas. The proponents note that NFQUs may also decrease the success rates of subsistence users if they shoot at deer and miss, causing deer to become more skittish and wary of hunting presence.

The proponents explain that high fuel costs, depressed economies, small boats, and inclement weather are all impacting the ability of Pelican residents to meet their subsistence needs. Pelican residents cannot afford to have unsuccessful deer hunts, or to travel far from their community to hunt deer. NFQUs exacerbate these concerns by obstructing access, competing for deer, and potentially altering deer behavior, all of which decrease the chances of successful subsistence hunts and hinder the continuation of subsistence uses.

Subsistence livelihoods require effective and efficient harvests. The proponents note that the proposed two-week closure window in early November is the most efficient time for subsistence deer hunting in Unit 4 for several reasons. First, the deer are still fat, providing the highest quality and amount of meat. Second, the deer are in rut, making them more susceptible to harvest. Third, weather conditions are typically favorable for hunting and proper meat processing.

The proponents assert that this two-week closure would allow for the continuation of subsistence uses and provide a meaningful subsistence preference, enhancing opportunity for subsistence users and helping them meet their subsistence needs by reducing competition and improving access to hunting areas during the most important time of year for subsistence deer hunting. Additionally, the proponents note that the proposed closure area is limited in scope but represents the area most hunted by Pelican residents. The proponents state that this closure will have a relatively small impact on NFQUs who

would maintain significant time and space to hunt deer in Unit 4, but the closure would greatly benefit local subsistence users.

The proponents also acknowledge that while tidelands are State managed lands, unaffected by any Federal closures, this should not decrease the effectiveness or necessity of this proposed closure. Deer are primarily pushed to beaches by heavy snowfalls, which usually occur after the requested closure period. Additionally, much of the proposed closure area is extremely steep and does not contain many beaches. Lastly, the proponents assert that when deer are on beaches, they are usually feeding above the mean high tide line, which is under Federal jurisdiction.

Existing Federal Regulation

Unit 4 - Deer

Unit 4 — 6 deer; however, female deer may be taken only from Sept. 15 – Jan. 31.	*Aug. 1 – Jan. 31*

Proposed Federal Regulation

Unit 4 - Deer

Unit 4 — 6 deer; however, female deer may be taken only from Sept. 15 – Jan. 31.	*Aug. 1 – Jan. 31*
Federal public lands within drainages flowing into Lisianski Inlet, Lisianski Strait, and Stag Bay south of a line connecting Soapstone and Column points and north of a line connecting Point Theodore and Point Uray are closed to deer hunting Nov. 1-15, except by federally qualified subsistence users hunting under these regulations.	

Existing State Regulation

Unit 4 - Deer

Chichagof Island east of Port Frederick and north of Tenakee Inlet

Residents - 3 deer total	*Bucks*	*Aug. 1 - Sept.14*
	Any deer	*Sept. 15 - Dec. 31*
Nonresidents – 2 Bucks	*Bucks*	*Aug. 1 – Dec. 31*

Unit 4 - Deer

Remainder		
Residents - 6 deer total	*Bucks*	*Aug. 1 - Sept.14*
	Any deer	*Sept. 15 – Dec. 31*
Nonresidents – 2 Bucks	*Bucks*	*Aug. 1 – Dec. 31*

Extent of Federal Public Lands/Waters

Unit 4 is comprised of approximately 96% Federal Public Lands, of which of 99% are U.S. Forest Service (USFS) managed lands, and less than 1% National Park Service or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service managed lands (Error! Reference source not found.). Unit 4 consists primarily of Admiralty, Baranof, and Chichagof Islands, along with some smaller adjacent islands. The proposed closure area is approximately 218 square miles in size, and it encompasses parts of Wildlife Analysis Areas (WAAs) 3417, 3418, 3419, and 3421 on northwestern Chichagof Island (see **Figure 2**).

Customary and Traditional Use Determination

Rural residents of Units 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 have a customary and traditional use determination for deer in Unit 4.

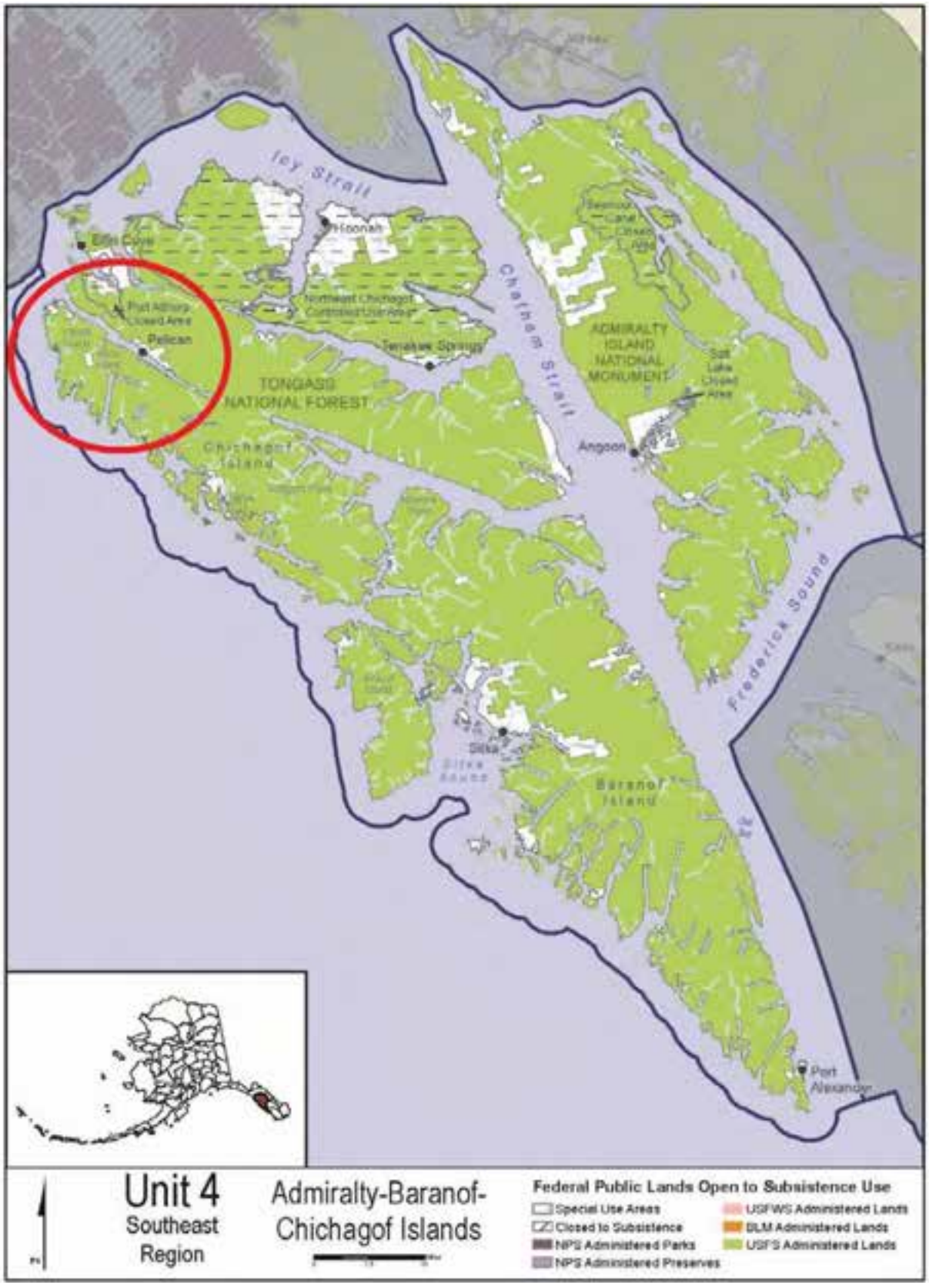

Figure 1. Unit 4 Map with Proposal Analysis Area Encircled in Red

Figure 2. Proposed Closure Area in relation to Pelican and Wildlife Analysis Areas 3417, 3418, 3419, and 3421 (Approximate)

Regulatory History

Except for the 1992/93 and 1993/94 regulatory years, the Federal season for deer in Unit 4 has been from August 1 to January 31, with a harvest limit of six deer. However, harvest of antlerless deer has only been permitted from September 15 to January 31. In 1992, in response to several deep snow winters, the northern Baranof Island area harvest limit was reduced to four deer, the season was shortened to December 31, and the area closed to non-federally qualified users (NFQUs). In 1993, the northeast Chichagof Island area was closed to NFQUs after November 1 (OSM 2022a).

From the late 1980s through 1991, the State general season in the northeast Chichagof area had a harvest limit of three deer. However, the State subsistence season allowed for the harvest of six deer, with the season running from August 1 through January 31. Since 1992, the State deer season has been from August 1 through December 31, with the harvest of antlerless deer only permitted from September 15 through December 31. For Chichagof Island east of Port Frederick and north of Tenakee Inlet, including all drainages into Tenakee Inlet, the State harvest limit has been three deer. The State harvest limit for the remainder of Unit 4 was four deer, until 2019, when it was increased to six deer.

In 2000, two proposals addressing Unit 4 deer regulations were submitted by members of the public during the Federal wildlife regulatory cycle (WP00-08 and -09). These proposals were motivated by conservation concerns following heavy snow winters during the 1998-1999 season, the increased winter deer mortality typically associated with heavy snows, decreased deer habitat due to recent logging in the area, and increasing hunting pressure enabled by logging road construction (OSM 2000). One proposal requested to rescind the January Federal deer season in Unit 4, while the other requested to rescind the January deer season and reduce the harvest limit from six deer to four deer. Both proposals were rejected by the Federal Subsistence Board (Board), consistent with the recommendations of the Southeast Council. The stated justification was that the available deer population and harvest survey data for Unit 4 did not indicate a conservation concern, and that the proposed changes would unnecessarily restrict subsistence opportunity (FSB 2000).

In 2010, three proposals addressing Unit 4 deer regulations were submitted during the Federal wildlife regulatory cycle (WP10-13, -14, and -21). These proposals were submitted following significant deer population declines that occurred during the deep snow winters of 2006 through 2009. WP10-13 was submitted by the Southeast Council, requesting to close the female deer season on January 15 in that portion of Unit 4 draining into Chatham Strait, Peril Strait, and Icy Strait, including Tenakee Inlet. WP10-14 was submitted by the Southeast Council, requesting to close Federal public lands in the Northeast Chichagof Controlled Use Area (NECCUA) to the harvest of female deer by NFQUs in December. WP10-21 was submitted by the Southeast Council, requesting that deer harvest on the Federal public lands of the NECCUA be restricted to residents of Hoonah. None of these proposals were adopted by the Board. Instead, Federal and State managers closed the female deer season in the NECCUA for the 2010 regulatory year, and part of the 2011 and 2012 regulatory years. These closures were enacted to help the deer population recover from the deep-snow winters of 2006 through 2009.

In 2012, one proposal concerning Unit 4 deer regulations was submitted during the Federal wildlife regulatory cycle (WP12-06). This proposal sought to address population concerns following the deep snow winters of 2006 through 2009, by rescinding the January deer season in Unit 4. The Board rejected this proposal because it was determined that rescinding the January season would unnecessarily restrict subsistence users, while providing little conservation benefit (FSB 2012). Based on available survey and harvest data, Federal and State managers believed that the Unit 4 deer population had completely recovered from the previous deep-snow winters by the 2013 season (OSM 2022a).

In 2019, the Alaska Board of Game (BOG) adopted Proposal 18, increasing the State general season harvest limit from four deer to six deer in Unit 4 Remainder. The stated justification was that additional sustainable harvest opportunity could be provided because there were no conservation concerns.

In 2022, four proposals (WP22-07, -08, -09, -10) concerning Unit 4 deer regulations were submitted during the Federal wildlife regulatory cycle. WP22-07 was submitted by the Southeast Council, requesting that the Federal public lands of Admiralty Island draining into Chatham Strait between Point Marsden and Point Gardner be closed to deer hunting Sept. 15 – Nov. 30, except by federally qualified subsistence users (FQSUs). WP22-08 was also submitted by the Southeast Council, requesting that the Northeast Chichagof Controlled Use Area (NECCUA) annual deer harvest limit for NFQUs be reduced to two male deer. The stated intent of these two proposals was to protect local deer populations from further depletion by reducing hunting pressure from NFQUs. The proponents asserted that this change would help increase harvest opportunity and provide for a meaningful subsistence priority for FQSUs in these areas (OSM 2022a, 2022b).

WP22-09 and WP22-10 both proposed changes to deer hunting regulations in the area in and around Pelican. WP22-09 was submitted by the Southeast Council, requesting that the Federal public lands draining into Lisianski Inlet, Lisianski Strait, and Stag Bay south of the latitude of Mite Cove (58° 4' N) and north of the latitude of Lost Cove (57° 52' N) be closed to deer hunting Oct. 15 – Dec. 31, except by FQSUs. The stated intent of WP22-09 was to protect local deer populations from further depletion by reducing hunting pressure from NFQUs. The proponents asserted that this change would help increase harvest opportunity and provide for a meaningful subsistence preference for FQSUs in the area (OSM 2022c). WP22-10 was submitted by Patricia Phillips of Pelican. This proposal requested that the deer harvest limit for NFQUs in Lisianski Inlet and Lisianski Strait be reduced to 4 deer. The stated intent of WP22-10 was to reduce deer hunting pressure, provide for a meaningful subsistence priority, and thereby increase the ability of FQSUs to meet their subsistence needs (OSM 2022d). The current proposal, WP24-06, is most similar to WP22-09 in that it requests a closure to deer hunting by NFQUs in the same general area in and around Pelican. However, the length of the closure requested under WP24-06 is approximately two months shorter than that previously requested under WP22-09.

At its April 2022 meeting, the Board rejected WP22-09 as part of the consensus agenda. The Board deferred Proposals WP22-07, -08, and -10 to its winter 2023 regulatory meeting, requesting the various user groups in the area work together to create more mutually acceptable solutions to the issues surrounding deer harvest in Unit 4 (FSB 2022).

The Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) subsequently organized an open public meeting regarding the deferred Unit 4 deer proposals in August 2022. The meeting provided an opportunity for different user groups to discuss their recent deer hunting experiences in Unit 4, their plans for future harvest, and how the proposals might impact them. Additionally, participants were asked if they had specific recommendations on these proposals or if they had any other suggestions for the Board that would help resolve these issues (OSM 2022a).

The Southeast Council modified its recommendations for WP22-07 and WP22-10 following deferral and open meeting discussion. At its fall 2022 meeting, the Southeast Council supported WP22-07 with modification to remove Wildlife Analysis Areas (WAAs) 4043, 4044, and 4054 from the proposal area and create a harvest limit for NFQUs of two male deer within the remaining area (WAAs 4041, 4042, 4055) (OSM 2022a). This modification reduced the proposal area to roughly half of its original size and allowed for some harvest by NFQUs in the remaining proposal area (SERAC 2021b). This modification was recommended to focus the proposal on the area most utilized by FQSUs and to reduce the potential impact of the proposal on NFQUs (SERAC 2021b).

At the same meeting, The Southeast Council supported WP22-10 with modification to reduce the harvest limit for NFQUs to two male deer, and to maintain the same proposal area as recommended in Fall 2021. This modification was recommended because it was suggested that a harvest limit reduction of four deer or three male deer would not provide a significant conservation benefit or substantially enhance the success rates of FQSUs, but that the situation in the Northwest Chichagof might not warrant a full closure to NFQUs (SERAC 2021b). The Southeast Council also felt that reducing the harvest limit to two male deer for NFQUs would reduce administrative complexity and enforcement issues by aligning the proposed harvest limit reduction for the Northwest Chichagof area (WP22-10) with that of the Northeast Chichagof area (WP22-08) and Southwest Admiralty Island (SERAC 2022b). The Southeast Council retained its original Fall 2021 recommendation of support for WP22-08 without modification, to reduce the harvest limit for NFQUs hunting in the NECCUA to two male deer (OSM 2022b). The Southeast Council noted that all three proposals were still intended to help protect local deer populations from further depletion by reducing hunting pressure from NFQUs, and thereby increase harvest opportunity and provide for a meaningful subsistence preference for FQSUs in these areas (OSM 2022a, 2022b, 2022c).

All three proposals (WP22-07, -08, and -10) were subsequently rejected by the Board at its February 2023 regulatory meeting (FSB 2023). The stated justification was that the available data on deer populations in Unit 4 did not meet the criteria necessary to close land or implement harvest restrictions for the purposes of conservation or the continuance of subsistence uses under §815(3) of ANILCA (FSB 2023). Recent ADF&G survey and harvest data indicated that overall deer populations in Unit 4 were among the highest in the State and that FQSUs in these areas were generally effective and efficient deer harvesters (FSB 2023). However, the Board member from the Bureau of Indian Affairs dissented on the basis that local ecological knowledge and testimony had been provided through the regulatory process, which indicated that FQSUs were having difficulty harvesting sufficient deer in the areas covered by the proposals (FSB 2023).

The BOG acted on State Proposals 10 and 11 at their January 2023 Southeast Region regulatory meeting (ADF&G 2022a). These proposals requested reducing the harvest limit for residents and nonresidents to four deer in Unit 4 Remainder. The proponents for both proposals listed the possible closure of federal lands to deer hunting by NFQUs as a key factor in submitting their proposals. Both proponents suggested that a harvest limit reduction would protect deer populations, help reduce user conflicts in Unit 4, and avoid a closure of Federal public lands to NFQUs. The BOG adopted Proposal 10, with modification to reduce the nonresident harvest limit throughout all of Unit 4 to two male deer (ADF&G 2023a). The resident harvest limit remained three deer in Unit 4, Chichagof Island east of Port Frederick and north of Tenakee Inlet, and six deer in Unit 4 Remainder. The BOG took no action on Proposal 11, due to the action taken on Proposal 10.

Current Events

Two other proposals concerning deer regulations in Unit 4 were submitted for the 2024 Federal subsistence wildlife regulatory cycle. WP24-04 was submitted by the Southeast Council, requesting to close a portion of Admiralty Island around Angoon to deer hunting by NFQUs, from Nov. 1-15. WP24-05 was submitted by the Southeast Council, requesting to close the Northeast Chichagof Controlled Use Area (NECCUA) surrounding Hoonah to deer harvest by NFQUs from Nov. 1-15.

The Hoonah Indian Association received funding through the USFS Southeast Alaska Sustainability Strategy program to collect community harvest and biological information about deer on the north end of Chichagof Island from 2022-2027. This project is being carried out in the communities of Hoonah, Pelican, Gustavus, and Angoon. A North Unit 4 Deer Working Group has also been established under the guidance of the Hoonah Indian Association Environmental Programs (HIA Environmental 2023). The first meeting of this group was held on March 15, 2023. Information from the deer working group and subsistence surveys will be integrated into the analyses of WP24-04, WP24-05, and WP24-06 as it becomes available.

Biological Background

Sitka black-tailed deer spend the winter and early spring at low elevation where less snow accumulates, and forests provide increased foraging opportunities. Fawning occurs in late May and early June as vegetation greens-up, providing abundant forage to meet the energetic needs of lactating does. Migratory deer follow the greening vegetation up to alpine for the summer. Resident deer remain at lower elevations. The breeding season, or rut, generally occurs in October through November, and peaks in late November (ADF&G 2009). Wolves and black bears are not present in Unit 4, so their primary predators in the area are humans and brown bears. Brown bears are estimated to kill an amount of deer equal to 15%-20% of the total annual deer harvested by hunters (Mooney 2009). Significant changes in deer populations and localized deer density levels are relatively normal over time in Unit 4 (Bethune 2020). Periodic declines are often attributable to severe winter weather, particularly deep snow events (Olson 1979, Bethune 2020). This issue is clearly illustrated in the regulatory history, and the frequency with which proposals to change Unit 4 deer hunting regulations follow heavy snow winters.

Habitat

Unit 4, like most of Southeast Alaska, has a maritime climate characterized by high rainfall and moderate summer and winter temperatures (Bethune 2020). However, the amount of rain and snow received can vary significantly from year-to-year, and across the unit (Bethune 2020). The landscape of Unit 4 is characterized by steep and rugged terrain with mountains, fjords, estuaries, and short, swift rivers (Bethune 2020). Vegetative communities occurring at low to moderate elevations (<1,500 feet) "are dominated by western hemlock (*Tsuga heterophylla*) and Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*), with western red cedar (*Thuja plicata*) and Alaskan yellow cedar (*Chamaecyparis nootkatensis*) old-growth forests. Mixed conifer muskeg and deciduous riparian forests are also common. Mountain hemlock (*Tsuga mertensiana*) comprises a subalpine timberline band between 1,500 - 2,500 feet in elevation" (Bethune 2020: 4).

Old-growth forests are considered primary deer winter range, in part because the complex canopy cover allows sufficient sunlight through for forage plants to grow but intercepts snow, making it easier for deer to move and forage during winters when deep snow hinders access to other habitats (McCoy 2017). Some areas of Unit 4 have been significantly impacted by large-scale changes in habitat due to logging, while the habitat in other areas is largely intact. Areas with substantial timber harvest, such as northeastern Chichagof and northwestern Baranof Islands, are expected to have lower deer carrying capacity compared to pre-harvest conditions (Brinkman et al. 2009). Deer may shift their activity patterns in response to intensive logging and subsequent forest succession (Brinkman et al. 2009). The density of deer in these areas may decline as even-aged young-growth stands progress beyond shrub and sapling stages to stem exclusion forests characterized by thick canopies and sparse understory browse (Brinkman et al. 2009: 39).

Population Information

Monitoring deer populations in forested habitat is challenging, as the total number of deer cannot be directly counted through ground or aerial surveys (Brinkman et al. 2013). Changes in deer populations in Unit 4 have historically been monitored using three complementary methods: deer pellet surveys, harvest reporting, and aerial alpine surveys. Winter body condition and beach mortality surveys may also be conducted to understand changes in the health and abundance of area deer populations (Bethune 2020).

Deer pellet surveys have been used in the Southeast region since 1981 to monitor deer population trends and document substantial changes (≥ 30%) in deer density in specific watersheds (McCoy 2017). An average of <1.00 pellet group per survey plot generally indicates a low-density deer population, an average of 1.00 – 1.99 pellet groups per survey plot indicates a moderate-density population, and an average of >2.00 pellet groups per survey plot typically indicates a high-density population (Kirchoff and Pitcher 1988, Bethune 2022a). Deer pellet survey data, however, should be interpreted with caution, "as factors other than deer population size can affect deer pellet-group density" (McCoy 2017: 2). Issues such as winter severity and snowfall patterns, temperature and humidity, variability in survey effort, the length of time since the last survey, timing of vegetation green-up and changes in pellet group detectability, and changes in habitat can all impact pellet-group density and/or detection (McCoy 2017).

A recent deer pellet study conducted by Brinkman and colleagues (2013) on Prince of Wales Island using DNA-based methods found that current ADF&G/USFS deer pellet survey techniques did not provide an accurate index of deer populations when extrapolated across time, or beyond the local scale. As the researchers explained:

> Over the past three decades, ADF&G and USFS have used deer pellet counts as the primary tool to monitor deer population trends. Precise estimates of trends in deer abundance are needed because perceived fluctuations in the deer population size above or below a predetermined population objective set by ADF&G results in changes in harvest regulations. Despite heavy reliance on these data, pellet group counts of black-tailed deer were compared with an independent measure of [deer] population size only once. In that study, 13 radio-collared deer were introduced to a small (approx. 40 ha) island in southeast Alaska. Researchers returned to the island 264 days later and surveyed 1.9% of the island for pellet groups. Data from that study indicated that a pellet group density of 0.05 pellet groups/m² represented 12 deer/km² (95% CI = 10.7 deer/km² – 13.8 deer/km²). This estimate assumed constant pellet persistence, detection, and deposition rates. Unfortunately, data were obtained only during a single year, which prevented any evaluation of how well pellet groups deposited during winter tracked changes in deer population. Also, only 4 deer remained on the island (6 swam off and 3 died) when researchers returned to conduct pellet group counts, which complicated the association between deer numbers and number of pellet groups encountered. Moreover, the island was much smaller than typical deer home ranges (which likely concentrated deer activity) and habitat diversity was low when compared with typical deer ranges in southeast Alaska. Consequently, the usefulness of the study for evaluating the reliability of pellet-group surveys as conducted by ADF&G and USFS personnel was limited (Brinkman et al. 2013: 445).

Brinkman and colleagues (2013) also noted that though their deer pellet index was not directly comparable to that developed by ADF&G/USFS because of different methodologies, their model suggested that a similar deer pellet density of 0.05 pellet groups/m² across a mosaic of habitat types on Prince of Wales Island would indicate a minimum deer count of 2.9 deer/ km², with a much wider margin of error (95% CI = 0.4 deer/km² – 24.3 deer/km²). Previous pellet group count studies conducted outside of Alaska that demonstrated the usefulness of pellet-group counts were conducted under conditions that are difficult to replicate with unenclosed populations of deer in unmanaged landscapes (Brinkman et al 2013). The researchers concluded:

> The variation we reported between estimates of pellet-group counts and deer counts at the transect level do not support the use of pellet-group count surveys to reliably monitor trends in deer populations at larger spatial scales. Indeed, during our study, pellet-group data aggregated within watersheds did not reflect the decline in deer count within those watersheds. For instance, in the Staney watershed, DNA results indicated a 24% decline in minimum deer count from 2006 to 2008, whereas pellet group counts indicated a 17% increase over the same years (Brinkman et al. 2013: 449).

There have been no recent deer pellet surveys conducted within the proposal area. The last deer pellet surveys conducted on Chichagof Island took place at Pavlof Bay in 2019 and Finger Mountain in 2018 (Bethune 2022a). The average pellet groups counted per plot for each of these surveys were 2.47 and 3.61 respectively, generally indicating a high-density deer population (Bethune 2022a). Recent pellet surveys conducted in other parts of Unit 4 have generally indicated increasing populations from prior years (McCoy 2019; Bethune 2020). As the ADF&G Regional Supervisor explained during a recent Southeast Council meeting, "deer pellet densities in Game Management Unit 4, no matter where you do them, are always the highest in the region" (SERAC 2021b: 476). However, he did also note that "The Department does not monitor deer populations in these relatively small areas affected by the proposal. We monitor deer populations on a unit-wide level" (SERAC 2021b: 351). This statement, as well as the previously mentioned study by Brinkman and colleagues (2013), lends credence to local testimony presented at recent Southeast Council meetings that deer populations may not be tracked at a fine enough scale to capture periodic, localized declines (see SERAC 2021b). As a long-time Pelican resident cautioned:

> I've hunted in Game Management Unit 4 since 1993 and have been very aware of the deer population. I've always hunted the good time, between October 20th and November 24th or so, [around] Thanksgiving. And, I can witness there is a significant decrease in the population in the Pelican area. In 1998, as I would walk through my three acres, and the hillsides going up the hill to hunt, you would frequently see multiple [deer] droppings, multiple areas of droppings. Now, as I walk through three to eight acres of the area near Sunnyside, it's hardly one dropping for every ten feet or two meters, and so you assume it's the same deer. So, there is a significant decrease in the population in the [Lisianski] Inlet. I'm also familiar with areas outside the Inlet, and I've seen a larger population there [before], where we've seen herds of deer, seven or eight at a time [in the past], we're seeing two or three [now]…I think the deer population in Lisianski Inlet is in danger of not being able to reproduce and keep the herd up (SERAC 2021b: 503).

Aerial alpine deer survey work began in 2013, as an effort to provide a new, timelier method to assess and monitor the abundance of deer in alpine areas (Bethune 2020). These surveys are intended to be flown each summer before the hunting season, with deer seen per survey hour constituting the standard unit of measurement (Bethune 2020). As Bethune (2020: 25) notes, "The alpine survey technique appears to be a useful tool for gauging deer abundance immediately prior to hunting season. However, research is needed to learn more about what alpine surveys tell us about the larger deer population."

Aerial alpine surveys have not yet been conducted over the proposal area. Recent surveys were flown over Southern Admiralty Island in 2016 and 2017, and Northeast Chichagof Island in 2017 and 2018 (Bethune 2022a). Southern Admiralty Island exhibited the highest deer seen per hour of any survey location in Southeast Alaska, while Northeast Chichagof exhibited numbers similar to north Prince of Wales Island (POW) (see **Figure 3**). Aerial surveys were not conducted in 2019 and 2020 due to COVID-19 restrictions (Bethune 2022a).

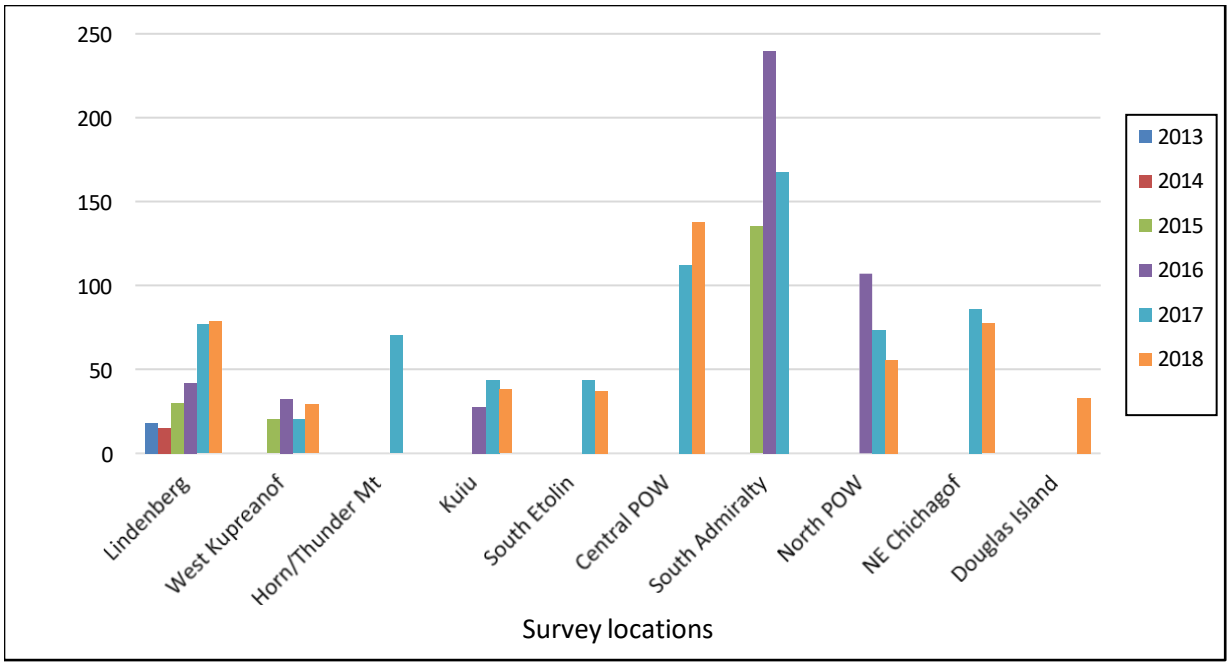

Figure 3. Average Number of Deer Counted per Hour during Mid-Summer Aerial Alpine Surveys in Southeast Alaska, 2013 – 2018 (Bethune 2022a).

Annual harvest data estimated from harvest reports and hunter surveys can also provide another indicator of deer population status, and potential change over time (Bethune 2022a). The most recently estimated five-year average (2016-2020) for all reported harvests in Unit 4 was approximately 5,742 deer per year (see **Table 1**). During this time, the greatest amount of harvest took place on Chichagof Island, followed by Baranof Island and Admiralty Island (Bethune 2022a). The total estimated per year harvest average during this period was very similar to the average of 5,674 deer harvested each year during the previous five-year reporting period from 2011-2015 (**Table 1**). The greatest amount of harvest during the 2011-2015 reporting period also took place on Chichagof Island, followed by Baranof Island and Admiralty Island (Bethune 2020). The average number of all hunters hunting in Unit 4 each year increased slightly between these five-year reporting periods (+4%), while the average number of total hunter days per year decreased slightly (-3%) (**Table 1**). Still, the harvest levels estimated for the two most recent five-year reporting periods (2011-2015 & 2016-2020) are substantially lower than those estimated for the 2001-2005 reporting period (**Table 1**). Yet, the estimated average number of hunters hunting each year during these three reporting periods (2011-2005; 2011-2015; 2016-2020) is quite similar (**Table 1**).

Table 1. Estimated Total Harvests and Hunting Effort in Unit 4 during Recent Five-Year Reporting Periods (ADF&G 2005-2006, 2006-2007; Mooney 2007, 2009, 2011, 2015; Bethune 2020, 2022a).

Year	Total Hunters	Total Hunter Days	Total Harvests in Unit 4
2001	3581	-	7457
2002	3414	-	5117
2003	3637	-	7621
2004	3363	-	6787
2005	3166	-	6983
5 Year Average	**3432**	**-**	**6793**
2006	3057	-	7741
2007	1999	-	1846
2008	2378	-	3855
2009	2280	-	3909
2010	2709	-	4688
5 Year Average	**2485**	**-**	**4408**
2011	3157	14020	6909
2012	3103	12214	4853
2013	3248	13094	5409
2014	3435	13815	4694
2015	3733	15183	6505
5 Year Average	**3335**	**13665**	**5674**
2016	3742	14535	7192
2017	3478	12555	5255
2018	3449	13425	5229
2019	3382	12870	5979
2020	3252	12712	5055
5 Year Average	**3461**	**13219**	**5742**
Overall Average	**3178**	**13442**	**5654**

Recently reported five-year harvest and hunting efforts in the wildlife analysis areas encompassed by the proposal area follow somewhat different trends (see **Table 2**). The estimated average yearly harvest in this area decreased by approximately 16% (42 deer) between the 2011-2015 and 2016-2020 reporting periods (**Table 2**). However, at least some of this reduction in harvest could be attributed to a similar reduction in the average number of reported hunters (-9% or -12 hunters) and average reported hunter days (-16% or -91 hunter days) witnessed between these two reporting periods (**Table 2**). Overall, there has been a substantial decline in the average reported hunters per year (-27% or -48 hunters), average

reported hunter days per year (-24% or -146 hunter days), and average reported harvests per year (-31% or -98 deer) in WAAs encompassed by the proposal area between the 2001-2005 reporting period and the 2016-2020 reporting period (**Table 2**). These declines in total hunters, hunter days, and harvests in the area are certainly interrelated, and possibly correlated with the collective impacts of declining populations in rural communities like Pelican, rising gas prices, and depressed local economies (see Brinkman et al. 2014). Among the different user groups in this area, Pelican hunters reported the greatest percent declines in average yearly hunters (-56% or -23 hunters), hunter days (-64% or -70 hunter days), and harvests (-54% or -38 deer) between the 2001-2005 reporting period and the 2016-2020 reporting period (see **Table 8**). This issue is discussed in greater detail in the ensuing sections of the analysis.

Table 2. Estimated Total Harvests and Hunting Effort in Wildlife Analysis Areas (WAAs) encompassed by the Proposal Area during Recent Five-Year Reporting Periods (ADF&G 2021).

Year	Total Hunters	Total Hunter Days	Total Harvests in Proposal Area
2001	179	721	327
2002	163	548	244
2003	204	573	359
2004	177	640	340
2005	153	579	328
5 Year Average	**175**	**612**	**319**
2006	149	580	282
2007	94	300	86
2008	121	303	155
2009	117	370	157
2010	170	663	290
5 Year Average	**130**	**443**	**194**
2011	183	826	356
2012	114	358	206
2013	130	587	274
2014	141	483	212
2015	129	531	271
5 Year Average	**139**	**557**	**264**
2016	135	503	296
2017	112	382	205
2018	128	470	194
2019	124	404	202
2020	137	571	210
5 Year Average	**127**	**466**	**221**
Overall Average	**143**	**520**	**250**

Based on the combination of harvest data, pellet survey data, aerial surveys, and related information, managers assert that the overall deer population in Unit 4 has recovered from the population declines suffered during the severe winters of 2006-2008 (see **Tables 1** & **2**), and it may be reaching winter carrying capacity in some areas (Bethune 2022a). Most recently, the heavy snowfall that took place in December 2021 led to some concerns about over-winter mortality. However, the rest of the 2021-2022 winter exhibited mild to average weather conditions and the mortality surveys conducted in the spring of 2022 found that over-winter mortality was not higher than normal, and that the body condition of live deer was similar to that seen in previous years (Bethune 2022b).

Cultural Knowledge and Traditional Practices

Pelican is located near the northwest coast of Chichagof Island, in Lisianski Inlet. It is approximately one-hundred miles west of Juneau, and eighty miles north of Sitka. Pelican began as a commercial fishing and processing town, when a fish buyer from Sitka began buying fish in the area and chose the protected inlet as an ideal site for a cold storage plant (ADCCED 2023). The fish buyer decided to name the site after his fish packing vessel, "The Pelican," and a community soon grew around this operation (ADCCED 2023). A school and fish cannery were created in the 1940s, and the city of Pelican was officially incorporated in 1943 (ADCCED 2023). At its peak, the cold storage plant processed over 5 million pounds of salmon and halibut annually (ADCCED 2023). The commercial fishing fleet was made up mostly of family boats, and Pelican was a thriving fishing community until the 1990s (Schroeder and Kookesh 1990, ADLWD 2022). Unfortunately, the fishing industry began a significant decline at this time, which culminated with the closing of the fish processing plant in 2009 (ADCCED 2023, ADLWD 2022). Though fishing is still a key aspect of the culture in this community, the commercial fishing industry is not as strong it was previously (ADCCED 2023). The downturn in the commercial fishing industry has likely played a key role in the decline in Pelican's population, which also started in the 1990s, as people moved to other communities in search of employment and income (see **Table 3**, ADCCED 2023). A Pelican resident recently explained that commercial fishing opportunities, such as longlining for halibut and black cod, have been decreasing and that many people left the community when Pelican Seafoods shutdown (SERAC 2021a: 81). This situation is similar to that being experienced by many smaller, rural communities in southeast Alaska (Sill and Koster 2017). Pelican has worked to diversify its economy in recent years and has significantly increased its efforts in the tourism industry (ADCCED 2023). The community experiences a regular influx of seasonal residents and fishermen each year (ADCCED 2023, OSM 2022d).

Table 3. The population of Pelican from 1940 to 2020 based on US Census Data (ADCCED 2023).

Year	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	2021	2022
Population	48	180	135	133	180	222	163	88	98	92	83

In 2020, there were 98 full-time residents living in 23 households in Pelican (US Census 2020a). This population number was slightly higher than that estimated for 2010, but well below the peak reached in 1990 (**Table 3**). The median age of Pelican residents in 2020 was approximately 48, about 13 years older than the median age for all Alaskan residents (US Census 2020a). Pelican also had a significantly larger proportion of residents 65 and older (21%), when compared to the median figure for the entire state

(13%) (US Census 2020a). The employment rate in Pelican was roughly 66%, about 8% higher than the median employment rate across the state (US Census 2020a). The estimated median income for Pelican households was $52,188 in 2020 (US Census 2020b). This was about $25,500 less than the median household income for Alaska overall in 2020 (US Census 2020a). The primary employment sectors in Pelican in 2020 were public administration/government (28%); agriculture, forestry, fishing, and hunting (28%); transportation, warehousing, and utilities (23%); and education, healthcare, and social work (21%) (US Census 2020b). This socioeconomic information for Pelican in 2020 is compared to that of the previous two US Census periods in **Table 4** below.

Table 4. Pelican Socioeconomic Statistics for 2000, 2010, and 2020 (US Census 2000, 2010, 2020a, 2020b)

Year	Population	Median Age	Percent of Population 65+	Median Household Income	Employment Rate	Family Poverty Rate	Households Qualified for SNAP
2000	163	41	11%	$48,750	64%	n/a	n/a
2010	88	54	17%	$44,750	49%	n/a	n/a
2020	98	48	21%	$52,188	66%	n/a	n/a

Most residents of Pelican rely on subsistence resources both as key sources of livelihood and a primary basis for their overall lifestyle (OSM 2022d). Proposals to provide for a meaningful subsistence priority against increased hunting competition should be approached with this in mind (SERAC 2023). Deer have been a key subsistence resource utilized by Pelican residents for many years (OSM 2022d, SERAC 2021a), and generally represent the most significant terrestrial source of meat for rural residents of southeast Alaska (Brinkman et al. 2009). Pelican residents participated in a baseline household subsistence survey documenting their harvest and use of deer and other wild resources in 1987 (ADF&G 2023b). There have been no other comprehensive subsistence studies of Pelican conducted since this time, but a new subsistence study of Pelican is scheduled to be carried out during the winter of 2023 (Sill 2023). Still, the data provided in the 1987 baseline study compares favorably to subsistence studies conducted in nearby Unit 4 communities around the same time (Leghorn and Kookesh 1987, Schroeder and Kookesh 1990). Ninety-one percent of Pelican households were shown to use deer, and deer ranked as the second most important resource in terms of bulk contribution to subsistence, trailing only non-salmon fish at the time (see **Table 5**). This study also illustrated the cultural importance of reciprocity and sharing of subsistence resources within the community, as sharing of subsistence resources and knowledge promotes sociality and future harvest success, while preventing potential wastage when subsistence foods are harvested in abundance (**Table 5**, Langdon and Worl 1981, Langdon 2021). The role of sharing to distribute subsistence-caught food within communities, and its contribution to peoples' survival over the generations has been described in detail by area residents during previous Southeast Council meetings, and more recent subsistence studies conducted in nearby communities (SERAC 2009, 2010, 2021a; Sill and Koster 2017). Though 91% of Pelican households reported using deer, a smaller percentage (63%) reported harvesting deer (**Table 5**). This data conforms to findings from subsistence studies conducted in many other rural Alaskan communities, where a smaller proportion of households

often harvest a larger percentage of local subsistence resources, which they share or trade with other households (Wolfe and Ellana 1983; Wolfe and Walker 1987).

Table 5. Average Harvest, Use, and Sharing of Deer by Pelican Households in 1987 Baseline Subsistence Study (ADF&G 2023b).

	Estimated Values for 1987
Population of Pelican	239
Percentage of Households Using Deer	91%
Percentage of Households Harvesting Deer	63%
Percentage of Households Giving Deer	45%
Percentage of Households Receiving Deer	59%
Total Deer Harvested	316
Average Harvest per Household (lbs.)	307
Average Harvest per Capita (lbs.)	105
Deer Rank in Contribution to Subsistence	2nd

In Pelican, as in similar Unit 4 communities, deer hunting strategies align with the species' yearly lifecycle (OSM 2022d). Fawns are born in late spring in trees edging muskeg or beach. In summer, deer move into the alpine areas until the fall when they enter mature forests. During winter, deer live in the forest below the snow line until heavy snows drive them down to the beaches where the forest fringe keeps the ground relatively snow free. Accordingly, there are three different hunting strategies that are associated with specific seasons, weather, geographical locations, and deer behavior in this area (George and Kookesh 1982). These strategies are broadly described as the Alpine Hunt, the Muskeg and Forest Hunt, and the Beach Hunt (George and Kookesh 1982). However, due to the generally steep and rugged landscape in Unit 4, beach and low elevation hunting is a preferred strategy (George and Kookesh 1982). Boats are used extensively to facilitate deer hunting trips to destinations that are reached along the marine passages from Pelican (SERAC 2021b). These hunting trips become particularly important in October and November, as food security can become a problem around this time (see **Table 6**).

The State deer hunting season in the proposal area runs from August through December. Subsistence users hunting under Federal regulations are permitted to harvest deer from August through January. Overall, most harvest in Unit 4 occurs later in the season, as snow forces deer to lower elevations where they are easier to harvest (OSM 2022d). Nearly half (45%) of the harvest in Unit 4 occurs during the month of November; and 67% occurs from September through November (see **Table 6**).

Table 6. Percentage of Unit 4 deer harvest by month and user type, 2000-2019 (ADF&G 2021).

Hunter type	August	September	October	**November**	December	January
Federally Qualified	6%	8%	16%	**40%**	23%	8%
Non-Federally Qualified	5%	6%	13%	**53%**	22%	0%
Overall	6%	7%	15%	**45%**	22%	5%

The cost of living in Pelican is high, like that of many similar communities in Unit 4, and many residents' incomes are limited (SERAC 2021b). Successful subsistence hunting and fishing is key to local livelihoods in these communities (SERAC 2021a). Though the deer population appears to be healthy on a game management wide level and close to carrying capacity in some parts of Unit 4, the proponents and other residents of Unit 4 have noted localized declines in deer populations in recent years, which have exacerbated issues of competition and conflict between different user groups in these areas (SERAC 2021a, 2021b). Residents have also suggested that deer populations within Unit 4 may not be tracked at a fine enough scale to consistently capture localized depletions, and that hunter effort and harvest reporting data tends to underestimate the amount of hunting effort taking place, and overestimate hunting success rates. (SERAC 2021a, 2021b). As one Pelican resident noted:

> I've lived in Pelican coming up on 30 years…Last year [2020], I shot one deer. And, my wife, my daughter, and I live on one fixed income, and we depend on our fish and our deer to eat. We have one ferry a month, if we're lucky. Alaska Sea Planes charges one dollar a pound [for shipping food]. We can't afford to go and buy the expensive beef and expensive food. Lately we've been going without food, and the increased [hunting] pressure in this area, along with the pressure of the bears has just totally hindered our hunting (SERAC 2021b: 505).

Likewise, another resident noted, "This is a low-income community. Subsistence hunting and fishing is really not optional for many folks here. Recent food scarcity has been exacerbated by the fact that our ferry service has been intermittent, and our food supply has been undependable because of that" (SERAC 2021a: 189–190). The Alaska State Ferry is scheduled to visit Pelican once a month from October through December, and March through April (Juneau Empire 2022). However, Pelican residents described the Alaska State ferry as unreliable and the stop at Pelican has been cancelled many times because of issues like ferry worker strikes, the pandemic, and mechanical problems (SERAC 2021a). The Ferry is also not scheduled to visit Pelican in January or February (Juneau Empire 2022). This has caused increasing concern about getting food in the community. It is also common for planes to Pelican to be cancelled because of bad weather. One Pelican resident explained, "You have to put up lots of food to sustain yourself" (SERAC 2021b: 68–69). However, residents have noted that increased hunting pressure can easily lead to issues of crowding, safety, and reduced hunter success due to the generally steep terrain and limited drainages in and around Lisianski Inlet (SERAC 2021a, 2021b). Overall, approximately 80% of the recent annual deer harvests in Unit 4 have been made by boat-based hunters (Bethune 2022a). Regarding the deer hunting situation in and around Pelican, one long-time resident commented:

> The big problem I see is the increased competition. There are more boats hunting, and more people coming in on the airlines and on the ferry and hunting locally…So, there's more competition in the [Lisianski] Inlet and more competition in the outer coastal areas. Large seine boats are coming up from Sitka, with three or four smaller boats attached and they're hunting areas that were traditionally hunted by people who had Forest Service lease cabins out in that area. So, there's more pressure all the way from Sitka to here. On the outer coast there's more space and area for deer than there is in the Inlet. The Inlet is restricted by limited drainages (SERAC 2021b: 503-504).

The resident continued, commenting on the impact of increased hunting competition and unreliable ferry service on local food security. She noted, "I'm also the Chairman of the Food Bank in Pelican, and in the last year we distributed over 2,000 pounds of food to residents of Pelican because of shortage of food…and because of the limited ferry service. So, I think it's important to know the degree which people in this area depend on wild game and fish" (SERAC 2021b: 504). Though prey switching among subsistence users has been a recorded method for coping with issues of competition and fluctuations in the availability of primary subsistence resources, a recent study among nineteen rural communities in the Yukon River drainage suggests that such strategies often do not provide substantial compensation for declining harvests of primary subsistence resources, and that the overall utility of prey switching may be complicated by policy restrictions, the increased time and effort required to harvest sufficient amounts of secondary resources, and/or simultaneous declines in secondary resources (Hansen et al. 2013).

Pelican residents have noted that deer harvests tend to vary somewhat from year-to-year, based on numerous environmental factors. Sometimes, after a heavy snowfall covers available browse, deer are observed on the beaches seeking food, but return to forested areas and higher elevations after it rains to take advantage of the browse in those areas (SERAC 2021a, 2021b). Some years, such as 2006 through 2008, deep prolonged snow coverage can result in significant deer over-winter mortality (SERAC 2021a, 2021b). Bears seeking deer can also scare deer off the beaches (SERAC 2021a, 2021b). One area resident noted, "The recent winters have been less severe with less snow which can impact whether the deer are being driven to the beach fringe or not. [Fewer deer sightings] may have been because the snow level was well above the beach fringe" (SERAC 2021b: 73). A different resident explained:

> I kind of live for deer and I wasn't able to get any last year. I'm getting too old to climb up to the top of the mountain so, you know, I do rely for them to be on the beaches. Anyway, last year I wasn't able to score any. So, I've been saying that the [deer] population, I don't know, it seems to be decreasing, if you ask me, and there's more pressure on them all the time (SERAC 2021b: 172).

However, some FQSUs and NFQUs have suggested that deer hunting issues currently being experienced by residents of places like Pelican stem from local preferences for beach hunting (SERAC 2021b). They note that the perception of localized declines in the Unit 4 deer population may be due to recent mild winters, which resulted in deer being spread-out through the forests rather than concentrated and easily observable on the beaches (SERAC 2021b). A resident of Juneau explained:

> I was out there [Unit 4] for six weeks last year…and you know, it was cold. It was cold and there wasn't much snow last year. So, if you wanted to get deer, you had to go into the woods. It's as simple as that… So, I thought we were pretty successful…When you did get into the woods and tried to walk around up in there, you were crunching through the little bit of frozen snow that was there…but there was a lot of sign [of deer] … Very seldom did we run the beaches. I mean that's, to me, not really hunting, but I understand for folks who are a little older. (SERAC 2021b: 174).

As this statement by the Juneau hunter alludes, hunting for some NFQUs is not just about the efficiency with which one can harvest a deer for food; it is also about the experience and sporting nature of the hunt. Still, other Pelican residents who hunted in areas beyond the beaches also found it difficult to harvest enough deer to meet their needs in 2020 (SERAC 2021a). For example, one resident explained, "I've hunted off the lower part of the hills, and I haven't had any luck this year" (SERAC 2021a: 19–20). Another resident commented, "I've been out in the hills hunting, and there is a definite lack of deer" (SERAC 2021b: 504).

Some Pelican residents have the resources to go out to the "outer coast" to seek deer and have been more successful, while others must stay closer to Pelican because they lack the appropriate boats and/or money for fuel required to travel further away (SERAC 2021a, 2021b). As researchers and residents have noted, most rural Alaskans now rely upon gasoline and motorized transportation to hunt, fish, and gather subsistence resources (Brinkman et al. 2014). A recent study of eight rural Alaskan communities in the Yukon Flats region quantified the significant impacts of rising fuel costs and depressed local economies among subsistence harvesters (Brinkman et al. 2014). Overall, 81% of the subsistence harvesters participating in the study noted that they had reduced the distance they traveled to conduct subsistence activities over the past ten years because of gasoline costs (Brinkman et al. 2014). Similarly, 89% of the study participants noted that they had reduced the number of yearly trips they took to conduct subsistence activities for the same reason (Brinkman et al. 2014). As the researchers explained:

> During the last ten years [2002 – 2012], the median distance traveled to perform subsistence decreased by 60%, and the median number of annual trips taken to perform subsistence decreased by 75%. The change in subsistence activity was similar across and within communities. Eighty-five percent of the people interviewed reported that they were making sacrifices with serious consequences, such as putting off paying monthly bills, to buy gasoline for subsistence activities. To adapt to high gasoline prices, most [study] participants said that they are using more efficient modes of transportation (69%), followed by more sharing of gasoline costs with family and friends (37%), and conducting more multipurpose subsistence trips (20%). With subsistence practices being critical to food security and cultural identity…our results suggest that unaffordable fuel has threatened social resilience [in this area] (Brinkman et al 2014: 18).

The previously discussed reduction in deer hunter days and harvests reported by Pelican residents during the most recent five-year reporting period could be at least partially related to the impact of rising fuel prices in an area with declining commercial fisheries employment and income earning opportunities (**Table 8**). These reductions in hunter effort and harvests are also related to the declining community population witnessed in this area since the 1990s (**Table 3**). Reductions in the number and distance of trips that Pelican residents can afford to take to harvest subsistence resources would almost certainly contribute to issues of user conflict and competition in the proposal area.

For some residents of Unit 4, there are also concerns that non-local hunters impact the success of local hunters in ways that go beyond competition and crowding. Some residents assert that non-local hunters, including hunters primarily seeking bear, often shoot at deer and miss, causing the deer to become more skittish and wary of all hunting presence. As one testifier explained, "You used to be able to drive up to

a deer, get out of the boat within reasonable range and take the deer. Now, you have to stop 400 or 500 yards away" (SERAC 2021a: 59), and "this is something my dad taught me, his dad taught him, and my mother's father taught me. If you shoot at a deer [and miss], you're never going to see that deer again. That's the nature of deer" (SERAC 2021b: 397).

Harvest History

Hunter harvest and effort reporting is another one of the suite of methods that managers use in combination to monitor deer population trends in Unit 4. As Bethune (2020: 15) notes, hunter harvest trends, particularly those observed at larger scales, typically reflect current deer population levels. However, hunter self-reported harvest and effort data should be analyzed cautiously, as reporting rates can be less than ideal (Bethune 2020). This is particularly the case in smaller rural communities where reporting rates are often much lower than elsewhere, sometimes less than 30% (Bethune 2020). Management staff typically call hunters to ask about their hunting efforts and harvests to try to achieve a 60% reporting rate when response rates are low. However, to account for hunters who do not report, data are proportionally expanded by community size (Bethune 2020). Therefore, "in small communities with low reporting rates, expanded data may be based on the reports of only a handful of hunters, resulting in a good deal of uncertainty about the [accuracy of] expanded data" (Bethune 2020: 16).

Additionally, there are several other reasons why harvest estimates often do not accurately represent the hunting efforts and success rates of residents in small, rural communities. First, residents of rural communities often under-report their harvesting because of differences in their interpretations of survey questions. This is a common phenomenon with survey questions, in which the particular lived experiences of respondents leads them to interpret questions differently than intended. For example, residents have noted that the State harvest reporting system used to measure hunting effort and success may be misleading because subsistence users often only document their successful hunts (SERAC 2021b). As one Unit 4 resident explained, "I question this [harvest success] information. When I complete a deer hunter survey, I only list actual deer harvested, and it is always a one-day hunt. I never list the number of times I hunt without success, and it may be three, four, or five times before I shoot a deer" (SERAC 2021b: 73).

Available harvest and effort data also does not specifically account for the impact of declining, ageing populations in communities like Pelican (SERAC 2021b). It would be reasonable to expect that a community's harvests, total number of hunters, and total days hunted would decrease as their population decreases (SERAC 2021b). However, the number of reported Pelican hunters as a percentage of overall community population has remained relatively stable for the years where data exists (see **Figure 4**).

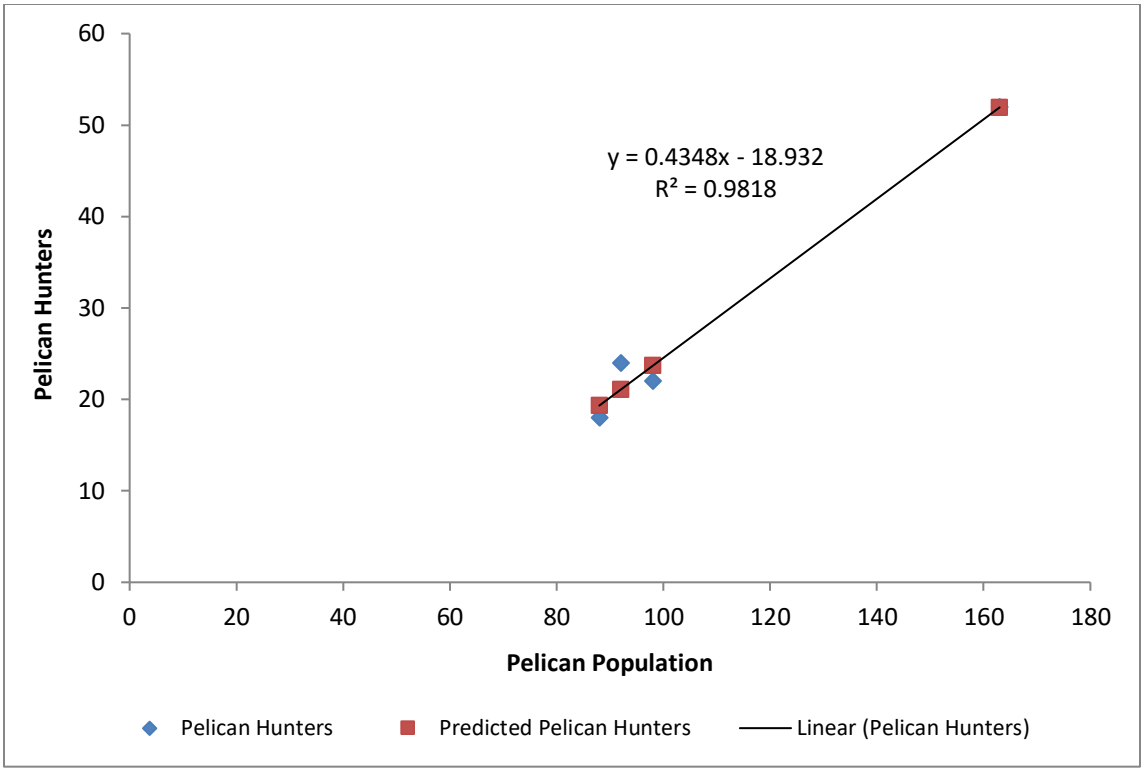

Figure 4. Relationship between reported number of Pelican Hunters and overall Population of Pelican in 2000, 2010, 2020, and 2021 (ADF&G 2021, ADCCED 2023)

Still, an ageing population of hunters might also be more reliant upon beach and low elevation hunts in an otherwise steep and rugged landscape. Declining community populations, however, do not explain local perceptions of increased hunting pressure. Though harvest reports and comprehensive subsistence survey data are often the only sources of quantitative information available on the harvest and use of wild resources by residents of small rural communities in Alaska, it is important to consider this type of quantitative information holistically, in combination with qualitative testimony of local users' observations and traditional ecological knowledge (SERAC 2021b).

ADF&G harvest data from 2000 through 2021 (ADF&G 2022c, ADF&G 2021) were used to try to gain some understanding of the deer harvest patterns and trends of FQSUs and NFQUs in the portion of northwestern Chichagof Island addressed by the proposal (i.e., the "proposal area"). Likewise, hunter effort was also measured as a function of the overall number of hunters and hunter-days. It should be noted that these measurements of hunter effort do not specifically account for potential confounding factors such as community population decline, weather, the price of gas, or hunter competition. Hunter harvest and effort measurements were grouped by Wildlife Analysis Area (WAA), which roughly correspond to major watersheds or other distinct geographic areas (see **Figure 2**). Since effort was calculated by WAA, individual hunters using multiple WAAs in a single regulatory year may have been counted multiple times and over-represented in these calculations.

According to the available data, from 2000 to 2021, approximately 71% of Pelican residents' reported deer harvests, and 66% of their reported hunting days took place within the WAAs encompassed by the

proposal area (see **Table 7**). The Yakobi Island (3418) and Upper Lisianski Inlet/Lisianski River (3419) WAAs accounted for roughly half of these harvests and hunting days, while a smaller percentage of Pelican hunting days and deer harvests took place within the West Coast Chichagof (3417) and Port Althorp/Lower Lisianski (3421) WAAs (**Table 7**). Pelican residents reported relatively minimal hunting occurring in WAAs located outside the proposal area (**Table 7**). However, the location of about 25% of the total reported harvest and 32% of the hunting days reported by Pelican residents during this time could not be determined from the information returned and is unknown. It is possible that some of this unknown harvest and harvest effort may have also taken place within the proposal area. Based on the distribution of reported deer harvest and hunting days by Pelican residents, proximity to Pelican appears to be a primary factor in selecting hunting locations (OSM 2022d).

Table 7. Distribution of Unit 4 Deer Hunting Effort and Harvest by Pelican Residents by Wildlife Analysis Area (WAA), 2000-2021 (ADF&G 2021, 2022c).

WAAs Within Proposal Area	Total Harvest	Days Hunted	Percent Harvest	Percent Days Hunted
3417 WEST COAST CHICHAGOF	163.6	284.2	12%	13%
3418 YAKOBI IS.	387.6	439.7	28%	20%
3419 UPPER LISIANSKI INLET, LISIANSKI RIVER	370.7	659.8	27%	30%
3421 PORT ALTHORP, LOWER LISIANSKI, INIAN IS.	60.3	76.8	4%	3%
Total within Proposal Area	982.2	1460.5	71%	66%

WAAs Outside Proposal Area	Total Harvest	Days Hunted	Percent Harvest	Percent Days Hunted
3002 SITKA ROAD SYSTEM	1.5	1.5	<1%	<1%
3003 SILVER BAY, DEEP INLET	4.5	4.5	<1%	<1%
3312 DUFFIELD PENIN., BEAR BAY	3.7	1.8	<1%	<1%
3314 FISH BAY DRAINAGES	2.9	1.5	<1%	<1%
3416 KHAZ PENIN., SLOCUM ARM	7.4	4.5	<1%	<1%
3526 NORTH SHORE TENAKEE INLET	1.8	1.8	<1%	<1%
3629 SOUTHERN SHORE TENAKEE INLET	4.7	7.9	<1%	<1%
3731 KELP BAY-TAKATZ BAY	1.6	1.6	<1%	<1%
3733 WHALE BAY DRAINAGES, WILDERNESS COAST	9.8	0	<1%	0%
3835 NORTHERN MANSFIELD PENIN.	3.4	3.4	<1%	<1%
4041 WHITEWATER BAY, WILSON COVE	1.7	1.7	<1%	<1%
4252 HUMPBACK, GALLAGHER CREEKS	5.7	5.7	<1%	<1%
Total Outside Proposal Area	48.7	35.9	4%	2%
Total (Known Harvest Area)	1030.9	1496.4	75%	68%
Unknown Harvest Area	355.7	733.1	25%	32%

Based on the reported data, an average of approximately 147 users hunted for 535 days, harvesting a total of 248 deer within the WAAs encompassed by the proposal area each year from 2000 to 2021 (see **Table 8**). However, the total number of hunters, hunter days, and deer harvested in this area by both FQSUs and NFQUs was variable between years (see **Table 8**). In most years, FQSUs harvested more

deer from the WAAs encompassed by the proposal area due to the larger number of hunters present in this group. On average, roughly 57% of all hunters utilizing the proposal area each year were FQSUs (**Table 8**). However, over half of the FQSUs that reported hunting in the proposal area each year came from outside of Pelican (**Table 8**). The data also shows a decreasing proportion of FQSUs in the proposal area over time, coupled with an increasing proportion of NFQUs (**Table 8**). This change corresponds with the declining population witnessed in Pelican and other nearby rural communities during this period. The largest proportion of NFQUs hunting in the proposal area each year came from Juneau (35% on average). Other NFQUs typically composed about 8% of all hunters each year (ADF&G 2021).

The estimated yearly data on harvests within the WAAs encompassed by the proposal area shows similar trends between 2000 and 2021 (**Table 8**). On average, Pelican residents were responsible for about 18% of the harvests taking place within in this area each year, while other FQSUs were generally responsible for about 41% of the harvests (**Table 8**). NFQUs were also responsible for approximately 41% of harvests in this area each year (**Table 8**). The reported harvest by non-residents within this area each year was relatively small (ADF&G 2021). However, the location of about 24% of the harvests by non-residents in Unit 4 could not be determined from the information returned and is unknown for this period.

The estimated data on hunter days spent in the WAAs encompassed by the proposal area each year between 2000 and 2021 exhibits a somewhat different trend (**Table 8**). NFQUs spent more days hunting in the area during fifteen of the twenty-two years in this period (**Table 8**). However, the overall average yearly difference in hunting days between FQSUs and NFQUs is relatively small (**Table 8**). On average, NFQUs were responsible for about 51% of hunter days spent in the proposal area each year (**Table 8**). Pelican residents were responsible for about 12% of hunter days spent in the proposal area each year, while other FQSUs were responsible for 36% of hunter days in the proposal area (**Table 8**). The generally higher number of hunting days spent in the proposal area by NFQUs could be an indication that FQSUs are more efficient harvesters in this area, NFQUs are engaging in other activities while hunting or engaging different hunting methods, the population of nearby communities like Pelican has been decreasing over time, or issues like rising gasoline prices have been restricting local hunting efforts.

Overall, each user group reported declines in average yearly hunters, hunter days, and harvests in the WAAs encompassed by the proposal area between the 2001-2005 reporting period and the 2016-2020 reporting periods (**Table 8**). Among the different user groups, Pelican hunters reported the greatest percent declines in average yearly hunters (-56% or -23 hunters), hunter days (-64% or -70 hunter days), and harvests (-54% or -38 deer) between these two reporting periods (see **Table 8**).

Table 8. Estimated hunting effort and harvest by user group within the Wildlife Analysis Areas encompassed by the proposal area during recent five-year reporting periods (ADF&G 2021).

Year	Pelican Hunters	Pelican Hunter Days	Pelican Harvests	Other FQSU Hunters	Other FQSU Hunter Days	Other FQSU Harvests	NFQU Hunters	NFQU Hunter Days	NFQU Harvests	Total Hunters	Total Hunter Days	Total Harvests
2000	52	99	52	96	211	92	88	534	97	236	844	241
2001	62	142	108	63	307	118	54	272	102	179	721	327
2002	37	123	71	65	144	91	61	281	82	163	548	244
2003	44	83	64	94	285	163	66	204	132	204	573	359
2004	38	144	77	59	148	113	79	349	150	177	640	340
2005	19	53	34	74	215	150	60	311	144	153	579	328
5 Year Average	**40**	**109**	**70**	**71**	**220**	**127**	**64**	**283**	**122**	**175**	**612**	**319**
2006	15	44	34	59	137	110	76	400	138	149	580	282
2007	20	23	11	35	98	45	39	179	29	94	300	86
2008	24	38	55	54	113	19	43	152	81	121	303	155
2009	30	70	43	40	127	52	48	173	62	117	370	157
2010	18	35	27	84	410	169	68	218	94	170	663	290
5 Year Average	**21**	**42**	**34**	**54**	**177**	**79**	**55**	**224**	**81**	**130**	**443**	**194**
2011	26	193	61	80	346	155	77	287	140	183	826	356
2012	19	57	31	50	140	103	45	161	72	114	358	206
2013	16	35	30	48	236	134	66	316	110	130	587	274
2014	17	59	34	60	163	89	64	261	89	141	483	212
2015	15	34	35	29	149	76	85	348	160	129	531	271
5 Year Average	**19**	**76**	**38**	**53**	**207**	**111**	**67**	**275**	**114**	**139**	**557**	**264**
2016	19	42	46	47	173	125	69	288	125	135	503	296
2017	19	41	37	43	116	89	50	225	79	112	382	205
2018	17	35	29	48	154	72	63	281	93	128	470	194
2019	11	31	21	59	188	114	54	185	67	124	404	202
2020	22	45	29	43	239	90	72	287	91	137	571	210
5 Year Average	**18**	**39**	**32**	**48**	**174**	**98**	**62**	**253**	**91**	**127**	**466**	**221**
2021	24	36	55	41	158	80	64	298	83	129	492	218
Overall Average	**26**	**66**	**45**	**58**	**194**	**102**	**63**	**273**	**101**	**147**	**535**	**248**

Though NFQUs composed a significant proportion of the hunters utilizing the WAAs encompassed by the proposal area each year between 2000 and 2021, the proposal area accounted for a relatively small amount of NFQUs' overall hunting efforts and harvests within Unit 4 as a whole (ADF&G 2021, 2022c). Approximately 4% (1,387 users) of all NFQUs' reported hunting in the WAAs encompassed by the proposal area between 2000 and 2021. NFQUs reported spending about 5% (6,005 days) of all their hunting days in Unit 4 within this area during this time (ADF&G 2021, 2022c). Likewise, roughly 6% (2,220 deer) of all deer reported harvested by NFQUs in Unit 4 from 2000 - 2021 were taken from this area (ADF&G 2021, 2022c). WAA 3417 (West Coast Chichagof) was the portion of the proposal area most heavily utilized by NFQUs during this time, accounting for roughly half of all their hunting efforts and harvests in the WAAs encompassed by the proposal area (ADF&G 2021, 2022c). Only a small portion of WAA 3417 would be closed under the current proposal.

Other Alternatives Considered

Harvest limit reduction: The current proposal (WP24-06) responds to critiques of an earlier, similar proposal (WP22-10) where the proposed harvest limit reduction to four deer for NFQUs was not considered likely to provide for a meaningful conservation benefit or to substantially improve the success rates of FQSUs (SERAC 2021b). Recently reported data shows that relatively few NFQUs take their full harvest limit in this area (OSM 2022d). A harvest limit reduction that allows for the taking of more than one deer by NFQUs would probably not reduce issues of competition and crowding in and around the proposal area during the proposed closure period.

Reduce extent of closure area and/or period of closure: The current proposal represents the outcome of significant consideration of this option. It is intended to limit the proposed closure area to the location most utilized by Pelican residents and other nearby FQSUs (**Table 7**). The current proposal also limits the length of the closure to a relatively short period of time considered most important to local FQSUs. These reductions could help minimize competition and conflicts between user groups in Pelican's most heavily utilized deer hunting areas, while displacing fewer NFQUs. However, there are portions of the proposed closure area that may not be as essential to local subsistence deer hunting efforts. It may be worth considering further reducing the size of the proposed closure area or period of closure, particularly in light of another current proposal (WP24-05) seeking to close a portion of northeast Chichagof Island to NFQUs during the same time period.

Working Group: One alternative considered during previous deliberations on similar proposals, WP22-07, -08, -09/10, was to establish a Unit 4 deer working group. This suggestion was mentioned by some Southeast Council members and public testifiers during the fall 2021 Southeast meeting (OSM 2022a). Developing a "Unit 4 deer management strategy," which was also suggested multiple times during the fall 2021 Southeast Council meeting (OSM 2022a). It was suggested that this alternative would allow consideration of deer harvest and hunter competition issues in Unit 4 on a more holistic and longer timescale. It would also enable all alternatives to be considered and could help bring user groups together for discussion and compromise.

Since this time, a "North Unit 4 Deer Working Group" has been established under the guidance of the Hoonah Indian Association Environmental Programs (HIA Environmental 2023). The first meeting of this group was held on March 15. The stated goals for the group are to:

> Complete annual community surveys on deer harvest and use by training people in the communities to do the work; (2) Understand if/how competition is impacting subsistence use of deer on north Chichagof; (3) Collect deer data through camera traps in overwintering areas to begin to get trend data for deer numbers; (4) Host meetings where managers, community members, and non-community members can discuss their deer harvest needs; and (5) Increase community understanding of how harvest reporting is used in management with the goal of increasing community reporting (HIA Environmental 2023).

This working group should provide important information to consider regarding current and future proposals to change Unit 4 deer regulations. It will be important to integrate this information into analyses and deliberations as it becomes available.

Effects of the Proposal

The proponents have asserted that the continuation of subsistence and meaningful rural preference is under threat from increasing competition from NFQUs in and around Pelican. If the Board adopts this proposal, it will restrict NFQUs from hunting deer in the proposal area from Nov. 1-15. This could potentially provide FQSUs in the area with an enhanced subsistence harvest opportunity, by reducing user competition and conflict during a period of peak hunter effort and harvest that is particularly important for a community that has recently faced food security issues. The proponents have noted that competition can significantly restrict access to favored deer hunting sites located in narrow embayments. November is the month when the greatest amount of federally qualified and non-federally qualified hunter effort and harvest has taken place in Unit 4 in recent years. Weather conditions are typically favorable for hunting and meat processing, deer provide the highest quality and amount of meat, and deer are generally more susceptible to harvest during this time.

Adopting the proposed closure could lead to increased harvest effort by NFQUs before and after the closure period. The proposed closure could also lead to increased hunting pressure and user conflicts along beaches, as areas below the high tide line are State-managed lands. The proponents, however, note that beach hunting generally takes place after the proposed closure period and above the high tide line in this area. Still, the proposed closure could create enforcement concerns related to this issue. Adopting the proposal would also prevent NFQUs with local ties to the area from directly participating in deer hunting during the period of closure, but they would still be able to help in other ways such as with meat processing.

While deliberating similar proposals (WP22-07, -08, -09/10) during the previous wildlife cycle, some Southeast Council members expressed concern over the potential displacement of NFQUs to other areas of Unit 4 if these proposals were to be adopted. These Council members were particularly concerned about potential displacement creating similar problems elsewhere if all three deer proposals under consideration at the time were to be adopted (SERAC 2021b). This issue remains a concern with the

current proposal (WP24-06) and a similar proposal (WP24-05) to close an area of northeast Chichagof Island to NFQUs during the same time-period.

OSM PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

Oppose WP24-06.

Justification

Deer have been and continue to be very important to local subsistence livelihoods and lifestyles for FQSUs living in the Pelican area. Many area residents have noted that they have had to change their deer hunting methods to focus their efforts much closer to home, as it has become too expensive and dangerous to travel further without appropriate boats and fuel. Local knowledge attests to the fact that only a limited number of boats and users can hunt in narrow bays and other preferred locations due to issues of access and resource competition in these areas. Residents of Pelican and similar communities have also noted that deer populations within Unit 4 may not be tracked at a fine enough scale to consistently capture localized depletions that exacerbate issues of competition and user conflict. Residents have also explained that hunter effort and harvest reporting tend to underestimate the amount of hunting effort taking place, and overestimate hunting success rates. There is data presented in this analysis that supports these arguments, suggesting that rates of competition for deer in the proposal area in recent years may be impacting the success and efficiency of Pelican residents who have had to focus their deer hunting efforts closer to home.

However, it is still not clear that the current levels of competition created by NFQUs in the proposal area pose an imminent threat to the continuation of subsistence at this time, or that the current proposal is the best way to solve the issues being faced by Pelican residents. NFQUs compose a large proportion the hunters utilizing the proposal area each year. However, based on reported data, WAA 3417 (West Coast Chichagof) appears to be the portion of the proposal area most heavily utilized by NFQUs, accounting for roughly half of all their reported hunting efforts and harvests in the proposal area between 2000 and 2021. Only a small portion of WAA 3417 would be closed under the current proposal, and it is not clear whether this portion of WAA 3417 is a significant hunting location for NFQUs.

It is also not clear that the proposed closure would significantly curtail beach hunting by NFQUs, as the area of the beach located below the mean high tide mark is state-managed land and would remain open during the proposed closure period. Beach hunting appears to be a favored means of hunting for many types of users throughout Unit 4. A closure in the proposal area may have the unintended consequence of promoting increased hunting of the beaches below the mean high tide line by NFQUs. There may be more effective avenues to address this issue. It is also not clear to what extent NFQUs engage in other hunting methods such as muskeg/forest and alpine hunts, and whether these hunting efforts also represent a substantial source of competition for FQSUs in the proposal area. Adopting this proposal would also prevent NFQUs with local ties to the area from directly participating in deer hunting with local family and friends during the period of closure. However, these users would be able to participate in other ways, such as assisting with meat processing.

Interpretations of the information presented in this analysis are also complicated by a number of interrelated issues. Recent mild winters in the area may have resulted in fewer deer being easily visible on beaches, giving the appearance of localized declines in the deer population and/or increased competition for deer. There are limitations in the hunter harvest and effort reporting framework, as well as the regularity and reliability of reported data. Recent human population declines in communities like Pelican exacerbate issues with harvest and effort analyses, as population declines may be misinterpreted as a lack of hunting effort when compared to the harvest and effort data compiled for previous years. Overall, the Office of Subsistence Management feels that more information is still needed from a greater sample of the local population to determine whether a closure to NFQUs is necessary, and exactly where that closure should be located. OSM hopes to receive this type of information through additional meetings of the Southeast Council and the North Unit 4 Deer Working Group.

WRITTEN PUBLIC COMMENTS

To whom it may concern,

I am writing in regards to the following proposals:

Admiralty: WP24-04
Chichagof (Hoonah): WP24-05
Lisianski (Pelican): WP24-06

I am a lifelong Alaskan who lives in Juneau. I hunt in the Pelican area described in the proposal, but would like to speak to all of the proposals. I would suggest, as someone who hunts the Pelican area every year for last ~10 years, that the last few years have been much more difficult to harvest deer during the fall. This has likely caused these communities for look for someone to blame. Juneau (or non-local) hunters are an easy target; however, I do not believe the correct one.

I am deeply sympathetic to the needs of individuals living in the small communities of Southeast Alaska. The hardships endured by these folks are very real. However, I do not see limiting hunting access as a solution. Every study that has ever looked at the topic has found that hunter predation on the Sitka Blacktail Deer population in Southeast Alaska has found that hunting is an insignificant contribution to loss of deer. I certainly understand that it would be challenging for a local from any of these communities to see hunters not from their town leaving with deer, when they themselves haven't been able to harvest deer.

I believe the explanation for the apparent "shortage" of deer has been warmer winter weather not producing as much snow, especially in the early season. For many of these small communities, hunting is performed by driving a boat around looking for deer on beaches. Without enough snow to drive the deer down off of the mountains, I have seen less deer on beaches in the last few years. However, if one is willing to go into the woods, there are plenty of deer to be found at higher elevations. This matches with any of the recent deer surveys suggesting there are no major drops in deer populations in these regions.

I believe that these smaller communities hope for plentiful, easy to shoot deer on the beaches will not happen regardless of whether these proposals are passed or not. It will depend more on whether there are early and heavy snowfalls. I would respectfully request that you reject all of these proposals as I believe they would not address the proposed concerns, and would unfairly limit one group of Alaskan's access to a plentiful resource.

-Justin Dorn
Juneau, Alaska

Hello --

I am writing in reference to the above proposal regarding the closure of the above to Juneau residents.

We have a homesite down the Inlet towards Phonograph Creek which my parents acquired in the early 80's and built a small cabin. As the years passed, I was able to make improvements to the homesite as well as establish a floating dock and pier for easier access. My family has spent and continues to spend countless hours out there during the summers, the Fall and into the Winter months, hunting, fishing and enjoying the beauty of the area and all that the land provides. Our grandchildren now enjoy feeling of wonder and excitement every time they join us. They have an opportunity to "unplug" and enjoy all of that too. If this proposal is passed, then they (and we) would be limited in our ability to help them enjoy the area as well as teach them to hunt, fish and enjoy a slower pace in life. Please do not pass this proposal and limit this ability to see all that is available to them in the area.

Sincerely,
Dwight Robidoux
br2@gci.net (907)
209-6017

This proposal, if approved, would close deer hunting on Federal public lands draining into a large part of the Pelican area, between November 1st and November 15th, except by Federally qualified subsistence users.

The apparent reason for this proposal is not a conservation issue but a perceived notion that **only** non-federally qualified users are making it difficult for Pelican's Federally qualified subsistence users to meet their subsistence needs in one, specific, two week period. This proposal did not consider the same difficulties created by groups of Federally qualified subsistence users from outside of the Pelican area who hunt in the same area and time period. Anchoring boats in small bays and causing deer to be more skittish and wary **is not limited** to just non-federally qualified users.

With the exception of Juneau, all residents in the Northern Southeast Alaska Region are Federally qualified subsistence users. Some of the local cabins are owned by a small number of Juneau residents who hunt in the Pelican area. Through observation and without documentation, it is hard to accept that a small number of the Southeast region's non-federally qualified residents **alone** have made it difficult for Pelican residents to meet their subsistence needs by hunting during this specific two week period.

Considering that the abundance of deer in the Pelican area has been documented by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and the unsubstantiated difficulties stated, this proposal should not be approved.

Submitted by: Al Steininger

June 15, 2023

Norm Carson
PO Box 98
Pelican, AK 99832

Federal Subsistence Board Office of Subsistence Management
Attn: Theo Matuskowitz
1011 E. Tudor Road, MS-121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199

RE: Proposal 24-6

I am adamantly opposed to this proposal. I first came to Pelican in 1966 as a college kid working at the cold storage. In the fall of 1968 I was hired by the Alaska State Troopers. Obviously, I had to depart Pelican for work reasons, but between 1966 and 2022 I deer hunted every year in the areas around Pelican described in this proposal. In the mid-80's my wife and I acquired a 3 acre parcel along Lisianski Inlet not far from Pelican. Later we would inherit my parents home in Pelican, and then later purchase another home in Pelican.

We have two sons, one recently retired from the Alaska State Troopers and another with about 7 years to go to retirement from the same agency. Both boys hunted with myself and my parents for deer in this proposal area. The oldest son resides in Juneau and has hunted out here for many years; under this proposal he would be excluded. Our younger son is about to transfer to Bethel and would also be excluded. The time frame within this proposal mirrors the time of the fall the boys joined us for a family tradition of deer hunting and a time to be together. Mid-November is also the time the Alaska Marine Highway System traditionally schedules a ferry from Juneau to Pelican.

Back in 2021 the State Board voted down a similar proposal; has anything changed to warrant a reversal? I say no; we have more deer and the # of hunters has not increased. We have a home along Lisianski Inlet and I can say we have not seen any increase in hunting pressure since 2021; we have seen a continued healthy number of deer. I will also point out that since the 2021 proposal was voted down there has not been a local referendum on this matter. Why have the local hunters not been asked for an opinion before this proposal was brought up again?

As it stands now, the State regulations provide a substantial restriction on non-resident hunters. A non-resident is required to purchase a $160 hunting license and buy a deer tag for each deer harvested at $300. Add to the license/tag expense a one way airplane ticket from Juneau costs $287.00. The presenter offered several subjective reasons for this proposal, here are a few:

- **This proposal is to establish a meaningful preference for the continuation of subsistence uses of deer. Pelican residents depend on deer and are experiencing difficulty meeting their subsistence needs——-**
  —Their was no offering of data to support this. How many local hunters are there?
  —How many hunters were not harvesting deer?
  —How many deer does it take to meet their subsistence needs? Between August 1 and January 31st local hunters could not harvest enough deer to feed their family! Is there data to support this?
  —Pelican just saw the opening of a general store by year round residents; The owner is submitting the paperwork necessary to accept SNAP payment for persons of low income.

- **Non-Federally-qualified anchor boats in small bays which inhibits access to traditional hunting areas by subsistence users.**
  —After over 50 years of hunting in the proposal area I can not recall any boats anchored overnight in the bays. Is the presenter suggesting the boat is there for an extended number of days? I have never seen this. Is there a log book or photos to substantiate this statement? Actually I can not think of many places in the proposal area I would want to anchor over night in November.

- **Non-Federally-qualified users may also decrease the success of subsistence users if they shoot deer and miss causing the deer to be more skittish and wary.**
  —What may happen is not a valid reason to deny other Alaska residents of their right to hunt. Actually, I did find a 2 point buck about 5 years ago, dead and floating in the inlet. As it turned out, a local Pelican resident messed up and did not adequately check on the deer he shot on the beach. At that time I posted a photo of this on a community bulletin board.

- **High fuel costs, depressed economy, small boats and inclimate weather also affect the ability of Pelican residents to meet their subsistence needs. They cannot afford to have many unsuccessful hunts or to travel far from their community to hunt deer because of these safety and economic concerns.**
  —High fuel costs are the same for everyone whether from Juneau or Pelican. For years I hunted all of this area out of a 14' Lund; very economical with a small outboard. Us Pelican residents have the upper hand when it comes to weather; we can hunt the good days while others are still trying to get to Pelican. Weather deters Juneau based hunters from traveling to Pelican.
  —"Travel far from their community", this proposal encompasses an inlet 22 miles long and straits about another 11 miles long. Why advocate closing such a large area if the local hunters can not afford to travel very far?
  —Depressed economy, there are jobs going unfilled by locals! Homes with multiple family members receive multiple PFD's. I do not characterize Pelican as a community on the edge of a food shortage.
  —Safety concerns? What are they?

- **Non-Federally-qualified users exacerbate these concerns by obstructing access, competing for deer, and potentially altering deer behavior all of which decreases chances of successful subsistence hunts and hinder the continuation of subsistence uses.**

—All of this is generalized opinion. There is no data to substantiate the obstructing of access, or competing for deer; what are the ADF&G stats on this? How many Juneau residents hunted this area? "Potentially" is not justification. There is no demonstration of the hindering the continuation of subsistence uses; us locals can hunt until the end of January.

- **Subsistence hunting focuses on efficiency. The proposed two week closure window in early November is the most efficient time for subsistence deer hunting in Unit 4 for several reasons:**
  —First. The deer are still fat providing the highest quality and amount of meat.
  —Second. The deer are in the rut making them more vulnerable to harvest.
  —Third. Weather conditions are favorable for proper meat care and processing.
  —None of these points are justifiable reasons to exclude Alaska residents. ANILCA requires a conservation issue, not whether the species is fat, in the rut, or if the weather conditions are favorable for taking care of the meat.
- **Deer are primarily pushed to beaches by heavy snowfalls which usually occur after the requested closure period in early November. Additionally, much of the proposed closure area is extremely steep and does not contain many beaches. Lastly, when deer are on the beaches they are usually feeding above the mean high tide line, which is under Federal jurisdiction.**
  —The area in this proposal actually contains approximately 75 miles of shoreline. There are approximately 50 beaches and small coves that invite hunting access. I have harvested numerous deer on the beach under legal means to do so.
  —Behind State subdivided lots there is a substantial number of acres of State land. This proposal will encourage non-federally qualified substance hunters to access those acres; so along with beach hunting there will be more "skittish deer".

For such a serious matter as denying Juneau based hunters access to hunting in two weeks of November, this proposal is based upon opinion and hyperbole. I urge the council **not** to pass this proposal; leave State regulations for the sport season and Federal for the extended subsistence season.

Norm Carson

Attention: Federal Subsistence Board

Office of Subsistence Management

(Attn: Theo Matuskowitz)

1011 E. Tudor Road, MS-121

Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199

Email: subsistence@fws.gov
Fax: (907) 786-3898

Regarding: WP24-06 SE Deer 4 Pelican area - close to non-federally qualified users Nov. 1-15 19, to close a portion of Chichagof Island around Pelican from Nov 1-15.

Expressing my opposition to a deer hunting law that is not about deer hunting...

A short while ago I attended an event at the Pelican community hall featuring local youngsters singing and playing instruments. It was a nice event and performance. I noticed how the kids seemed enthusiastic. Not like when I was going to school in Pelican and there were always a few of the guys who were "too cool" to perform... these kids seemed happy to have the opportunity to participate. It was nice.

And then I wondered... How many of these kids will find it necessary to leave Pelican when they graduate high school (assuming they stay even that long)? There aren't really any legitimate opportunity's for work or life opportunities in Pelican anymore... Not since Pelican Cold Storage closed many years ago. The town has shrunk to a fraction of the size it was when I was a kid and barely struggles along by anyones honest assessment.

In the good old days we would bring loads of fat king salmon, halibut and black cod in to fill the freezers and ship out on the barge. There was lots of money to be made then. There were other young people around too and fun to be had... not so much now.

It struck me as sad, that these kids might hunt with their family and friends growing up here, but then find it necessary to go to a larger town to find work, or a life... and that they then would be shut out from deer hunting in the traditional place that they had hunted growing up.

That these kids would upon leaving suddenly become second class citizens in a place they regard as home, because they needed to find a way to make a living, because they found they had to leave to find opportunity, because a small town in bush Alaska just won't offer enough so that a person can support a family, buy property or save for retirement.

These kids that have to leave... If they have kids, and their parents still lived in the village, they wouldn't be able to bring their kids home to hunt with the grandparents. If they did that it would be a federal crime. So there is no way to pass down the tradition.

The federal substance laws perfectly break the bond of culture and traditions around subsistence living that rural Alaskans cherish. The Feds are good at doing that it seems. destroying communities and cultures.

This proposed law is not about the need of local people to get extra time to catch deer. They are already here year round, all that they have is time!

I will resist the urge to go into further details regarding what I think is really going on. Suffice to say, this is a bad idea that will destroy something I thought was important.

Best Regards,

Denny Corbin

Sunnyside, Alaska

June 15, 2023

Federal Subsistence Board Office of Subsistence Management

Attn: Theo Matuskowitz

1011 E. Tudor Road, MS-121

Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199

RE: WP24-6

Lisianski Deer Restriction

I moved to Alaska in 1985 and resided in Juneau for almost 30 years. I moved to the Lower 48 for personal reasons. Five years ago i returned to Alaska and purchased a home in Pelican. I am presently employed in Pelican helping remodel a private home.

I have always been an avid hunter and fisherman; I was involved in subsistence hunting and fishing. I hunted to put food on my table in my first 30 years in Alaska.

A recent study by the Department of Fish & Game states the deer population in the area of Lisianski Inlet & Strait is not at all threatened. In years past I have experienced regulation changes by the ADF&G when they felt it necessary to protect the deer population; this is not the current situation.

WP24-6 would restrict deer hunting in the Lisianski area between November 1 and 15to only those residents meeting the qualifications for a Rural Qualified Hunter. Only the residents of two communities in Southeast do not meet the rural standard; those would be of Juneau and Ketchikan.

In the past 5 years I have seen plenty of deer along the shores of Lisianski Inlet. All experienced hunters in Southeast understand that weather conditions and individual effort determine success or failure.

By current statistics, the deer population is flourishing and subsistence hunters are more successful now than in previous years.

I ask that WP24-6 not be passed.

Sincerely,

Steve Christensen
General Delivery
Block 1, Lot 7
Pelican AK 99832

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WP24-01 Executive Summary	
General Description	Proposal WP24-01 is a request to allow the sale of brown bear hides. *Submitted by: Kaleb Rowland*
Proposed Regulation	**§___.25 Subsistence taking of fish, wildlife, and shellfish: general regulations** *(j) Utilization of fish, wildlife, or shellfish* *. . .* *(13) You may sell the raw/untanned and tanned hide or cape from a legally harvested **brown bear**, caribou, deer, elk, goat, moose, musk ox, and sheep.*
OSM Preliminary Conclusion	**Support** Proposal WP24-01 **with modification** to allow the sale of brown bear hides with claws attached in areas where the Federal harvest limit is two bears every regulatory year and after first obtaining a permit available at the time of sealing from an ADF&G sealing officer. The modified regulation should read: **§___.25 Subsistence taking of fish, wildlife, and shellfish: general regulations** *(j) Utilization of fish, wildlife, or shellfish* *. . .* *(13) You may sell the raw/untanned and tanned hide or cape from a legally harvested caribou, deer, elk, goat, moose, musk ox, sheep, **and brown bear with claws attached harvested in an area with a two brown bear limit per regulatory year in Federal regulations only after first obtaining a permit at the time of sealing from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.***
Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Recommendation	
Southcentral Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Recommendation	

WP24-01 Executive Summary	
Kodiak/Aleutians Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Recommendation	
Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Recommendation	
Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Recommendation	
Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Recommendation	
Seward Peninsula Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Recommendation	
Northwest Arctic Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Recommendation	
Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Recommendation	
North Slope Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Recommendation	
Interagency Staff Committee Comments	
ADF&G Comments	

WP24-01 Executive Summary	
Written Public Comments	**None**

DRAFT STAFF ANALYSIS
WP24-01

ISSUE

Proposal WP24-01, submitted by Kaleb Rowland of McCarthy, Alaska, is a request to allow the sale of brown bear hides.

DISCUSSION

The proponent states federally qualified subsistence users in many areas of Alaska must salvage the hides of brown bears, however, the hides must not be sold. The proponent continues that the hides of many other legally harvested big game species may be sold, and brown bears should be added to this regulation.

Existing Federal Regulation

> **§___.25 Subsistence taking of fish, wildlife, and shellfish: general regulations**[1]
>
> *(j) Utilization of fish, wildlife, or shellfish*
>
> . . .
>
> *(13) You may sell the raw/untanned and tanned hide or cape from a legally harvested caribou, deer, elk, goat, moose, musk ox, and sheep.*

Proposed Federal Regulation

> **§___.25 Subsistence taking of fish, wildlife, and shellfish: general regulations**
>
> *(j) Utilization of fish, wildlife, or shellfish*
>
> . . .
>
> *(13) You may sell the raw/untanned and tanned hide or cape from a legally harvested* ***brown bear****, caribou, deer, elk, goat, moose, musk ox, and sheep.*

[1] Sections of the regulatory booklet produced for the public that describe legal utilization of brown bears are incorrect. The Code of Federal Regulations regarding the utilization of brown bears are correctly reflected in the **Appendix**.

Existing State Regulation

5 AAC 92.200—Purchase and sale of game

. . .

(b) Except as provided in 5 AAC 92.031, a person may not purchase, sell, advertise, or otherwise offer for sale:

(1) any part of a brown bear, except an article of handicraft made from the fur of a brown bear, and except skulls and hides with claws attached of brown bears harvested in areas where the bag limit is two bears per regulatory year by permit issued under 5 AAC 92.031;*

***Note**: The harvest limit for a resident hunting in Units 16B, 17, 19A, 19D, 20E, 21, 22A, 22B, 22D, 22E, 23, 24B, 25D, and 26A is two brown bears per regulatory year. A person may not take more than one brown bear, statewide, in any regulatory year, except that in these units, a person may take two brown bears per regulatory year (*5 AAC 92.132 Bag limit for brown bears*).

5 AAC 92.031 - Permit for selling skins, skulls, and trophies

. . .

(g) A person may sell, advertise, or otherwise offer for sale a skull or hide with claws attached of a brown bear harvested in an area where the bag limit is two brown bears per regulatory year only after first obtaining a permit from the department. Any advertisement must include the permit number assigned by the department, and the department will permanently mark all hides and skulls intended for sale. All bears sold under this permit must be reported to the department within the time frame specified on the permit.*

***Note**: A "Permit to Sell a Brown/Grizzly Bear Hide and/or Skull" is available at the time of sealing from the sealing officer.

Extent of Federal Public Lands

Federal public lands comprise approximately 54% of Alaska and consist of 20% U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service managed lands, 15% Bureau of Land Management managed lands, 14% National Park Service managed lands, and 6% U.S. Forest Service managed lands.

Customary and Traditional Use Determinations

This is a statewide proposal. For more information refer to the customary and traditional use determinations at *§___.24 Customary and traditional use determinations*.

Background

Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora

All Alaskan brown/grizzly bears are classified as the same species, *Ursus arctos*, but are referred to differently depending on where they are found and their diet. In general, the common name "brown bear" refers to those Ursus arctos found in the coastal regions, and the common name "grizzly bear" refers to those found in the interior. The brown bear conservation environment in the lower 48 is related but very different than in Alaska, which is the only remaining state with an abundant brown bear population. Brown bears once ranged from northern Alaska and western Canada south to Mexico, and from the west coast east across the great plains of the United States. Over the last 200 years, the number and range of brown bears south of Canada has declined by more than 95% largely as a result of excessive human caused mortality and habitat loss (ADF&G 2000). In 1990, fewer than 1,000 brown bears remained in the states south of the Canadian border (Schoen 1990). Today, Alaska is home to more than 98% of the brown bear population in the United States and 70% of the brown bears in North America (ADF&G 2000). With the demise of brown bears in other areas, Alaska has become a premier locale for trophy bear hunting.

In 1975 the North American brown bear was listed by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) as an Appendix II species, which means it may become threatened by extinction if trade is not strictly regulated and monitored. This listing is designed to protect threatened populations elsewhere in North America, outside of Alaska. Commercial trade, in Appendix II species is allowed only if the state of export issues permits reporting that the trade will not be detrimental to the survival of the species in the wild. The transport of brown bear parts between states or countries is subject to both State and Federal consideration and permitting (USFWS 2023).

Licensed hunting of brown bears occurs in four provinces and territories in Canada (Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and British Columbia). In Canada, almost all trade in brown bear parts, including gall bladders and paws, is prohibited (some exceptions apply to Aboriginal groups for personal or ceremonial use). Some manufactured, non-food items, such as tanned hides, may be sold, but such trade in brown bear parts is low. In Canada, brown bears are mainly traded as hunting trophies (skins, rugs, or taxidermy mounts). A provincial or territorial permit is needed to legally possess, sell, and export brown bear parts, including those killed by accident or for defense of life and property. A CITES export permit is required for international export (Government of Canada 2012, 2014).

Sale of Hides

People have sold and exported brown bear pelts from Alaska for centuries. During the Russian Period in Alaska, the Russian American Company exported large numbers of brown bear skins to St. Petersburg and Asia (Bockstoce 2009).

Conservation efforts, led by Eastern conservationists, began with the passage of the Game Law of 1908 that implemented hunting seasons and a licensing system for brown bear parts that were being shipped out of Alaska, and limited exports to three brown bear hides annually per person and a $5 dollar fee on

each hide. The primary deterrent to the sale and export of brown bear hides was the export limit and fee (Holzworth 1930).

In 1925 a new game law was passed that eliminated market hunting of big game, including brown bears, and established the Alaska Game Commission, the predecessor to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), that was responsible for imposing and revising seasons and harvest limits in Alaska. However, lack of enforcement and increases in sport and trophy hunting, especially for big coastal bears, continued to threaten brown bear populations in some areas of Alaska. Alaska Natives were exempted under the new law and were still permitted to hunt game at any time of year for food and to sell game hides within the state unless otherwise restricted (Dufresne 1965).

Beginning in 1961 after Alaska statehood, the purchase, sale, or barter of brown bears or brown bear parts was prohibited by the State of Alaska (State of Alaska 1961). Salvage and sealing requirements, introduced in 1961, mandated that a hunter retrieve the hide with claws attached and skull so that scientific information regarding the sex, age, and hide quality of harvested bears could be obtained by biologists. Beginning in 1968, the harvest limit in all units open to brown bear hunting was one bear every four regulatory years. Beginning in 1977, all hunters were required to purchase a tag before hunting a brown bear. However, in rural western Alaska, participation by subsistence users was very limited, and few subsistence harvests were reported through this system (Thornton 1992).

The issue of claw retention was examined extensively by the Brown Bear Claw Handicraft Working Group. The group was formed by the Federal Subsistence Board in 2009 to discuss a range of issues relating to brown bear claws including their use in handicrafts, the feasibility of tracking, and potential changes to regulations. Of particular concern to this group was preventing the illegal harvest and sale of brown bear parts that can garner significant monetary value in worldwide markets, and which may incentivize illegal harvest of brown bear populations elsewhere in North America where conservation concerns are prevalent. Brown bear claws, paws, and gall bladders are the primary illegal items sought for these markets (OSM 2010).

Sealing requirements help to track the sale of wildlife parts, to validate that an animal was legally harvested, and to provide documentation to allow individuals traveling to another country to obtain a CITES permit for the item to be legally transported across international borders (OSM 2010). For example, during Alaska Board of Game deliberations on Proposal 57 (sale of brown bear hides with claws attached and/or skulls, see Regulatory History, below) in March 2016, Alaska Wildlife Troopers testified that law enforcement tracks internet activity for hides and attempts to verify permit and sealing records when bear products are encountered. Very few brown bear hides had been encountered. At the time of the testimony, all bear hides sold by Alaska residents were appropriately harvested under a predation control permit. These permits are for the purpose of predation control to recover depleted prey populations such as moose and caribou (ADF&G 2023a).

Western/Northwestern Alaska Brown Bear Management Areas

In 1992, the Alaska Board of Game adopted the Western Alaska and Northwestern Alaska brown bear management areas and more liberal subsistence harvesting regulations. Brown bear subsistence harvest

seasons in most of these areas were lengthened to September 1–May 31, and harvest limits were increased to one brown bear every regulatory year. Under subsistence regulations, Alaska residents did not have to seal brown bears unless the hide or skull was being removed from the area or presented for commercial tanning. For brown bears, sealing means taking the skull and hide (with claws and evidence of sex attached) of the bear you killed to an officially designated "sealing officer." The skull must be skinned from the hide (*5 AAC 92.165 - Sealing of bear skins and skulls*). Hides and skulls are permanently marked by ADF&G (*5 AAC 92.990 – Definitions*).

An Alaska resident hunting in these management areas was required to have a State subsistence registration permit and to salvage the meat, but the hide and skull need not be salvaged. Over time the Alaska Board of Game has further modified these regulations. Currently, State subsistence registration hunts in which the hide and skull need not be sealed, unless removed from the area or presented for commercial tanning, occur in Unit 9B, all drainages in Unit 9E that drain into the Pacific Ocean between Cape Kumliun and the border of Unit 9D and Unit 9E, Unit 17, Unit 18, that portion of Units 19A and 19B downstream of and including the Aniak River drainage, Unit 21D, Unit 22, Unit 23, Unit 24, and Unit 26A (*5 AAC 92.165 Sealing of bear skins and skulls*).

Regulatory History

Customary Trade

In 1992, the Federal Subsistence Board adopted final Federal subsistence regulations in which it defined customary trade to be the following: "*Customary trade means cash sale of fish and wildlife resources regulated herein, not otherwise prohibited by Federal law or regulation, to support personal and family needs; and does not include trade which constitutes a significant commercial enterprise*" (*§___.4 Definitions*). The Board said it would continue to refine the definition of customary trade (57 Fed. Reg. 104, 22941 [May 29, 1992]). Customary trade is part of the definition of subsistence uses in Federal regulations.[2]

The Federal Subsistence Board's customary-trade focus has been refining regulations to address two issues on a region-by-region basis. One is the sale of salmon and the second is the sale of handicrafts that incorporate brown bear claws. The Board appointed working groups to propose regulations with input from Regional Advisory Councils. In 2003, the Board adopted regulations defining a significant commercial enterprise of salmon in some regions of the state and requiring a permit and reporting of customary trades of salmon in other regions of the state (*§___.27(b)(11)(i)* and *(ii)*; *§___.27(b)(12)*) and allowing the sale of handicrafts that incorporate brown bear claws in 2012 (*§___.25(j)(7)(ii)*). To allow the sale of handicrafts incorporating brown claws, a modification to the sealing certificate, which is managed by the State of Alaska, was required to include a place on the certificate indicating that the

[2] *Subsistence means the customary and traditional uses by rural Alaska residents of wild, renewable resources for direct personal or family consumption as food, shelter, fuel, clothing, tools, or transportation; for the making and selling of handicraft articles out of nonedible byproducts of fish and wildlife resources taken for personal or family consumption; for barter, or sharing for personal or family consumption; and for* ***customary trade*** *(§___.4 Definitions)*

bear was harvested by a Federally qualified subsistence user (*§___.25(j) Utilization of fish, wildlife, or shellfish*, see regulations in the **Appendix**) (68 Fed. Reg. 81, 22309, [April 28, 2003]; 77 Fed. Reg. 114, 35498 [June 13, 2012]).

Sale of Brown Bear Hides

In 2002, Proposal WP02-01, submitted by a resident of Fort Yukon, requested the Federal Subsistence Board to classify black bears and brown bears as furbearers, which opened up the possibility that bear hides may be sold (*If you are a Federally qualified subsistence user, you may sell the raw fur or tanned pelt with or without claws attached from legally harvested furbearers (___25(j)(8)*).

Regional Advisory Councils differed in their recommendations. The Southeast Alaska Council was the only one that supported legalizing the sale of brown bear and black bear hides. The Southeast Alaska Council justification read,

> The Council was in favor of full use of subsistence resources and did not believe that allowing sale of bear parts would increase bear harvests, promote illegal trade, or cause conservations concerns. The Council noted that hunting regulations for bear limit the number of bears that can be taken and that sale of parts of legally taken bears would provide only a minor financial return to the harvester. There were no conservation concerns for the brown bear population under existing management; the southeast population is healthy, and fewer bears are taken than the harvest guideline would allow. This change in classification would not affect other users and could be positive for subsistence users (OSM 2002: 23).

One Council supported the sale of black bear pelts only, and five other Councils supported allowing the sale of only handcrafts that incorporate black bear fur (thereby aligning Federal and State regulations). One Council said the sale of bear parts could threaten bear populations and was not a customary and traditional use in the region. A Western Interior Alaska Council member abstained from voting on the proposal because of a cultural taboo that women do not talk about bears. Two Councils said that such decisions should be made on a region-by-region basis and not statewide (OSM 2002). The Board adopted a motion to only allow the sale of handicrafts incorporating black bear fur: *If you are a Federally qualified subsistence user, you may sell handicraft articles made from the skin, hide, pelt, or fur, including claws, of a black bear (§___.25(j)(6)*) (67 Fed. Reg. 125, 43711 [June 28, 2002]).

In 2006, the Alaska Board of Game adopted regulations to allow the sale of raw brown bear hides, with claws attached, harvested in specific predator control management areas under a State permit: "*After the skin and skull is sealed as required under 5 AAC 92.165(a), a person may sell the untanned skin, with claws attached, and skull of a brown bear taken in an active brown bear predator control area listed in 5 AAC 92.125 only under a permit issued by the department"* (*5 AAC 92.031(d)*). The purpose of predation control is to recover depleted prey populations such as moose and caribou (ADF&G 2006a, 2006b:5, 2023a).

In 2016, the Alaska Board of Game adopted Proposal 57 to allow the sale of brown bear hides and/or skulls by Alaska residents in units where the harvest limit is two bears annually: *A person may sell, advertise, or otherwise offer for sale a skull or hide with claws attached of a brown bear harvested in an area where the bag limit is two brown bears per regulatory year. . . .* (*5 AAC 92.031(g)*). Currently, these units with two-bear harvest limits in State regulations are 16B, 17, 19A, 19D, 20E, 21, 22A, 22B, 22D, 22E, 23, 24B, 25D, and 26A (*5 AAC 92.132 Bag limit for brown bears*) (ADF&G 2016a, 2016b:32, 2016c:5).

In 2018, the Federal Subsistence Board rejected the recommendations of affected Councils on Proposal WP18-44 to allow the sale of brown bear hides with claws attached and/or skulls in Unit 23. The Board said black markets for illegally acquired brown bear parts are known to encourage poaching and increasing market availability for brown bear parts may intensify illegal harvest. The Board also noted there is insufficient evidence that residents of Unit 23 have an established pattern of customary trade involving brown bear hides and skulls, and few residents of Unit 23 harvest brown bears under the Federal subsistence regulation due to meat salvage and sealing requirements. The lack of a component to the proposal that would require a permit for sale in line with State regulations was also a factor in the Board's justification for rejecting the proposal (OSM 2018).

Current General Regulations

Federal subsistence regulations prohibit the sale of wildlife or their parts unless specifically allowed under Federal subsistence regulations: "*You may not exchange in customary trade or sell fish or wildlife or their parts, taken pursuant to the regulations in this part, unless provided for in this part*" (*§___.7(b) Restriction on use*).

One specific authorization in Federal subsistence regulations for the sale of the non-edible byproducts of brown bears harvested for subsistence is for handicrafts: "*If you are a Federally qualified subsistence user, you may sell handicraft articles made from the skin, hide, pelt, or fur, including claws, of a brown bear taken from Units 1–5, 9A–C, 9E, 12, 17, 20, 22, 23, 24B (only that portion within Gates of the Arctic National Park), 25, or 26"* (*§___.23(j) Utilization of fish, wildlife, or shellfish*).

Federal subsistence regulations define a brown bear hide as having claws attached: . . . *skin, hide, or pelt of a bear shall mean the entire external covering with claws attached"* (*§___.23(a) Definitions*).

Additionally, customary trade shall not constitute a significant commercial enterprise: *Customary trade means exchange for cash of fish and wildlife resources regulated in this part, not otherwise prohibited by Federal law or regulation, to support personal and family needs; and does not include trade which constitutes a significant commercial enterprise* (*§___.4 Definitions*). Sales that rise to the level of a significant commercial enterprise are not defined on a statewide basis and instead may be defined on a region-by-region basis by placing monetary caps on sales and/or requiring permits for and reporting of customary trades (see examples of these regulations in the **Appendix** at *§___.27 Subsistence taking of fish*).

Biological Background

Brown bears on Kodiak Island are the only distinct subspecies (*Ursus arctos middendorffi)* because they are genetically and physically isolated from other Ursus arctos. However, all "grizzly bears" and "brown bears" are considered "brown bears" for purposes of harvest in Alaska.

Alaska has an estimated 30,000 brown bears statewide (ADF&G 2023b). Brown bears range throughout most of Alaska, except the islands of the Aleutian Chain west of Unimak and in Southeast Alaska south of Frederick Sound (**Figure 1**). High densities of brown bears occur on Kodiak Island, the Alaska Peninsula, and the Admiralty, Baranof, and Chichagof Islands of Southeast Alaska. The density of brown bears in Alaska varies considerably with habitat and ranges anywhere from 2.6 bears/ 1,000 km^2 on the North Slope (Lenart 2021) to 275 bears/1,000 km^2 in Southeast Alaska (Bethune 2021), although these estimates are extrapolated from an estimate derived from a reanalysis of 20-year-old data. Except for breeding pairs and females with offspring, brown bears are typically solitary creatures and avoid the company of other bears.

Figure 1. Map showing the range of brown bears in Alaska (ADF&G 2023c).

Brown bear populations are extremely sensitive to disruption. This is because brown bears exhibit the lowest reproduction rate of any North American mammal. In some areas with low population densities, such as in northern Alaska, brown bear populations are often managed conservatively for several reasons: large home ranges are required to meet resource needs (McLoughlin et al. 2002); female brown bears generally do not successfully reproduce until they are more than five years old and have low reproductive rates, small litters, and long intervals between litters. Sows exhibit high fidelity to home ranges with little emigration or immigration, and monitoring methods are imprecise and expensive (USFWS 1982, Reynolds 1989, Miller et al. 2011)

Brown bears are difficult to survey precisely due to their solitary nature and their sensitivity to disturbance, as is evident from the lack of current population data. Statewide, population estimates are sometimes based on surveys conducted in the 1990s or early 2000s and extrapolated to arrive at a current estimate. In Unit 4 in Southeast Alaska, there has not been a population estimate for brown bears for almost two decades (Bethune 2021). Historically, ADF&G estimated densities of between 227 and 275 bears/1000 km^2, with population estimated for Unit 4 of 4,303 bears. In Unit 13, there is currently no population monitoring (Hatcher 2023). The last population estimate was in 1998 and it estimated 1,260 bears in the unit, with a density of 21.3 bears/1,000 km^2. In Units 25 and 26 current population estimates are based on models using population data from 1999. These calculations give an estimated density of 2.6 bears/1,000 km^2, with a non-statistically derived estimate of 333 bears for Unit 26B (Lenart 2021).

Most population data collected is from sealing records of harvested brown bears. In some areas, brown bears harvested under Federal or State subsistence regulations are not required to be sealed except under certain conditions. Where sealing is not required, a Federal or a State hunting permit is required that sometimes allows for the collection of similar data to sealing records The data collected from each is used to assess trends in harvest and to inform in-season management actions (Bethune 2021).

Harvest History

Harvests levels of brown bears have generally increased through the years. Spring seasons have been established in addition to fall hunts in many units. The Alaska Board of Game authorized brown bears to be taken over a bait station starting in 2012 in some areas. Also, intensive management plans are implemented occasionally to increase the population of certain game animals by allowing for the removal of more predators, such as brown bear.

Concerning the sale of the hides with claws attached of legally harvested brown bears in State regulations since 2016, ADF&G has not detected increased harvest. Although brown bear harvest increased slightly (then decreased right back to “normal” levels) when brown bears were first allowed to be taken over bait, hunting seasons were also being lengthened that might have contributed to this slight increase in harvest around the same time. Staff have been instructed to issue sale permits to anyone that harvested a brown bear in a two-bear harvest limit area that might possibly be interested in selling it down the road. However, just because a permit was issued (41 permits since 2018) does not mean the hide was sold (Bogle 2023, pers. comm.; Weber 2023, pers. comm.).

Federal subsistence permits have been available in some areas of Alaska to harvest brown bears since 1995. In the 20 years from 2002 to 2021, 158 subsistence hunters have reported harvesting a total of 40 brown bears by Federal permit cumulatively from Units 5, 8, 9, and in the Southcentral Alaska Region (OSM 2023). Subsistence hunters use these Federal permits because it allows them to hunt in areas where there is competition in the State system to obtain permits (for example draw hunts in Units 8), where there formerly was competition in the State system to obtain permits (for example in Unit 15), the hunt area is on National Park or Monument lands (such as in Unit 9), which are closed to the harvest of brown bears except by subsistence users, or in areas with more liberal Federal harvest limits (in Unit 5 for example).

Cultural Knowledge and Traditional Practices

Alaska Natives have harvested bears and competed with them for subsistence resources for at least 14,000 years (Birkedal 2001). Brown bears have traditionally been a very important part of the Alaska Native cultures. Because of their powerful senses and ability to hear through the ground, brown bears are usually referred to indirectly" and respectfully so that they will continue to give themselves to hunters. For this reason, the Yup'ik call them *carayak* (terrible fearsome thing), *ungungssiq* (land animal, quadruped), *naparngali* (one who stands upright) or *kavirluq* (red thing, as opposed to *tan'gerliq*, black bear)" (Fienup-Riordan 2007:164). Athabaskans call the brown bear *ghonoy*, *ghonoy tlaaga* or *dlil ta bahoolaanee*. Tlingits call it *yats'inEt* or *ya'Et'gu tutw'adi'at*. The Iñupiat call it *aklaq*.

Brown bears have been hunted for their meat and hides, and other parts of the bear have been used for traditional medicine or fashioned into such things as tools, amulets, ceremonial regalia, and art (Thornton 1992, Nelson 1983, Fall and Hutchinson-Scarborough1996, Loon and Georgette 1989, Behnke 1981, ADF&G 1990). Nelson (1983) reports that the brown bear takes an apex of power among Koyukon Athabascan spirits of the natural world, perhaps below only the wolverine. People's behavior toward the brown bear is subject to a number of culturally based requirements. Nelson (1983) reports that disregard or violation of these cultural requirements is sharply punished. Traditionally, when Koyukon men hunted brown bears, they followed prescribed rituals. For example, a man is not to openly discuss the brown bear hunt before or after it occurs, and care must be taken to prevent the hide from coming in contact with women. The Koyukon Athabascans have a taboo against women eating brown bear meat or young men eating meat from a brown bear's head (Nelson 1983). Dena'ina Athabascans in the Lake Clark and Katmai areas competed directly with brown bears for subsistence resources; it is thought that the Dena'ina likely displaced brown bear from the very best salmon fishing sites on certain rivers (Birkedal 2001). The Dena'ina reserved some secondary stream drainages for the exclusive use of bears and for bear hunting. It is reported that Alutiiq residents of the Alaska Peninsula believed that bears are human ancestors that must be shown respect (Sherwonit 1998). In the Chignik Bay, Chignik Lagoon, Chignik Lake, Ivanof Bay and Perryville area, brown bear hunting is governed by a system of traditional Alutiiq beliefs that emphasize respectful treatment of the bear and protection of the hunters (Fall and Hutchinson-Scarborough 1996). According to these traditions, the skull and hide of the bear are left at the kill site; the skull is placed facing in a southern or southeastern direction. Traditional Southeast Alaska, brown bear hunting by Alaska Natives was surrounded by numerous

behavioral prescriptions that were considered vital to the success of the hunt. Brown bears are an important symbol of Tlingit social and ceremonial life, and there is emphasis on the close relationship between humans and bears (Thornton 1992). Bear hides were used for ceremonial robes, clothing, rugs and bedding. Thornton (1992) reported that the Tlingit traditionally preferred brown bear hides for children's bedding, as the hides provided not only warmth, but also were thought to prevent illnesses. Loon and Georgette (1989) and Georgette (2001) described the widespread respect of the Iñupiat for bears and the belief that the bears must be treated appropriately. An Iñupiat man is not to openly discuss the bear hunt before or after it occurs. Traditionally, the bear's head is given to the eldest member of the community or hung on a tree or pole in camp. The Iñupiat give the bear hide to an elder or use it for bedding and clothing. It has been customary practice of some Yup'ik villagers to use bear hides for mattresses, trimming on clothing and skin for boats and to bury the bear's skull facing east at the kill site. Brown bear harvesting is a specialized pursuit that is concentrated in certain villages and certain families (Coffing 1991).

Effects of the Proposal

If Proposal WP23-01 is adopted, the sale of the hide of a brown bear legally harvested from Federal public lands under Federal regulations will be legal as long as the edible meat is salvaged for human consumption, claws are attached to the hide, and the hide is sealed by a representative of ADF&G.

However, this outcome might conflict with CITES and State regulations implementing CITES. CITES provides for the commercial trade of hides of legally harvested brown bears only if the state of export issues permits reporting that the trade will not be detrimental to the survival of the species in the wild. The State of Alaska currently issues these permits but only for the sale of the hides of brown bears legally harvested in areas with a two-brown bear harvest limit (in Units 16B, 17, 19A, 19D, 20E, 21, 22A, 22B, 22D, 22E, 23, 24B, 25D, and 26A).

It is already legal under State regulations to sell the hide of brown bears legally harvested in areas of Alaska where the harvest limit is two brown bears per year except for lands designated as National Park or Monument, which are only open to hunting under Federal subsistence regulations. Effects on nonsubsistence users are not anticipated. Effects on the resource, specifically whether, or how much, the harvest of brown bears will increase is anticipated to be minimal.

If Proposal WP23-01 is not adopted, the sale of brown bear hides will not be legal under Federal regulations but will remain legal in areas of Alaska under State regulations where the harvest limit is two brown bears per year including on most Federal public lands, except for lands designated as National Park or Monument. No effects on nonsubsistence users or the resource are anticipated.

OSM PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

Support Proposal WP24-01 **with modification** to allow the sale of brown bear hides with claws attached in areas where the Federal harvest limit is two bears every regulatory year and after first obtaining a permit available at the time of sealing from an ADF&G sealing officer.

The modified regulation should read:

> **§___.25 Subsistence taking of fish, wildlife, and shellfish: general regulations**
>
> *(j) Utilization of fish, wildlife, or shellfish*
>
> . . .
>
> *(13) You may sell the raw/untanned and tanned hide or cape from a legally harvested caribou, deer, elk, goat, moose, musk ox, sheep,* ***and brown bear with claws attached harvested in an area with a two brown bear limit per regulatory year* in Federal regulations only after first obtaining a permit* at the time of sealing from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.***
>
> ***Note**: Harvest limits of two brown bears per regulatory year in 2022/24 Federal regulations include all or portions of Units 22B, 22D, 23, 24B, 25D, and 26A. A "Permit to Sell a Brown/Grizzly Bear Hide and/or Skull" is available at the time of sealing from the sealing officer.

Justification

Conservation is a concern regarding brown bear populations in Alaska for several reasons including their low productivity rates, their solitary nature, difficulty obtaining population estimates, and high sport use in some areas. The OSM modification to the proposal puts limits on sales of brown bear hides. The sale of brown bear hides could only occur for brown bears shown to be legally harvested from Federal public lands under Federal regulations, and only in areas where there is a two brown bear harvest limit in Federal regulations. Currently, such areas are all or portions of Units 22B, 22D, 23, 24B, 25D, and 26A. Further, the edible meat must be salvaged (*§___.25(j)(2)(ii)*), the hide must have the claws attached (*§___.25(a)*), and the hide must be sealed by ADF&G before it can be removed from the area (*§___.26(j)*).

The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) provides for the commercial trade of hides of legally harvested brown bears only if the state of export issues permits reporting that the trade will not be detrimental to the survival of the species in the wild. Therefore, a permit from ADF&G is required. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game issues this type of permit before selling the hide of a brown bear legally harvested under State regulations but only in areas with a two brown bear harvest limit (in Units 16B, 17, 19A, 19D, 20E, 21, 22A, 22B, 22D, 22E, 23, 24B, 25D, and 26A). Allowing the sale of the hide of a brown bear harvested from other areas would require negotiation with the State over the use of its permitting system.

These requirements would limit from where and how many hides would be sold by federally qualified subsistence users. Limiting legal sales to only brown bears taken from areas with two-bear harvest limits would be a protection from over harvest. Other tools exist for the Board to use if harvests were to rise above sustainable yields in an area. These tools include reducing seasons and harvest limits, placing monetary caps on sales on a region-by-region bases, and requiring permits for and reporting of customary trades.

This is a statewide proposal that will be reviewed by all 10 Regional Advisory Councils. Each Council can inform the Board whether the regulation is culturally appropriate for their region.

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Appendix

Relevant Federal Regulations

§___.4 Definitions

The following definitions apply to all regulations contained in this part:

. . .

Customary trade *means exchange for cash of fish and wildlife resources regulated in this part, not otherwise prohibited by Federal law or regulation, to support personal and family needs; and does not include trade which constitutes a significant commercial enterprise.*

. . .

Subsistence *means the customary and traditional uses by rural Alaska residents of wild, renewable resources for direct personal or family consumption as food, shelter, fuel, clothing, tools, or transportation; for the making and selling of handicraft articles out of nonedible byproducts of fish and wildlife resources taken for personal or family consumption; for barter, or sharing for personal or family consumption; and for customary trade.*

§___.25 Subsistence taking of fish, wildlife, and shellfish: general regulations

(a) Definitions

. . .

Bear *means black bear, or brown or grizzly bear*

. . .

Big game *means black bear, brown bear, bison, caribou, Sitka black-tailed deer, elk, mountain goat, moose, musk ox, Dall sheep, wolf, and wolverine.*

. . .

Edible meat *means . . For black bear, brown and grizzly bear, "edible meat" means the meat of the front quarter and hindquarters and meat along the backbone (backstrap).*

. . .

Handicraft *means a finished product made by a rural Alaskan resident from the nonedible byproducts of fish or wildlife and is composed wholly or in some significant respect of natural materials. The shape and appearance of the natural material must be substantially changed by the skillful use of hands, such as sewing, weaving, drilling, lacing, beading, carving, etching, scrimshawing, painting, or other means, and incorporated into a work of art, regalia, clothing, or other creative expression, and can be either traditional or contemporary in design. The handicraft must have substantially greater monetary and aesthetic value than the unaltered natural material alone.*

. . .

Sealing *means placing a mark or tag on a portion of a harvested animal by an authorized representative of the ADF&G; sealing includes collecting and recording information about the conditions under which the animal was harvested, and measurements of the specimen submitted for sealing, or surrendering a specific portion of the animal for biological information.*

. . .

Skin, hide, pelt, or fur *means any tanned or untanned external covering of an animal's body. However, for bear, the skin, hide, pelt, or fur means the external covering with claws attached.*

. . .

Trophy means *a mount of a big game animal, including the skin of the head (cape) or the entire skin, in a lifelike representation of the animal, including a lifelike representation made from any part of a big game animal; "trophy" also includes a "European mount" in which the horns or antlers and the skull or a portion of the skull are mounted for display*

. . .

(j) Utilization of fish, wildlife, or shellfish.

. . .

(2) If you take wildlife for subsistence, you must salvage the following parts for human use:

. . .

(ii) The hide and edible meat of a brown bear, except that the hide of brown bears taken in Units 5, 9B, 17, 18, portions of 19A and 19B, 21D, 22, 23, 24, and 26A need not be salvaged;

. . .

(7) If you are a Federally qualified subsistence user, you may sell handicraft articles made from the skin, hide, pelt, or fur, including claws, of a brown bear taken from Units 1–5, 9A–C, 9E, 12, 17, 20, 22, 23, 24B (only that portion within Gates of the Arctic National Park), 25, or 26.

(i) In Units 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, you may sell handicraft articles made from the skin, hide, pelt, fur, claws, bones, teeth, sinew, or skulls of a brown bear taken from Units 1, 4, or 5.

(ii) Prior to selling a handicraft incorporating a brown bear claw(s), the hide or claw(s) not attached to a hide must be sealed by an authorized Alaska Department of Fish and Game representative. Old claws may be sealed if an affidavit is signed indicating that the claws came from a brown bear harvested on Federal public lands by a Federally qualified user. A copy of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game sealing certificate must accompany the handicraft when sold.

. . .

(13) You may sell the raw/untanned and tanned hide or cape from a legally harvested caribou, deer, elk, goat, moose, musk ox, and sheep.

§___.27 Subsistence taking of fish.

. . .

(b) Methods, means, and general restrictions.

. . .

(11) Transactions between rural residents. Rural residents may exchange in customary trade subsistence-harvested fish, their parts, or their eggs, legally taken under the regulations in this part, for cash from other rural residents. The Board may recognize regional differences and regulates customary trade differently for separate regions of the State.

(i) Bristol Bay Fishery Management Area—The total cash value per household of salmon taken within Federal jurisdiction in the Bristol Bay Fishery Management Area and exchanged in customary trade to rural residents may not exceed $500.00 annually.

(ii) Upper Copper River District—The total number of salmon per household taken within the Upper Copper River District and exchanged in customary trade to rural residents may not exceed 50 percent of the annual harvest of salmon by the household. No more than 50 percent of the annual household limit may be sold under paragraphs (b)(11) and (12) of this section when taken together. These customary trade sales must be immediately recorded on a customary trade recordkeeping form. The recording requirement and the responsibility to ensure the household limit is not exceeded rests with the seller.

(iii) Customary trade of Yukon River Chinook salmon may only occur between Federally qualified rural residents with a current customary and traditional use determination for Yukon River Chinook salmon.

(12) Transactions between a rural resident and others. In customary trade, a rural resident may exchange fish, their parts, or their eggs, legally taken under the regulations in this part, for cash from individuals other than rural residents if the individual who purchases the fish, their parts, or their eggs uses them for personal or family consumption. If you are not a rural resident, you may not sell fish, their parts, or their eggs taken under the regulations in this part. The Board may recognize regional differences and regulates customary trade differently for separate regions of the State.

(i) Bristol Bay Fishery Management Area—The total cash value per household of salmon taken within Federal jurisdiction in the Bristol Bay Fishery Management Area and exchanged in customary trade between rural residents and individuals other than rural residents may not exceed $400.00 annually. These customary trade sales must be

immediately recorded on a customary trade recordkeeping form. The recording requirement and the responsibility to ensure the household limit is not exceeded rest with the seller.

(ii) Upper Copper River District—The total cash value of salmon per household taken within the Upper Copper River District and exchanged in customary trade between rural residents and individuals other than rural residents may not exceed $500.00 annually. No more than 50 percent of the annual household limit may be sold under paragraphs (b)(11) and (12) of this section when taken together. These customary trade sales must be immediately recorded on a customary trade recordkeeping form. The recording requirement and the responsibility to ensure the household limit is not exceeded rest with the seller.

(iii) Customary trade of Yukon River Chinook salmon may only occur between Federally qualified rural residents with a current customary and traditional use determination for Yukon River Chinook salmon.

WP24-07 Executive Summary	
General Description	Proposal WP24-07 requests clarification of Federal trapping regulations that exempt Federally qualified subsistence users from Municipality of Anchorage trapping closures on Federal public lands in Units 7 and 14C. *Submitted by: Tom Lessard of Cooper Landing*
Proposed Regulation	*§100.26(n)(7)(iii)(**B**) & §100.26(n)(14)(iii)(**A**)* ***Federally qualified subsistence users trapping under these regulations are exempt from Municipality of Anchorage Ordinance AO 2019-050(S) while on Federal public lands which are open to trapping***.
OSM Preliminary Conclusion	**Oppose** Proposal WP24-07.
Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Recommendation	
Southcentral Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Recommendation	
Kodiak/Aleutians Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Recommendation	
Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Recommendation	
Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional	

WP24-07 Executive Summary	
Advisory Council Recommendation	
Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Recommendation	
Seward Peninsula Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Recommendation	
Northwest Arctic Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Recommendation	
Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Recommendation	
North Slope Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Recommendation	
Interagency Staff Committee Comments	
ADF&G Comments	
Written Public Comments	None

DRAFT STAFF ANALYSIS
WP24-07

ISSUES

Wildlife Proposal WP24-07, submitted by Tom Lessard of Cooper Landing, requests clarification of Federal trapping regulations that exempt Federally qualified subsistence users from Municipality of Anchorage trapping closures on Federal public lands in Units 7 and 14C.

DISCUSSION

The proponent states that Municipality of Anchorage Ordinance Number 2019-50(S) prohibits otherwise legal Federal subsistence trapping on Federal public lands within the Municipality of Anchorage in the Turnagain Arm and Portage Valley areas. The Anchorage Assembly created "Prohibited Trapping Zones" for safe trails within 50 yards of developed trails, excluding off-shoots; and within one-quarter mile of established trailheads, campgrounds, and permanent dwellings. The proponent states that the Municipal ordinance prohibits trapping, punishable by fines, on approximately 20 square miles within Portage Valley, which is mostly Federal public land.

Existing Federal Regulation

None

Proposed Federal Regulation

*§100.26(n)(7)(iii)(**B**) & §100.26(n)(14)(iii)(**A**)*

Federally qualified subsistence users trapping under these regulations are exempt from Municipality of Anchorage Ordinance AO 2019-050(S) while on Federal public lands which are open to trapping.

Existing State Regulation

5 AAC 92.510 Areas Closed to Trapping

(3) Unit 14(C) (Anchorage Area):

(A) the drainages into Eklutna River and Eklutna Lake, within Chugach State Park except Thunderbird Creek and those drainages flowing into the East Fork of the Eklutna River upstream from the bridge above the lake;

(B) the Eagle River Management Area;

(C) that portion of Chugach State Park outside of the Eagle River, Anchorage, and Eklutna management areas is open to trapping under Unit 14(C) seasons and bag limits, except that trapping of wolf, wolverine, land otter, and beaver is not allowed; killer style steel traps with an inside jaw spread seven inches or greater are prohibited; a person using traps or snares in the area must register with the Department of Natural Resources Chugach State Park area office and provide a trapper identification; all traps and snares in the area must be marked with the selected identification; the use of traps or snares is prohibited within

(i) 50 yards of developed trails;

(ii) one-quarter mile of trailheads, campground, and permanent dwellings;

(iii) repealed 7/1/2009;

(D) all land and water within the Anchorage Management Area as described in 5 AAC 92.530(3);

(E) in the Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge in Unit 14(C), described in AS 16.20.031: all land and water south and west of and adjacent to the toe of the bluff that extends from Point Woronzof southeasterly to Potter Creek;

(F) the Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER) Management Area, except for beaver, muskrat, mink, weasel, marten, otter, fox, and coyote in areas designated by the commander;

Extent of Federal Public Lands/Waters

Unit 7 is comprised of 77% Federal public lands and consists of 52% U.S. Forest Service (USFS) managed lands, 23% National Park Service (NPS) managed lands, and 2% U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) managed lands.

Unit 14C is comprised of 16% Federal public lands and consists of 11% USFS managed lands and 5% Bureau of Land Management (BLM) managed lands.

Customary and Traditional Use Determinations

The Federal Subsistence Board (Board) has not made a customary and traditional use determination for furbearers in Units 7 and 14C. Therefore, all rural residents of Alaska may harvest furbearers in these units.

Regulatory History

In 2014, the Board rejected Proposal WP14-01, which requested Federal regulations requiring trapper identification tags on all traps and snares, the establishment of a maximum allowable time limit for checking traps, and establishment of a harvest/trapping report form to collect data on non-target species captured. The proposal analysis indicated statewide application would be unmanageable, would require substantial law enforcement and public education efforts, and could cause subsistence users to avoid the regulation by trapping under State regulations. The proposal was unanimously opposed by all ten Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), and the public as reflected in written public comments.

In 2015, the Alaska Board of Game (BOG) considered Proposal 180, to prohibit trapping within 250 feet of most public roads and trails in the Cooper Landing Area. They opposed the proposal, stating trappers and local residents need to work together to find a solution or compromise upon which all users can agree. BOG members also noted concerns about the enforceability of the proposal and loss of trapping opportunity by requiring trappers to travel 250 feet off trail and back to set and check traps (ADF&G 2015).

In 2016, the BOG considered Proposal 80, to restrict trapping in and around cities with populations over 1,000 people. Specifically, trapping within one-quarter mile of publicly maintained roads, 200 feet of publicly maintained trails, and one mile of permanent dwellings, schools, businesses, and campgrounds would be prohibited. ADF&G stated that proposals restricting trapping should be addressed at regional rather than statewide BOG meetings, so affected local communities can comment. ADF&G also referred to State regulations that limit trapping in management areas. The BOG opposed the proposal due to opposition by 26 Fish and Game Advisory Committees and concern for unintended consequences. The BOG also commented that these types of restrictions could be better handled through city or borough ordinances (ADF&G 2016).

In 2019, the Anchorage assembly passed Municipal ordinance AL No. 2019-50(S), which made it illegal to trap within a prohibited trapping zone. This ordinance established prohibited trapping zones within the Municipality of Anchorage boundaries on public lands owned by the municipality and any land within 50 yards of developed trails and one-quarter mile of trailheads, campgrounds, and permanent dwellings. It also required anyone trapping within the municipal boundary to mark each trap with trapper identification number or contact information of trapper. The Anchorage assembly passed this ordinance for the safety of trail users and pets in Anchorage (MOA 2019).

In 2020, Proposal WP20-20, submitted by Robert Gieringer, requested that hunting and trapping in Unit 7 be prohibited within one mile of roads and trails and that traps be marked with brightly colored tape. This proposal was on the consensus agenda but was removed at the Board meeting by request from a member of the public. The Board rejected the proposal. The Board stated Federal regulations would be more restrictive than State regulations, violating the rural subsistence priority mandated by the Alaska National Interest Land Conservation Act (ANILCA). Furthermore, all users would still be able to hunt and trap without restrictions under State regulations, decreasing the proposal's

effectiveness and increasing user confusion. The Board also stated marking traps with brightly colored tape could result in attracting more people to the trap and possibly pets (FSB 2020).

In March 2022, the BOG considered deferred Proposal 199 at their 2022 Statewide Regulations meeting. Proposal 199 requested 50-yard setbacks along certain multi-use trails and trailheads in Units 13, 14, and 16. This proposal was deferred from the January 2022 BOG meeting so a workshop could be held to reach a compromise on the proposal. The BOG attempted to modify the proposal several times with different amendments, including language created from the workshop. All versions of this proposal were rejected.

In April 2022, the Board considered Proposal WP22-15, submitted by the Cooper Landing Community Safe Trails Committee, requesting setbacks of 1,000 feet on both sides of certain trails; 1,000-foot setbacks on certain roads; and trapping moratoriums in campgrounds plus 1,000-foot setbacks around certain campgrounds. The Southcentral Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council, ADF&G, Interagency Staff Committee and Office of Subsistence Management were all in opposition to this proposal due to potential of lost subsistence opportunity and regulatory confusion. While this proposal received 25 written public comments in support of the action, the Board rejected this proposal on the consensus agenda.

In March 2023, at the Southcentral Region BOG meeting in Soldotna, the BOG considered numerous trap setback proposals. Proposals 145–153 included trap setbacks at various locations throughout Units 7 and 15. While most of these proposals did not pass, three were adopted by the BOG. Amended Proposal 145 made it illegal to hunt and trap within one-quarter mile of wildlife crossings along the Sterling Highway. Amended Proposals 146 and 149 established trap setbacks along certain trails within Kachemak Bay State Park and along the perimeter of campgrounds in Unit 7, respectively. Setback distance was set at 50 yards unless the trap was elevated at least 3 feet above the ground, under water, under ice, or enclosed.

Effects of the Proposal

If this proposal is adopted, clarification would be provided in codified Federal regulations that federally qualified subsistence users trapping under Federal regulations on Federal public lands in Units 7 and 14C are exempt from the trapping closures established by the Municipality of Anchorage Ordinance AO 2019-050(S). Functionally, this would have no effect on subsistence users or wildlife populations as State and municipal regulations do not apply to federally qualified subsistence users taking fish or wildlife on Federal public lands under Federal regulations. However, adoption of this proposal could reduce user confusion by explicitly clarifying this exemption.

OSM PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

Oppose Proposal WP24-07.

Justification

OSM opposes this proposal because the ordinance passed by the Anchorage assembly does not apply to federally managed lands. Therefore, federally qualified subsistence users trapping under Federal regulations are currently exempt from this ordinance.

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FISHERIES RESOURCE MONITORING PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

The Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program (Monitoring Program) is a collaborative, interagency, interdisciplinary approach to enhance fisheries research and data in Alaska and effectively communicate information needed for subsistence fisheries management on Federal public lands and waters. In 1999, the Federal government assumed responsibility for management of subsistence fisheries on Federal public lands and waters in Alaska. Section 812 of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) directs the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture to research fish and wildlife subsistence uses on Federal public lands and waters and to seek data from, consult with, and incorporate knowledge of rural residents engaged in subsistence. The Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture are committed to increasing the quantity and quality of information available to manage subsistence fisheries; meaningful involvement by federally-recognized tribes and Alaska Native and rural organizations; and, collaboration among Federal, State, Alaska Native, and rural organizations.

Every two years, the Office of Subsistence Management announces a notice of funding opportunity for investigation plans addressing subsistence fisheries on Federal public lands. The Monitoring Program is administered through regions to align with stock, harvest, and community issues common to a geographic area. There are six distinct Monitoring Program regions (**Figure 1**) as well as a multi-region category for projects that encompass more than one region.

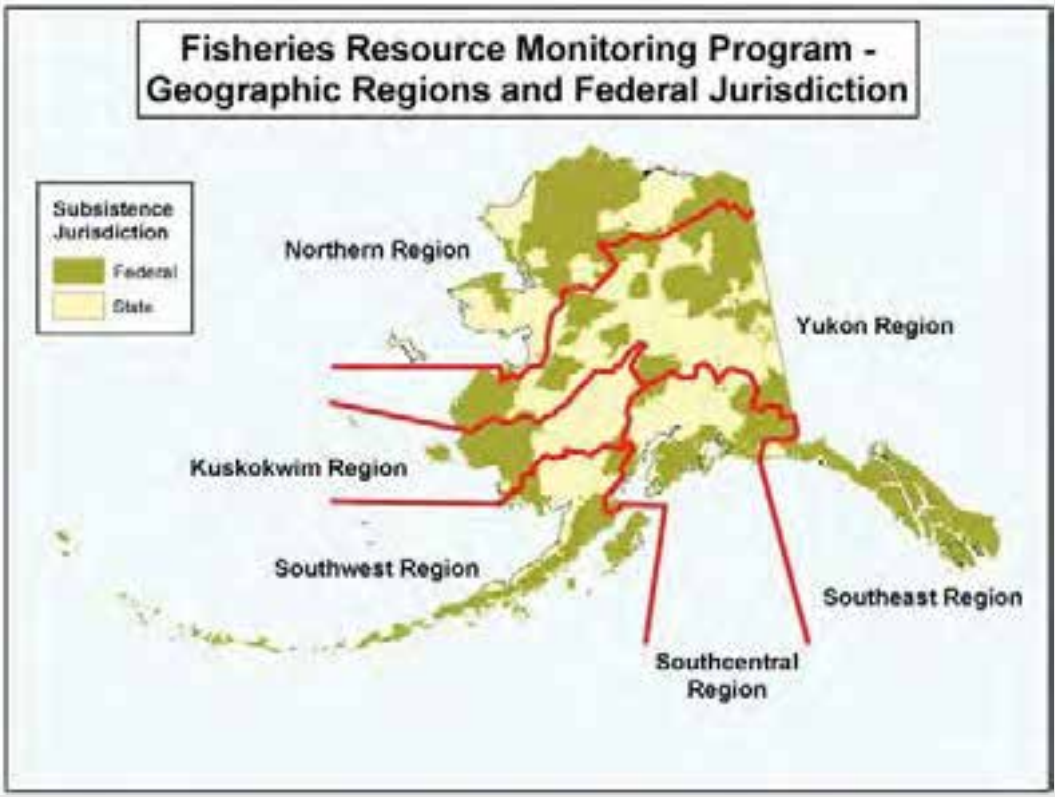


Figure 1. Geographic regions of the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program in Alaska.

During each two-year funding cycle, the Monitoring Program funds ongoing projects from the previous cycle (projects may be 1–4 years in duration) as well as new projects. Funding allocation guidelines are established by geographic region (**Table 1**). The regional guidelines were developed using six criteria that included level of risk to species, level of threat to conservation units, amount of subsistence needs not being met, amount of information available to support subsistence management, importance of a species to subsistence harvest, and level of user concerns regarding subsistence harvest. Funding allocation guidelines provide an initial target for planning; however, they are not final and are adjusted annually as needed.

Table 1. Regional allocation guideline for Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program Funds.

Region	U.S. Department of the Interior Funds	U.S. Department of Agriculture Funds
Northern Alaska	17%	0%
Yukon Drainage	29%	0%
Kuskokwim Drainage	29%	0%
Southwest Alaska	15%	0%
Southcentral Alaska	5%	33%
Southeast Alaska	0%	67%
Multi-Regional	5%	0%

The Monitoring Program was first implemented in 2000 with an initial allocation of $5 million. Since 2000, a total of $139.9 million has been allocated for the Monitoring Program to fund a total of 524 projects (**Figure 2** and **Figure 3**).

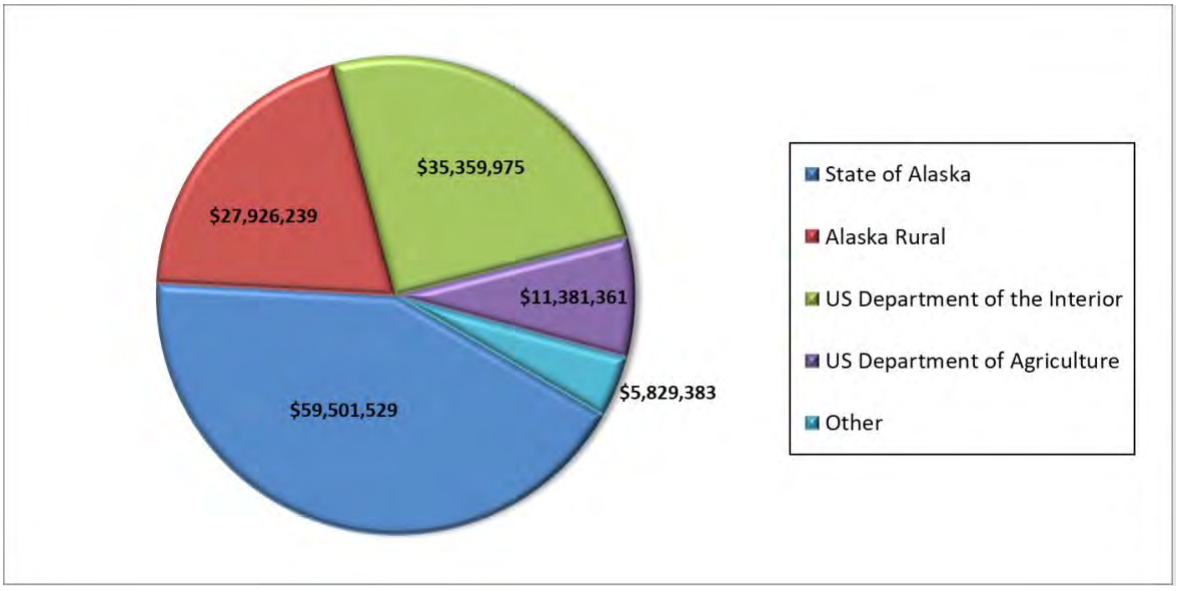


Figure 2. Monitoring Program fund distribution since 2000, identified by primary recipient organization type.

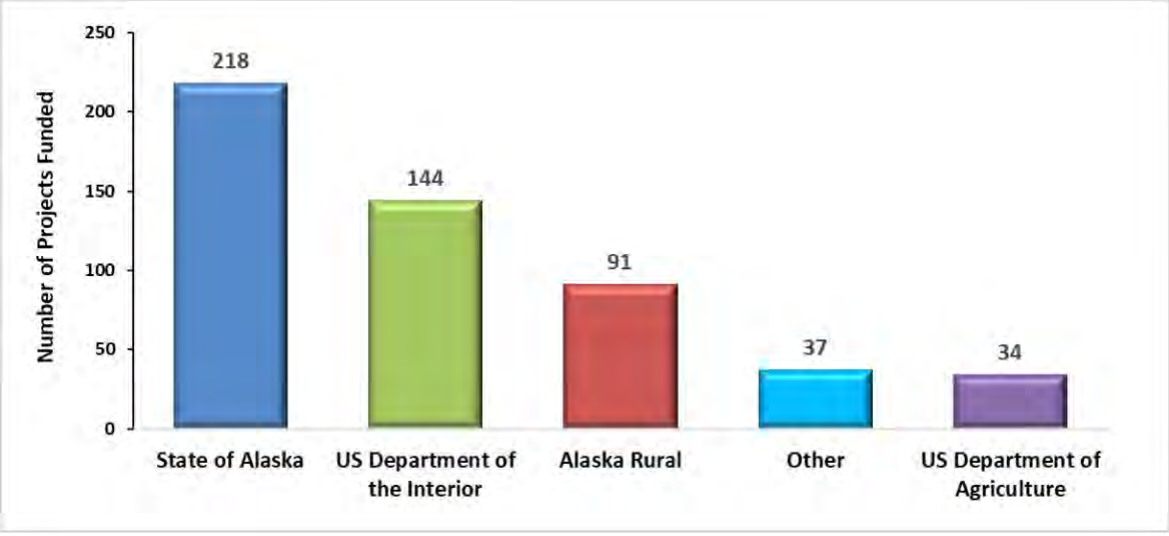


Figure 3. Number of Monitoring Program projects funded since 2000, listed by primary recipient organization type.

The three broad categories of information solicited by the Monitoring Program are (1) harvest monitoring, (2) traditional ecological knowledge, and (3) stock status and trends. Projects that combine these approaches are encouraged.

Harvest monitoring studies provide information on numbers and species of fish harvested, locations of harvests, and gear types used. Methods used to gather information on subsistence harvest patterns may include harvest calendars, mail-in questionnaires, household interviews, subsistence permit reports, and telephone interviews.

Traditional ecological knowledge studies are investigations of local knowledge directed at collecting and analyzing information on a variety of topics such as the sociocultural aspects of subsistence, fish ecology, species identification, local names, life history, taxonomy, seasonal movements, harvests, spawning and rearing areas, population trends, environmental observations, and traditional management systems. Methods used to document traditional ecological knowledge include ethnographic fieldwork, key respondent interviews with local experts, place name mapping, and open-ended surveys.

Stock status and trends studies provide information on abundance and run timing, age-sex-length composition, migration and geographic distribution, survival of juveniles or adults, stock production, genetic stock identification, and mixed stock analyses. Methods used to gather information on stock status and trends include aerial and ground surveys, test fishing, towers, weirs, sonar, video, genetics, mark-recapture, and telemetry.

PROJECT EVALUATION PROCESS

The Monitoring Program prioritizes high quality projects that address critical subsistence and conservation concerns. Projects are selected for funding through an evaluation and review process that is designed to advance projects that are strategically important for the Federal Subsistence Management Program, technically sound, administratively competent, promote partnerships and capacity building, and

are cost effective. Proposed projects are first evaluated by a panel called the Technical Review Committee. The Technical Review Committee's function is to provide evaluation, technical oversight, and strategic direction to the Monitoring Program. This committee is a standing interagency committee of senior technical experts that reviews, evaluates, and makes recommendations about proposed projects that are consistent with the mission of the Monitoring Program. Recommendations from the Technical Review Committee provide the basis for further comments from Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils, the public, the Interagency Staff Committee, and the Federal Subsistence Board, with final approval of the Monitoring Plan by the Assistant Regional Director of the Office of Subsistence Management.

To be considered for funding under the Monitoring Program, a proposed project must have a nexus to Federal subsistence fishery management. Proposed projects must have a direct association to a Federal subsistence fishery, and the subsistence fishery or fish stocks in question must occur in or pass-through waters within or adjacent to Federal public lands in Alaska (National Wildlife Refuges, National Forests, National Parks and Preserves, National Conservation Areas, National Wild and Scenic River Systems, National Petroleum Reserves, and National Recreation Areas). A complete project package must be submitted on time and must address the following five specific criteria.

1. ***Strategic Priorities***—Studies should be responsive to information needs identified in the 2024 Priority Information Needs available at the Monitoring Program webpage at https://www.doi.gov/subsistence/frmp/funding. All projects must have a direct linkage to Federal public lands and/or waters to be eligible for funding under the Monitoring Program. Projects should address the following topics to demonstrate links to strategic priorities:

    - Federal jurisdiction—The extent of Federal public waters in or nearby the project area
    - Direct subsistence fisheries management implications
    - Conservation mandate—Threat or risk to conservation of species and populations that support subsistence fisheries
    - Potential impacts on the subsistence priority—Risk that subsistence harvest users' goals will not be met
    - Data gaps—Amount of information available to support subsistence management and how a project answers specific questions related to these gaps
    - Role of the resource—Contribution of a species to a subsistence harvest (number of villages affected, pounds of fish harvested, miles of river) and qualitative significance (cultural value, unique seasonal role)
    - Local concern—Level of user concerns over subsistence harvests (upstream vs. downstream allocation, effects of recreational use, changes in fish abundance and population characteristics)

    To assist in evaluation of submittals for projects previously funded under the Monitoring Program, investigators must summarize project findings in their investigation plans. This

summary should clearly and concisely document project performance, key findings, and uses of collected information for Federal subsistence management. It should also justify the continuation of the project, placing the proposed work in context with the ongoing work being accomplished.

2. ***Technical-Scientific Merit***—Technical quality of the study design must meet accepted standards for information collection, compilation, analysis, and reporting. To demonstrate technical and scientific merit, applicants should describe how projects will:

    - Advance science
    - Answer immediate subsistence management or conservation concerns
    - Have rigorous sampling and/or research designs
    - Have specific, measurable, realistic, clearly stated, and achievable (attainable within the proposed project period) objectives
    - Incorporate traditional knowledge and methods

    Data collection, compilation, analysis, and reporting procedures should be clearly stated. Analytical procedures should be understandable to the non-scientific community.

3. ***Investigator Ability and Resources***—Investigators must show they are capable of successfully completing the proposed project by providing information on the ability (training, education, experience, and letters of support) and resources (technical and administrative) they possess to conduct the work. Investigators that have received funding in the past, via the Monitoring Program or other sources, are evaluated and scored on their past performance, including fulfillment of meeting deliverable and financial accountability deadlines. A record of failure to submit reports or delinquent submittal of reports will be considered when rating investigator ability and resources.

4. ***Partnership and Capacity Building***—Investigators must demonstrate that capacity building has already reached the communication or partnership development stage during proposal development and, ideally, include a strategy to develop capacity building to higher levels, recognizing, however, that in some situations higher level involvement may not be desired or feasible by local organizations.

    Investigators are requested to include a strategy for integrating local capacity development in their study plans or research designs. Investigators should inform communities and regional organizations in the area where work is to be conducted about their project plans. They should also consult and communicate with local communities to ensure that local knowledge is used and concerns are addressed. Investigators and their organizations should demonstrate their ability to maintain effective local relationships and commitment to capacity building. This includes a plan to facilitate and develop partnerships so that investigators, communities, and regional organizations can pursue and achieve the most meaningful level of involvement. Proposals

demonstrating multiple, highly collaborative efforts with rural community members or Alaska Native Organizations are encouraged.

Successful capacity building requires developing trust and dialogue among investigators, local communities, and regional organizations. Investigators need to be flexible in modifying their work plan in response to local knowledge, issues, and concerns, and must also understand that capacity building is a reciprocal process in which all participants share and gain valuable knowledge. The reciprocal nature of the capacity building component(s) should be clearly demonstrated in proposals. Investigators are encouraged to develop the highest level of community and regional collaboration that is practical including joining as co-investigators.

Capacity can be built by increasing the technical capabilities of rural communities and Alaska Native organizations. This can be accomplished via several methods, including increased technical experience for individuals and the acquisition of necessary gear and equipment. Increased technical experience would include all areas of project management including logistics, financial accountability, implementation, and administration. Other examples may include internships or providing opportunities within the project for outreach, modeling, sampling design, or project specific training. Another would be the acquisition of equipment that could be transferred to rural communities and tribal organizations upon the conclusion of the project.

A "meaningful partner" is a partner that is actively engaged in one or more aspects of project design, logistics, implementation, and reporting requirements. Someone who simply agrees with the concept or provides a cursory look at the proposal is not a meaningful partner.

5. ***Cost/Benefit—***This criterion evaluates the reasonableness (what a prudent person would pay) of the funding requested to provide benefits to the Federal Subsistence Management Program. Benefits could be tangible or intangible. Examples of tangible outcomes include data sets that directly inform management decisions or fill knowledge gaps and opportunities for youth or local resident involvement in monitoring, research, and/or resource management efforts. Examples of possible intangible goals and objectives include enhanced relationships and communications between managers and communities, partnerships and collaborations on critical resource issues, and potential for increased capacity within both communities and agencies.

   Applicants should be aware that the Government shall perform a "best value analysis" and the selection for award shall be made to the applicant whose proposal is most advantageous to the Government. The Office of Subsistence Management strives to maximize program efficiency by encouraging cost sharing, partnerships, and collaboration.

POLICY AND FUNDING GUIDELINES

Several policies have been developed to aid in implementing funding. These policies include:

- Projects of up to four years in duration may be considered

- Proposals requesting Monitoring Program funding that exceeds $235,000 in any one year are not eligible for funding
- Studies must not duplicate existing projects
- Long term projects will be considered on a case-by-case basis

Activities that are not eligible for funding include:

- Habitat protection, mitigation, restoration, and enhancement
- Hatchery propagation, restoration, enhancement, and supplementation
- Contaminant assessment, evaluation, and monitoring
- Projects where the primary or only objective is outreach and education (for example, science camps, technician training, and intern programs), rather than information collection

The rationale behind these policy and funding guidelines is to ensure that existing responsibilities and efforts by government agencies are not duplicated under the Monitoring Program. Land management or regulatory agencies already have direct responsibility, as well as specific programs, to address these activities. However, the Monitoring Program may fund research to determine how these activities affect Federal subsistence fisheries or fishery resources.

The Monitoring Program may fund assessments of key Federal subsistence fishery stocks in decline or that may decline due to climatological, environmental, habitat displacement, or other drivers; however, applicants must show how this knowledge would contribute to Federal subsistence fisheries management. Similarly, the Monitoring Program may legitimately fund projects that assess whether migratory barriers (e.g., falls, beaver dams) significantly affect spawning success or distribution; however, it would be inappropriate to fund projects to build fish passes, remove beaver dams, or otherwise alter or enhance habitat.

2024 NOTICE OF FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

The 2024 Notice of Funding Opportunity focused on priority information needs developed by the Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils with input from subject matter specialists. Investigation plans were due in February 2023. Submitted plans were reviewed and evaluated by the Office of Subsistence Management and U.S. Forest Service staff, and then scored by the Technical Review Committee. Each investigation plan was scored on the following five criteria: strategic priority, technical and scientific merit, investigator ability and resources, partnership and capacity building, and cost/benefit.

2024 FISHERIES RESOURCE MONITORING PLAN

A Fisheries Resource Monitoring Plan is developed during each Monitoring Program cycle that provides an overview of the process, the submitted materials, and the final list of funded projects. The 2024

Fisheries Resource Monitoring Plan will include regional overviews and comments from Regional Advisory Councils and the Interagency Staff Committee. Regional Overviews for each of the seven Monitoring Program regions contain area specific background information as well as the 2024 Technical Review Committee justifications and project executive summaries specific to those regions. The Regional Overviews are distributed for comment through Subsistence Regional Advisory Council meetings, beginning in September 2023. Regional Advisory Council comments are recorded and included in the draft 2024 Fisheries Resource Monitoring Plan that will be forwarded to the Interagency Staff Committee for their comments and finally to the Federal Subsistence Board.

The draft 2024 Fisheries Resource Monitoring plan will be presented to the Federal Subsistence Board at their January/February 2024 public meeting. The Board will review the draft plan and will forward their comments and recommendations to the Assistant Regional Director of the Office of Subsistence Management. Final project selection and funding approval lie with the Assistant Regional Director of the Office of Subsistence Management. For this funding cycle, a total of 26 investigation plans were received and 25 were considered eligible for funding. Investigators are expected to be notified in writing of the status of their proposals by late spring or early summer 2024.

FISHERIES RESOURCE MONITORING PROGRAM
SOUTHEAST REGION OVERVIEW

Since the inception of the Monitoring Program in 2000, a total of 87 projects have been funded in the Southeast Region at a cost of $31 million (**Figure 1**). The State of Alaska has had the most projects funded in the region, followed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Alaska rural organizations (**Figure 2**). See **Appendix 1** for more information on Southeast Region projects completed since 2000 and a list of all organizations that have received funding through the Monitoring Program.

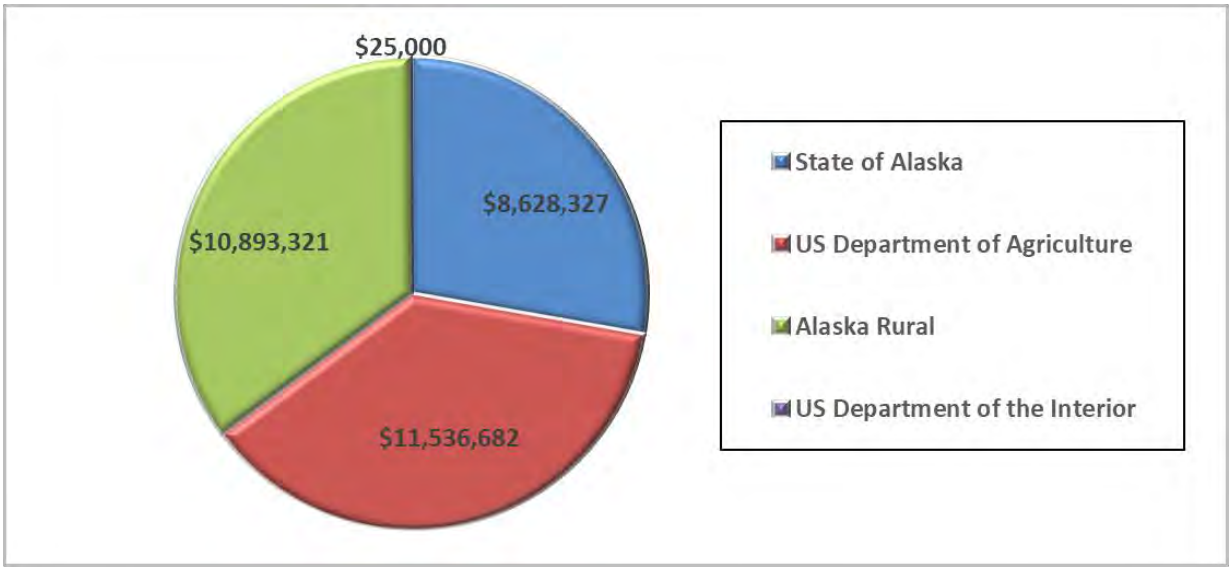


Figure 1. Monitoring Program fund distribution since 2000 in the Southeast Region.

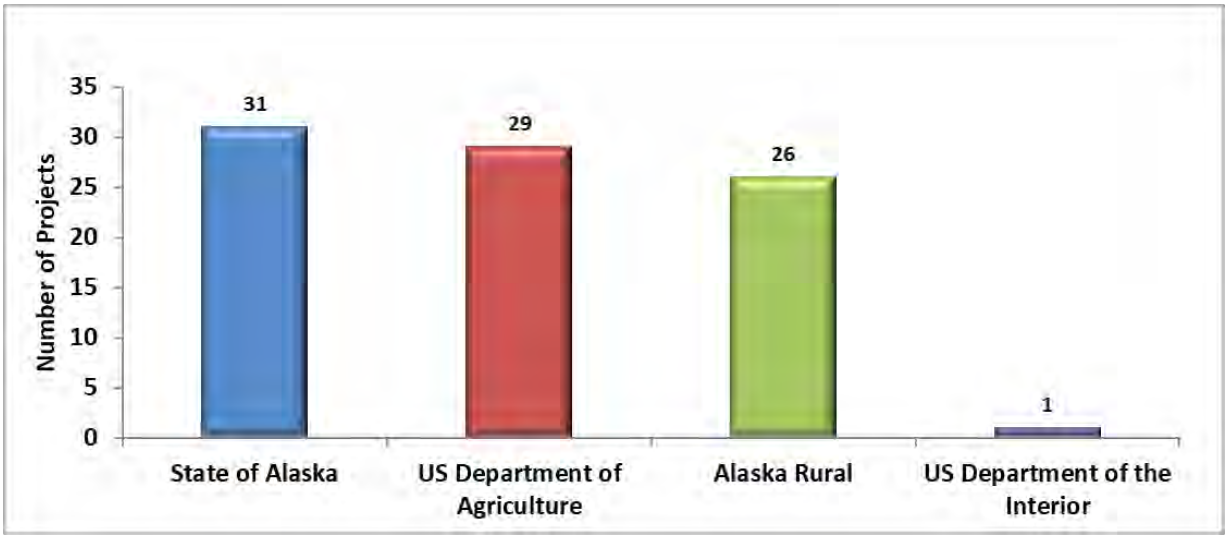


Figure 2. Number of Monitoring Program projects funded since 2000 in the Southeast Region.

PRIORITY INFORMATION NEEDS

The 2024 Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Southeast Region contained the following 12 priority information needs identified by the Southeast Alaska Regional Advisory Council:

- Reliable estimates of Sockeye Salmon escapement and in-season harvest and estimates of stream discharge in the following systems: Kanalku, Klawock, Hetta, Falls, Sarkar, Kook, Neva, Karta, Hatchery, Eek, Kah Sheets, Klag, Gut, Kutlaku, Salmon Bay, Sitkoh, Hoktaheen, Alecks Creek, Lake Eva and Lake Leo.

- Reliable estimates of salmon escapement and in-season harvest of subsistence salmon systems.

- Escapement indices or population estimates for Eulachon at the Unuk River and Yakutat Forelands.

- Population assessment for Eulachon for northern Southeast Alaska.

- Traditional ecological knowledge of how each community distributes harvest between Sockeye Salmon systems available to them.

- Reliable estimates of salmon populations and harvests in the sport and subsistence fisheries at Kah Sheets and Alecks Creek.

- Ethnographic study of the Yakutat subsistence salmon fishery.

- Reliable estimates of subsistence Sockeye Salmon harvest in the Klawock River drainage.

- Develop escapement goals for Sockeye Salmon systems with long term escapement data sets.

- Incorporate the use of indigenous co-management to develop escapement goals for Sockeye Salmon systems with long term escapement data sets.

- Assessment of Makhnati Island herring stock.

- Update community household fish harvest surveys.

2024 MONITORING PLAN DEVELOPMENT FOR THE SOUTHEAST REGION

For the 2024 Monitoring Plan, two proposals were submitted for the Southeast Region (**Table 1**).

Table 1. Projects submitted for the Southeast Region including total funds requested and average annual funding requests.

Project Number	Title	Project Duration (Years)	Total Project Request
24-600	Unuk River Eulachon Population Assessment	4	$177,800
24-650	Documenting Salmon and Nonsalmon Fish Harvest and Use Patterns in Four Central Prince of Wales Island Communities	3	$264,034
Total			**$441,834**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARIES AND TECHNICAL REVIEW COMMITTEE JUSTIFICATIONS

The following executive summaries were written by the principal investigators and submitted to the Office of Subsistence Management as part of a proposal package. They may not reflect the opinions of the Office of Subsistence Management or the Technical Review Committee. The executive summaries may have been altered for length.

Technical Review Committee justifications are a general description of the committee's assessment of proposals when examining them for strategic priority, technical and scientific merit, investigator ability and resources, partnership and capacity building, and cost/benefit. More in-depth reviews are provided to investigators following project selection.

Investigator Submitted Executive Summary:

Project Number:	24-600						
Title:	Unuk River Eulachon Population Assessment						
Geographic Region:	Southeast						
Data Types:	Stock Status and Trends						
Principal Investigator:	Jon Hyde, United State Forest Service						
Co-investigator:	Keenan Sanderson, Ketchikan Indian Community						
Project Request:	**2024:**	$75,824	**2025:**	$33,715	**2026:**	$33,990	**2027:** $34,271
Total Request:	$177,800						

Issue: Eulachon (*Thaelicthys pacificus)* systems in Southeast Alaska are typically large glacial rivers located on the mainland. The Unuk River has been a primary commercial/subsistence fishing location for Eulachon in Southeast Alaska. The Unuk River, which drains into Burroughs Bay in Behm Canal, is located approximately 55 nautical miles northeast of Ketchikan on the Tongass National Forest. Other

drainages in the Ketchikan area where Eulachon have been noted and harvested include: Klahini River, Chickamin River, Wilson & Blossom Rivers, and Carroll Inlet/Creek. Most of these drainages, except for Carroll Inlet/Creek, are located in the Misty Fjords National Monument Wilderness and can only be access by air or boat.

The spring Eulachon run provides food for congregating marine mammals, fish, and birds. Eulachon also provide the first subsistence opportunity of the year for many people. The Unuk River supported subsistence, personal use, and commercial fisheries for many years. The first documented commercial harvest of Unuk River Eulachon occurred in 1940 and continued sporadically until 2001 when the State managed commercial fishery was shut down. The Federal subsistence fishery continued until 2005. Since 2005, the fishery has been closed by both State and Federal managers due to poor Eulachon returns. In 2021 and 2022, a limited Federal Eulachon fishery was implemented on the Unuk River (Annual limit of 5 gallons per household). The fishery provides a subsistence opportunity and assists managers by providing in-season updates and fish samples.

The majority of the harvest in District 1 has occurred in the lower stretches of the Unuk River with very little documentation of harvest from the other listed locations. Although prior to 2001, historical Eulachon harvest had taken place under commercial regulations, the subsistence fishery under Federal management is just as important in the eyes of the subsistence user as provisions allow for customary trade of the resource. The primary purpose of this harvest has been to distribute Eulachon to the communities of Saxman, Metlakatla, Ketchikan and other outlying areas. Due to the great distance of the Unuk River from these communities, local users depended on the commercial harvesters for their yearly Eulachon. The ADFG Division of Subsistence documented in 1987 that 27% of residents in the rural community of Metlakatla utilize Eulachon.

Objectives:

1. Document run timing and spawning locations, and estimate biomass of Eulachon in the Unuk River, Chickamin, Klahini, Wilson, Blossom Rivers and in Carroll Inlet/Carroll Creek;
2. Estimate age-sex-length (ASL) distribution of the Eulachon escapement with a coefficient of variation less than 10%;
3. Document harvest methods, harvest levels, and run timing by on-site observations;
4. Expand the capacity of KIC to conduct future Eulachon monitoring.

Methods:

Objective 1: A ground crew will live on site and survey all six areas one or more times a day. Surveys will consist of at least two crew members walking, boating, or snorkeling the river to estimate Eulachon biomass. Crew transport flights will also be used for aerial surveys whenever possible. Aerial surveys will be recorded using duplicate downward facing mounted video cameras (GoPro®) for review and analysis.

Objective 2: Age, sex, and length will be obtained from sampled Eulachon using standard methods. Age will be determined from otoliths at the ADF&G Mark, Tag, and Aging Laboratory and sex will be determined from established morphological characteristics. Fish lengths will be measured from the tip-of-

the-snout to the fork-of-the-tail to the nearest mm and weight will be measured to the nearest 0.01g. Weight will vary with spawning condition and will pooled by spawning condition and sex.

Objective 3: Harvest and effort will be sampled during open Eulachon seasons on the Unuk River. The ground crew will document harvest location, total harvest, and catch per unit effort, and any harvester observations. Total harvest will be recorded on all Federal subsistence Eulachon harvest permits and returned post-season.

Objective 4: The USFS will provide pre-season training during the four-year funding cycle. The KIC surveyor training will focus on field safety, knowledge and comprehension of the survey and sampling techniques, standardized estimates of school size and density, development of logistical and organizational skills for survey implementation and data management in the field.

Partnership and Capacity Building: This project proposal is the result of an ongoing partnership between the USFS and KIC and consultations with Metlakatla Indian Community and Organized Village of Saxman. The goal of developing training, survey protocols, and partnerships will be to increase the capacity of all agencies and organizations involved in future Unuk River Eulachon monitoring. This project aims to increase KIC's capacity to perform biological monitoring through equipment and institutional knowledge gained throughout the project timeline.

Technical Review Committee Justification: The Eulachon population in District 1 is an important subsistence resource but the fishery has either been closed or only open with a severely reduced harvest limit for almost two decades. This project directly addresses a priority information need that has been on the Southeast Regional Advisory Councils list for many funding cycles. The principal investigator is employed with a Federal agency while the co-investigator is employed by an Alaska Native organization. While the investigators have not led past Monitoring Program projects, their combined education, experience, and resources support their plan for project execution and deliverables. The investigators lay out a clear plan for data collection, compilation, analysis, and reporting. However, the objectives are only somewhat measurable and achievable due to the study design, logistical challenges of conducting field work in the area, and the potentially insufficient amount of funds requested.

Investigator Submitted Executive Summary:

Project Number:	24-650			
Title:	Documenting Salmon and Nonsalmon Fish Harvest and Use Patterns in Four Central Prince of Wales Island Communities			
Geographic Region:	Southeast			
Data Types:	Harvest Monitoring/Traditional Ecological Knowledge			
Principal Investigator:	Lauren Sill, Alaska Department of Fish and Game			
Project Request:	**2024:** $145,334	**2025:** $95,910	**2026:** $22,790	**2027:** $0
Total Request:	$264,034			

Issue: The project proposes to update subsistence fish harvest and use information for the communities of Hollis, Thorne Bay, Coffman Cove, and Naukati Bay in direct fulfillment of the priority information need

articulated for the Southeast Region in the 2024 Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program Priority Information Needs document to "Update community household fish harvest surveys." The most recent comprehensive subsistence harvest and use information available for three of these communities dates to 1998, and to 1987 for the fourth.

ADF&G requires mandatory harvest reporting for most species that require a permit or harvest tickets, such as salmon or large game. Additionally, ADF&G conducts biennial, voluntary, halibut harvest surveys and occasional marine mammal harvest surveys. The methods used to collect these permit data provide only harvest numbers: estimates are not always accurate, and they decouple harvest from the broader context in which the resources are harvested. For example, permits do not document information about household demographics, sharing practices, or qualitative assessments about the harvests, all of which provide important explanatory context. Moreover, permits cover only a small subset of the variety of wild resources that are used by communities. The full context for subsistence harvests is necessary to adequately evaluate changes in the harvest of any particular species.

Over the nearly 30 years since the last comprehensive subsistence harvest survey (or nearly 40 years in the case of Naukati Bay), these communities have experienced demographic, economic, resource abundance, and regulatory changes which have likely affected their subsistence harvest and use patterns. Populations have fluctuated and population structure has changed, with fewer young families remaining in the communities as the availability of stable timber-based employment has declined. While resource-based jobs have declined, some tourism and services-based industries have grown. In addition to demographic and economic changes, the federal government established a subsistence halibut fishery in Alaska in 2003. To date, there has been no investigation into how this new regulation has modified household use of salmon or other kinds of fish. Prior to these regulations, halibut fishing occurred under sport regulations, which allowed only the use of rod and reel with bag limits of just a few fish. The federal subsistence regulation provides for rod and reel as well as long line gear, with bag limits of 20 fish per day, among other provisions. Recent surveys completed in other Southeast Alaska communities suggest that halibut harvests may have replaced some salmon harvests. A lack of information on the use of fisheries resources in the proposed study communities creates obstacles for communities, managers, and regulatory boards to advocate for or make informed decisions that are in the best interests of the communities and that continue to provide a subsistence priority.

Objectives: The objectives of this project are: 1) Produce reliable estimates of the harvests and uses of salmon and nonsalmon fish for study year 2024 by residents of Thorne Bay, Hollis, Coffman Cove, and Naukati Bay; 2) Record the geographic extent of search and harvest areas for wild resources by residents of Thorne Bay, Hollis, Coffman Cove, and Naukati Bay, and 3) Document observations of subsistence harvesting practices, harvest trends, resource abundance and characteristics, and areas used for subsistence fishing activities over time.

Methods: At the outset of the project, the PI will hold scoping meetings in each of the proposed study communities to discuss the project's goals, objectives, methods, and how the collected data can be used. Researchers will conduct field work employing two integrated social science data gathering methods: household harvest surveys and key respondent interviews.

Researchers will use voluntary household harvest surveys with a mapping component to address objectives 1 and 2. The Division of Subsistence has used harvest surveys for over 40 years to collect information about the use and harvest of resources by Alaska residents that has been the foundation of accurate subsistence harvest data useful to the Federal Subsistence Board and the Alaska Board of Fisheries. Based on standard Division of Subsistence sampling strategies, researchers will attempt a census of Hollis (28 households), Coffman Cove (69 households), and Naukati Bay (77 households), and a 43% sample of the 208 households in Thorne Bay. Project staff will hire local research assistants (LRAs) and train them in survey administration and will conduct the surveys in teams. The PI, working with the division's Information Management staff, will design the household survey to collect information for the 2024 study year about a household's harvest and use of fish resources. During the household surveys, researchers will document the geographic extent of the search and harvest activities for fish during the study year along with related information such as the species sought, the season of harvest, methods of access to the site, and gear used.

Through recommendations of the local government, LRAs, and others in the community, the PI will attempt to interview knowledgeable residents from each study community. Respondents will be a mix of ages and genders, will have current or past experience with subsistence activities, and ideally will be long-time residents of the area. The PI will develop a list of topics and questions to prompt discussion following the community scoping meeting and consultation with the ADF&G area biologist and local city councils. General topics likely to be discussed include local traditional knowledge (LTK) concerning salmon runs, populations, habitat, and harvest. Interviewers will also use maps to encourage discussion and to record temporal changes in harvest locations since the previous comprehensive survey. Interviewers will attempt 2–5 interviews in each community, depending on population size.

When draft project results are available, researchers will return to the communities to hold a review session with residents to present the preliminary data, address any concerns residents have with the data, and resolve any discrepancies noted. The data presented will include tables and figures created from the household survey analysis, maps of harvest areas for different resource categories for the study year, and composite maps of harvest areas resulting from the key respondent interviews.

Partnerships and Capacity Building: Individuals, communities, and local and regional councils can use information collected through this project to advocate for subsistence practices before the Federal Subsistence Board, Alaska Board of Fisheries, or Board of Game. Partnerships with USFS will be strengthened through collaboration with local USFS staff during survey administration. During the planning and implementation phase of the project, researchers will stay in contact with local government councils, and will ask for assistance with survey development, interview protocols, and logistics. During the project, if researchers become aware of issues in any of the communities that could be addressed through the state or federal regulatory processes, researchers can assist the local tribal council, regional association, Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils and ADF&G Fish and Game Advisory Committees, and residents in navigating that process. In addition, during the scoping and review meetings, examples of subsistence harvest data being used by communities to improve regulations will be shared. Partnerships developed through intensive survey efforts in communities have proven to be beneficial to all parties involved, both during the survey but also years after.

Local research assistants (LRAs) will be hired in each community. Researchers will train the LRAs in survey administration and mapping, as well as more broadly in the role of ADF&G and USFS in managing the land and natural resources used by community residents. The PI will identify key respondents in consultation with the local government and residents.

Technical Review Committee Justification: The proposed project will update household fish harvest and use survey information in four Prince of Wales Island communities that have not been surveyed in over 30 years, filling a priority information need identified by the Southeast Regional Advisory Council. The project will also collect important geographic information about the locations and extent of area households' harvesting efforts, as well as some key respondent interview data to understand local ecological knowledge and the broader context of socioecological changes taking place within the project study area. The project may also receive additional funding to expand the scope of the study to document the harvest and use of game species and other wild resources. Overall, the proposed project has the potential to provide insight into current subsistence management issues, food security issues, conservation concerns, and social changes in the communities of study. It should also produce data that will be relevant to the analysis of longer-term species population trends, broader ecological changes, and related changes in subsistence practices and uses in the area. However, it seems reasonable to question the robustness of the current key respondent interview protocol and the degree to which this protocol might add a significant traditional ecological knowledge element to the overall project. The project would be more competitive if a more thorough explanation of how and why particular survey and interview numbers were chosen for each study community, and how these amounts of surveys and interviews will ensure the representativeness of the study's findings. The project also does not contain a strong partnership or capacity building component. It would be ideal if the project proposed a specific mechanism to help build stronger, ongoing working relationships with the US Forest Service and/or a local organization working on land and resource management issues in the area. Despite the potential of the project, it is also worth questioning the cost effectiveness of some aspects of the proposed budget.

APPENDIX 1
PROJECTS FUNDED IN THE SOUTHEAST REGION SINCE 2000

Project Number	Project Title	Investigators
	Estimation of Sockeye Salmon Escapement	
00-043	Klawock Lake Sockeye Salmon Assessment	ADF&G, KCA
00-044	Falls Lake Sockeye Salmon Stock Assessment	ADF&G, OVK
01-125	Gut Bay, Kook, and Hoktaheen L Sockeye Salmon Escapement Index	ADF&G, OVK
01-126	Kanalku, Hasselborg, and Sitkoh Lakes Sockeye Stock Assessment	ADF&G
01-127	Thoms, Salmon Bay, Luck Lakes Sockeye Salmon Escapement Index	ADF&G, WCA
01-128	Klag Bay Sockeye Salmon Stock Assessment	ADF&G, STA, USFS

Project Number	Project Title	Investigators
01-130	Hetta Lake Sockeye Salmon Stock Assessment	ADF&G, HCA
01-175	Salmon Lake Sockeye and Coho Salmon Stock Assessment	ADF&G, STA, NSRAA, USFS
01-179	Virginia Lake Sockeye Salmon Assessment	USFS
02-012	Neva and Pavlof Sockeye Salmon Stock Assessment	USFS, HIA
02-017	Redfish Bay Sockeye Salmon Stock Assessment	STA, ADF&G, USFS
03-007	Eek Lake Sockeye Salmon Stock Assessment	HCA, ADF&G
04-604	Klawock Lake Sockeye Salmon Assessment	ADF&G, KCA
04-605	Kanalku & Sitkoh Lakes Sockeye Salmon Stock Assessment	ADF&G, ACA
04-606	Hetta Lake Sockeye Salmon Stock Assessments	ADF&G, HCA
04-607	Falls, Gut, & Katlaku Subsistence Sockeye Stock Assessment	ADF&G, ACA
04-608	Salmon Lake Sockeye Salmon Stock Assessment	STA
04-609	Klag Bay Sockeye Salmon Assessment	STA, ADF&G, USFS
05-601	Kook Lake Sockeye Salmon Assessment	ADF&G, ACA, USFS
05-603	Klawock Lake Sockeye Salmon Assessment	ADF&G, USFS
06-601	Neva Lake Sockeye Salmon Assessment	USFS
06-602	Katlaku Lake Sockeye Salmon Assessment	ADF&G, OVK
07-601	Hatchery Creek Sockeye Salmon Assessment	OVK, USFS
07-606	Hetta Lake Sockeye Salmon Assessment	ADF&G
07-607	Kanalku Lake Sockeye Salmon Assessment	ADF&G, ACA
07-608	Klawock Lake Sockeye Salmon Assessment	ADF&G, KCA
07-609	Falls Lake Sockeye Salmon Assessment	ADF&G, OVK
08-600	Karta River Sockeye Salmon Assessment	OVKa, ADF&G, USFS, BIA
10-600	Karta River Sockeye Salmon Assessment	OVKa, BIA, USFS, ADF&G
10-601	Hatchery Creek Sockeye Salmon Assessment	USFS, OVKa, BIA
10-604	Klag Lake Sockeye Salmon Assessment	STA, USFS
10-605	Sitkoh Lake Sockeye Salmon Assessment	USFS, ACA, ADF&G
10-606	Hetta Lake Sockeye Salmon Assessment	HCA, KECS
10-607	Kanalku Lake Sockeye Salmon Assessment	ADF&G, ACA
10-609	Falls Lake Sockeye Salmon Assessment	USFS, OVK
10-610	Kook Lake Sockeye Salmon Assessment	USFS, ACA
10-611	Redoubt Lake Sockeye Salmon Assessment	USFS, ADF&G
10-612	Neva Lake Sockeye Salmon Assessment	USFS, HIA
14-601	Redoubt Lake Sockeye Salmon Assessment	USFS, ADF&G
14-602	Falls Lake Subsistence Salmon Stock & Harvest Assessment	USFS, OVK

Project Number	Project Title	Investigators
14-603	Hetta Lake Sockeye Salmon Assessment	HCA, KECS
14-605	Hatchery Creek Sockeye Salmon Assessment	USFS, OVKa
14-606	Klawock Lake Sockeye Salmon Assessment	USFA, KCA, POWHA
14-608	Kanalku Lake Subsistence Sockeye Salmon Assessment	ADF&G, ACA, USFS
14-609	Klag Lake Sockeye Salmon Stock Assessment	STA
14-610	Kook Lake Sockeye Salmon Stock Assessment	USFS, ACA
14-611	Sitkoh Lake Sockeye Salmon Stock Assessment	USFS, ACA
14-612	Neva Lake Sockeye Salmon Stock Assessment	USFS, HIA
16-604	Eek Lake Sockeye Salmon Stock Assessment	USFS, HIA
18-602	Falls Lake Sockeye Salmon Stock Assessment	USFS, OVK
18-603	Gut Bay Sockeye Salmon Stock Assessment	USFS, OVK
18-604	Hetta Lake Sockeye Salmon Stock Assessment	HCA, KECS
18-607	Neva Lake Sockeye Salmon Stock Assessment	USFS, HIA, ADF&G
18-609	Sitkoh Lake Sockeye Salmon Stock Assessment	USFS, ACA, ADF&G
18-610	Klag Lake Sockeye Salmon Stock Assessment	STA
20-600	Eek/Kasook Lakes Sub. Sockeye Salmon Stock Assessment	HCA
22-604	Hetta Lake Sockeye Salmon Assessment	HCA
22-607	Neva Lake Sockeye Salmon Stock Assessment	HIA
22-609	Sitkoh Lake Sockeye Salmon Stock Assessment	USFS
22-610	Klag Lake Sockeye Salmon Stock Assessment	USFS
	Documentation of Subsistence Use Patterns for Salmon	
00-015	SE Alaska Subsistence Fisheries Database Development	ADF&G
00-045	SE Tribes Traditional Subsistence Territory Mapping	USFS, OVK, ACA, HIA
01-091	East Alsek River Salmon Historical Use and TEK	YTT
01-103	SE Subsistence Fisheries GIS Database	ADF&G
01-104	Kake Sockeye Salmon Subsistence Harvest Use Pattern	ADF&G, OVK
02-038	SE Subsistence Fisheries GIS Database Development	ADF&G, CCTHITA, TST
02-049	Wrangell Salmon Subsistence Harvest Use Patterns	ADF&G, WCA, USFS
02-104	Hoonah and Klawock Salmon Survey	ADF&G, CCTHITA, TST
03-651	Klawock River Subsistence Steelhead Harvest & Use Patterns	ADF&G
04-651	SE Alaska Salmon TEK and Subsistence Monitoring	STA, ADF&G
04-652	Subsistence TEK Database	ADF&G, STA
06-651	Southeast Alaska Survey of Customary Trade	CCTHITA
07-651	Hydaburg Sockeye Salmon Customary & Traditional System	HCA, UAA
08-615	Maknahti Island Subsistence Herring Fishery Assessment	STA, PSU

Project Number	Project Title	Investigators
22-650	Icy Straits Subsistence Harvest Patterns	ADF&G
22-651	In-season Harvest Klawock River Subsistence Salmon	ADF&G
	Prince of Wales Island Steelhead	
01-105	POW Island Steelhead/Rainbow Trout Harvest Use Patterns	ADF&G
05-604	Prince of Wales Steelhead Assessment	ADF&G, OVK
08-650	POW Island Steelhead Trout Subsistence Harvest Survey	OVKa, HCA, BIA, USFS
	Estimation of Non-salmon Species	
07-610	Behm Canal Eulachon Genetics	USFWS
08-607	Unuk River Eulachon	USFS
10-603	Yakutat Eulachon Surveys	USFS, YSB, ADF&G
14-607	Unuk River Eulachon	USFS
22-612	Northern SE Eulachon Population Dynamics Monitoring	CIA

Abbreviations: **ACA** = Angoon Community Association, **ADF&G** = Alaska Department of Fish and Game, **BIA** = Bureau of Indian Affairs, **CCTHITA** = Central Council of Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, **HCA** = Hydaburg Cooperative Association, **HIA** = Hoonah Indian Association, **KCA** = Klawock Cooperative Association, **KECS** = Kai Environmental Consulting Services, **NSRAA** = Northern Southeast Aquaculture Association, **OVK** = Organized Village of Kake, **OVKa** = Organized Village of Kasaan, **POWHA** = Prince of Wales Hatchery Association, **PSU** = Portland State University, **STA** = Sitka Tribe of Alaska, **TST** = Third Sector Technologies, **UAA** = University of Alaska Anchorage, **USFS** = USDA Forest Service, **USFWS** = USDOI Fish and Wildlife Service, **WCA** = Wrangell Cooperative Association, **YSB** = Yakutat Salmon Board, and **YTT** = Yakutat Tlingit Tribe.

FISHERIES RESOURCE MONITORING PROGRAM
MULTI-REGION OVERVIEW

Since the inception of the Monitoring Program in 2000, a total of 18 multi-Region projects have been funded at a cost of $2.1 million (**Figure 1**). The State of Alaska has had the most multi-Region projects funded, followed by Department of the Interior agencies, other organizations, and the Department of Agriculture (**Figure 2**). See **Appendix 1** for more information on multi-Region projects completed since 2000 and a list of all organizations that have received funding through the Monitoring Program.

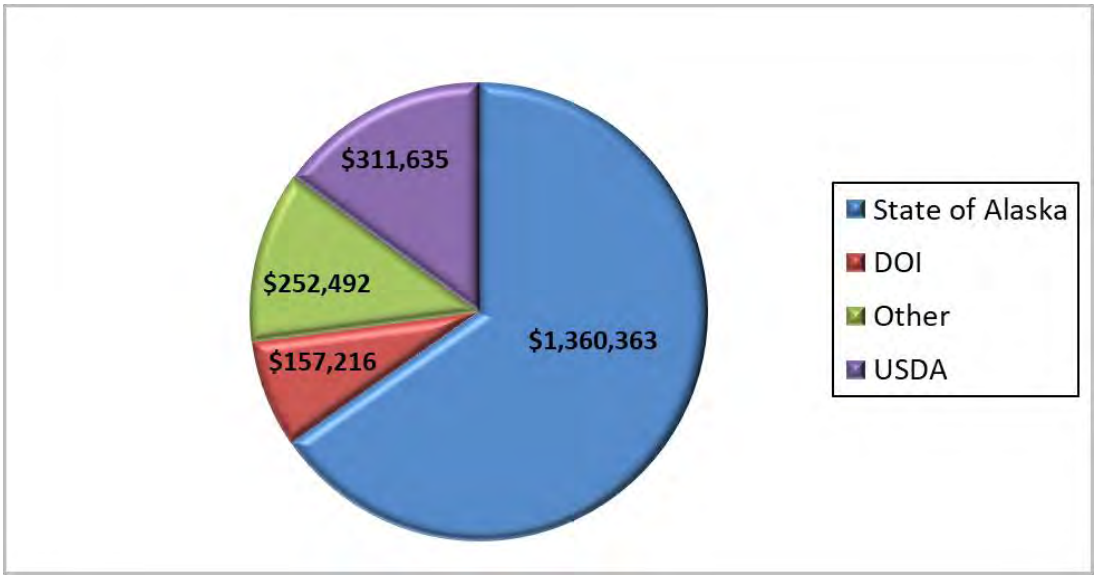


Figure 1. Monitoring Program fund distribution since 2000 for multi-Region projects.

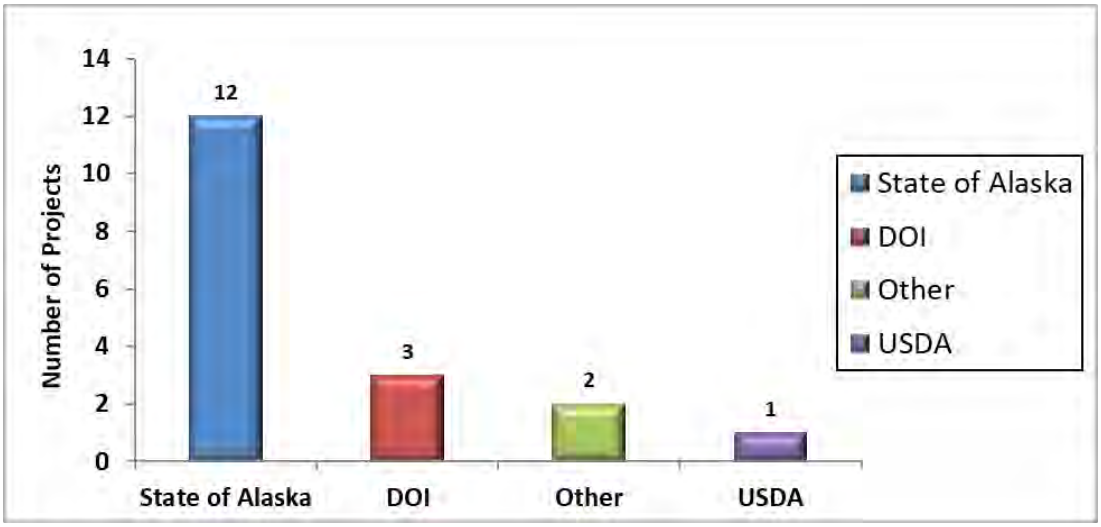


Figure 2. Number of Monitoring Program projects funded since 2000 for multi-Region projects.

PRIORITY INFORMATION NEEDS

The 2024 Notice of Funding Opportunity for multi-Region projects contained the following four priority information needs identified by Regional Advisory Councils:

- Gain a better understanding of ecosystem factors negatively impacting subsistence salmon runs and harvest practices in Alaska, including ocean conditions, freshwater conditions, and changing climate conditions.
- Changes in relative abundance and species composition of salmon species, and expansion of salmon species into new waters.
- The impact of changing weather on traditional fish processing practices and food security.
- Effects of fluctuating water levels on salmon spawning viability.

2024 MONITORING PLAN DEVELOPMENT FOR THE MULTI-REGION

For the 2024 Monitoring Plan, one multi-Region proposal was submitted (**Table 1**).

Table 1. Multi-Region projects submitted for the 2024 Monitoring Plan, including project duration and total funds requested.

Project Number	Title	Project Duration (Years)	Total Project Request
24-750	Understanding Ecosystem Change on Traditional Salmon Subsistence Practices and Community Food Security in Three Coastal Alaskan Communities	3	$517,285
Total			**$517,285**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND TECHNICAL REVIEW COMMITTEE JUSTIFICATION

The following executive summary was written by the principal investigator and was submitted to the Office of Subsistence Management as part of a proposal package. It may not reflect the opinions of the Office of Subsistence Management or the Technical Review Committee. The executive summary may have been altered for length.

Technical Review Committee justifications are a general description of the committee's assessment of proposals when examining them for strategic priority, technical and scientific merit, investigator ability and resources, partnership and capacity building, and cost/benefit. More in-depth reviews are provided to investigators following project selection.

Investigator Submitted Executive Summary:

Project Number:	24-750
Title:	Evaluating Ecosystem Change on Traditional Salmon Subsistence Practices and Community Food Security in Three Coastal Alaskan Communities.
Geographic Region:	Multi-Regional
Data Types:	Harvest Monitoring (HM) and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK)
Principal Investigator:	Chance Wilcox, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Co-investigator:	Jacqueline Keating, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
	Lauren Sill, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Project Request:	**2024:** $158,771 **2025:** $174,343 **2026:** $184,171
Total Request:	$517,285

Issue: This project responds to two priority information needs identified for the multi-regional category in the 2024 Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program call for proposals prepared by the Office of Subsistence Management: "Gain a better understanding of ecosystem factors negatively impacting subsistence salmon runs and harvest practices in Alaska, including ocean conditions, freshwater conditions, and changing climate conditions" and "the impact of changing weather on traditional fish processing practices and food security." This research project will collect subsistence salmon harvest data, community food security information, and harvest assessments over time by residents of Akutan, Nanwalek, and Hoonah and document their traditional and contemporary subsistence harvest and use areas and traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) regarding local ecosystem changes and their effect on salmon populations and subsistence salmon harvest and processing practices. The data from this study will be useful for regulatory bodies such as the Alaska Board of Fisheries and the Federal Subsistence Board in their assessments of whether subsistence needs are being met and inform federal and state managers on subsistence regulations from the perspective of local resource users, especially considering ecosystem changes such as coastal erosion that affect fishing practices.

Pacific salmon are a fundamental subsistence resource for the communities of Akutan, Hoonah, and Nanwalek. In addition to the social, economic and cultural importance of this resource, the ability to harvest and process subsistence salmon in coastal Alaska is essential to community food security for the residents of the three communities. Both salmon spawning and rearing habitats, as well as subsistence harvest and uses of salmon by these three communities occur within some federal conservation system boundaries, where there are overlapping subsistence fishing opportunities provided by the Federal Subsistence Board (FSB). Harvest and uses of subsistence salmon by residents of Akutan occurs within the boundaries of the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge. The community of Hoonah is located within the bounds of the Tongass National Forest, and residents harvest subsistence salmon through the area. Areas of the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge are utilized by residents of Nanwalek for subsistence pursuits of salmon.

The most recent ADF&G Division of Subsistence surveys from Akutan (2008), Hoonah (2013), and Nanwalek (2014) documented that salmon made up the largest portion of these communities' subsistence harvests. However, these studies did not investigate how changing ecosystem features, such as more

frequent and less predictable storms, changing wind patterns, and warmer ocean temperatures affected salmon populations, traditional salmon processing methods, and community food security.

This project will utilize face-to-face household surveys, mapping, key respondent interviews, and participant observation to investigate how ecosystem and weather changes have altered subsistence practices and community food security over time. This proposed project will: 1) update subsistence salmon harvest and use estimates in Akutan, Hoonah, and Nanwalek for the calendar year 2025; 2) document observations related to the effects of environmental change on salmon populations and subsistence pursuits by study community residents; and 3) integrate the results across the study communities to identify comparisons as well as regional trends or associations with particular environmental features. The documentation of TEK will aid in contextualizing harvest estimates and collate the observations of changes linked to climate on local salmon populations and subsistence activities. For example, studies throughout coastal Alaska have documented rapidly increasing coastal shoreline erosion and increasing ocean temperatures; these and other climate related phenomena may alter subsistence activities and cause area residents to adapt their subsistence harvest and processing practices. The results of this study will increase federal and state fisheries managers' understanding of community-based subsistence fisheries, especially considering the rapidly changing environmental conditions of coastal Alaska.

Objectives: The goal of the project is to document observations of ecosystem factors affecting salmon runs and subsistence practices in coastal Alaska communities. The project will result in a better understanding of the effects of unpredictable and changing weather patterns experienced by coastal Alaska communities as they relate to subsistence salmon harvesting and processing and community food security.

To accomplish this, the project has three objectives:

1. Document, characterize, and quantify salmon harvest and processing and changes thereto in Akutan, Nanwalek, and Hoonah to better understand impacts of ecosystem change on community subsistence practices and food security.
2. Estimate subsistence salmon harvest amounts and locations for three coastal Alaska communities for study year 2025.
3. Record the geographic extent of harvest and use areas for salmon by residents of Akutan, Nanwalek, and Hoonah during the study year and compare with areas used for salmon harvest activities over time.

Methods: This study will take place in three communities, Akutan, Nanwalek, and Hoonah, and will integrate three social science data gathering methods to estimate the harvest and use of salmon for subsistence by community residents, measure food security in each community, and document TEK related to observed effects of environmental change on salmon harvest and processing. These methods are: 1) participant observation, 2) key respondent interviews, and 3) comprehensive household harvest surveys. The data gathering methods for this project were designed to be integrated so that data collected using one method inform the development and implementation of other methods. Data from all three methods will provide quantitative and qualitative material to accomplish Objective 1. Objective 2 will be achieved using data from the household harvest surveys and accompanying geographic data. Geographical

data collected with the household harvest surveys will accomplish Objective 3, although data from interviews and participant observation will also address this objective.

Partnerships/Capacity Building: In accordance with principles for ethical research and to establish and maintain working relationships, the Hoonah Indian Association, Chugach Regional Resources Commission, and the Native Village of Akutan were consulted during the development of this proposal. Ongoing consultation with the tribal councils will occur throughout the project. Prior to the publication of the technical report, researchers will return to their research communities to disseminate study results, answer questions, and collect feedback people may have about the project and resulting data. During the project, researchers will work with local tribal councils to obtain assistance with survey development, interview protocols, and logistics. Local research assistants in each community will help coordinate local logistical support and participation in project activities. Through the surveys and interviews, community members will have the opportunity to share their knowledge of salmon used for subsistence and their experiences with these resources.

Technical Review Committee Justification: The proposed project is a compelling, multi-region study that will document and compare local observations of ecosystem factors that are impacting salmon runs and subsistence practices in coastal Alaskan communities. The project will combine participant-observation, harvest and use surveys, key respondent interviews, and mapping to better understand the impacts of unpredictable and changing weather patterns experienced by coastal Alaskan communities as they relate to subsistence salmon harvesting and processing and community food security. The project will also provide updated salmon harvest and use data for the communities of Akutan, Nanwalek, and Hoonah. The project will also document traditional and contemporary subsistence harvest and use areas and traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) regarding local ecosystem changes impacting subsistence in southern coastal Alaska. Several regional priority information needs and key issues of concern are addressed that have been specifically discussed in many Regional Advisory Councils' reports to the Federal Subsistence Board for at least the past decade.

The scientific framework of the project is sound, and it displays a greater commitment to the benefits of mixed-methods research. Specifically, the project should provide for a better integration of qualitative data such as traditional ecological knowledge with quantitative harvest and use data. Still, the project would benefit from a more thorough explanation of how and why particular survey and interview numbers were chosen for each study community, and how these amounts of surveys and interviews will ensure the representativeness of the study's findings. The project has the potential to be of interest and use to public, policymakers, and scientific interests both inside and outside the realms of Alaskan subsistence. However, the project would be a stronger candidate for funding if the research communities were more directly reliant upon federal subsistence fisheries, and if the research protocol could be expanded to focus on all key subsistence fish and shellfish harvested in each proposed study community. This is particularly important considering the overall amount of funding requested for this project. The project could also make a stronger effort to forge meaningful working research partnerships with tribal organizations, rural organizations, and/or the Federal land and resource management agencies working in and around the study communities. Despite the potential of the project, it is also worth questioning the cost effectiveness of some aspects of the proposed budget.

APPENDIX 1
PROJECTS FUNDED IN THE YUKON REGION SINCE 2000

Project Number	Project Title	Investigators
00-016	Information Access of AYK Fish Data	ADF&G
00-017	Statewide Subsistence Harvest Strategy	ADF&G, AIT
01-010	Regulatory History of Alaska Salmon Regulations	ADF&G, EA
01-106	Validity and Reliability of Fisheries Harvest	ADF&G, AITC, NPS
01-107	Implementation of Statewide Fisheries Harvest Strategy	ADF&G, AITC
01-154	Project Information and Access System	ADF&G
02-043	Alaska Subsistence Fisheries Database GIS Integration	ADF&G
02-069	Shared Fishery Database	ADF&G
04-701	Develop Shared Fishery Database	ADF&G
04-751	Subsistence Harvest Database Update and Report	ADF&G
05-702	Whitefish Genetic Species Markers	USFWS
06-701	Dolly Varden Stock Composition	USFWS
08-701	Stream Temperature Monitoring	ARRI
12-700	Genetic Baseline for Inconnu from the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers	USFWS
14-701	Stream Temperature Monitoring	ARRI
16-752	Subsistence Harvest and Use Patterns of Nonsalmon by Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Coastal Communities	ADF&G
18-751	Subsistence Harvest Assessment and Stock Composition of Dolly Varden and Nonsalmon fish stocks in the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge	ADF&G

Abbreviations used: ADF&G=Alaska Department of Fish and Game, AITC=Alaska Inter-Tribal Council, ARRI=Aquatic Restoration and Research Institute, EA=Elizabeth Andrews, NPS=National Park Service, USFWS=U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

ANNUAL REPORTS

Background

ANILCA established the Annual Reports as the way to bring regional subsistence uses and needs to the Secretaries' attention. The Secretaries delegated this responsibility to the Board. Section 805(c) deference includes matters brought forward in the Annual Report.

The Annual Report provides the Councils an opportunity to address the directors of each of the four Department of Interior agencies and the Department of Agriculture Forest Service in their capacity as members of the Federal Subsistence Board. The Board is required to discuss and reply to each issue in every Annual Report and to take action when within the Board's authority. In many cases, if the issue is outside of the Board's authority, the Board will provide information to the Council on how to contact personnel at the correct agency. As agency directors, the Board members have authority to implement most of the actions which would effect the changes recommended by the Councils, even those not covered in Section 805(c). The Councils are strongly encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity.

Report Content

Both Title VIII Section 805 and 50 CFR §100.11 (Subpart B of the regulations) describe what may be contained in an Annual Report from the councils to the Board. This description includes issues that are not generally addressed by the normal regulatory process:

- an identification of current and anticipated subsistence uses of fish and wildlife populations within the region;
- an evaluation of current and anticipated subsistence needs for fish and wildlife populations from the public lands within the region;
- a recommended strategy for the management of fish and wildlife populations within the region to accommodate such subsistence uses and needs related to the public lands; and
- recommendations concerning policies, standards, guidelines, and regulations to implement the strategy.

Please avoid filler or fluff language that does not specifically raise an issue of concern or information to the Board.

Report Clarity

In order for the Board to adequately respond to each Council's annual report, it is important for the annual report itself to state issues clearly.

- If addressing an existing Board policy, Councils should please state whether there is something unclear about the policy, if there is uncertainty about the reason for the policy, or if the Council needs information on how the policy is applied.
- Council members should discuss in detail at Council meetings the issues for the annual report and assist the Council Coordinator in understanding and stating the issues clearly.

- Council Coordinators and OSM staff should assist the Council members during the meeting in ensuring that the issue is stated clearly.

Thus, if the Councils can be clear about their issues of concern and ensure that the Council Coordinator is relaying them sufficiently, then the Board and OSM staff will endeavor to provide as concise and responsive of a reply as is possible.

Report Format

While no particular format is necessary for the Annual Reports, the report must clearly state the following for each item the Council wants the Board to address:

1. Numbering of the issues,
2. A description of each issue,
3. Whether the Council seeks Board action on the matter and, if so, what action the Council recommends, and
4. As much evidence or explanation as necessary to support the Council's request or statements relating to the item of interest.

ADF&G Division of Subsistence SERAC Fall Meeting – October 24 - October 26, 2023

Project Updates

1. **Klawock Inseason Subsistence Sockeye Salmon Harvest Monitoring (FRMP)**
   Purpose: To provide improved and timely subsistence salmon harvest estimates for the Klawock Lake system and to increase participation in the subsistence salmon permit program. The project is a collaboration between ADF&G, Klawock Heenya Corporation, and Kai Environmental.

   Next Steps: Surveyors collected inseason harvest data during the summer of 2022. Due to staffing and logistical challenges, inseason harvest data collection did not occur for the summer of 2023. We expect to have data collection happen in the summers of 2024 and 2025. A survey was mailed to residents of Klawock and other households that have participated in the Klawock subsistence fishery to ask about the user experience of the permit process. Results of the survey will be used in future outreach efforts to improve permit participation in Southeast.

2. **Icy Strait Harvest Update (FRMP)**
   Purpose: 1) Produce reliable estimates of the harvests and uses of wild resources for study year 2023 by residents of Gustavus, Tenakee Springs, and Pelican; 2) Record the geographic extent of search and harvest areas for wild resources by residents of Gustavus, Tenakee Springs, and Pelican during the study year; and 3) Document observations of subsistence harvesting practices, harvest trends, and areas used for subsistence activities over time.

   Next steps: Scoping meetings are being planned for this fall in each community to introduce the project to the broader community and solicit feedback, comments, and concerns. Comprehensive harvest and use surveys have not been conducted in any of these communities since 1987. The research plan includes attempting to survey all households in Tenakee Springs and Pelican, and a sample of households in Gustavus. Surveys will be conducted in spring 2024 with preliminary data available in the late fall of 2024. Community reviews of the data will occur in 2025, and a final report and community summary will be published by the fall of 2025.

3. **Keex' Kwaan Community Forest Partnership**
   Division of Subsistence Purpose: Produce reliable estimates of the harvest and use of wild resources by Kake residents, including a description of roads and lands used.

   Next steps: Comprehensive household surveys were conducted in the spring of 2023. The purpose of the surveys was to document the importance of wild foods to the community of Kake, as well as areas that are important for their harvest. Data are currently undergoing analysis and internal review and then will be presented to the community of Kake for their review. A report will be published in the Fall of 2024.

For more information or concerns about subsistence in Southeast Alaska:

1. Contact Lauren Sill, Subsistence Program Manager, Southern Region: (907) 465-3617, lauren.sill@alaska.gov
2. Visit the Community Subsistence Information System: http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sb/CSIS/
3. Download Subsistence Publications: http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/sf/publications/

The mission of the Division of Subsistence is to scientifically gather, quantify, evaluate, and report information about customary and traditional uses of Alaska's fish and wildlife resources (AS 16.05.094).

Winter 2024 Regional Advisory Council Meeting Calendar

Last updated 5/2/2023

Due to travel budget limitations placed by Department of the Interior on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Office of Subsistence Management, the dates and locations of these meetings will be subject to change.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					Mar. 1	*Mar. 2*
Mar. 3	*Mar. 4 Window Opens*	*Mar. 5*	*Mar. 6*	*Mar. 7*	*Mar. 8*	*Mar. 9*
		All Regions Meeting (Anchorage)				
Mar. 10	*Mar. 11*	*Mar. 12*	*Mar. 13*	*Mar. 14*	*Mar. 15*	*Mar. 16*
Mar. 17	*Mar. 18*	*Mar. 19*	*Mar. 20*	*Mar. 21*	*Mar. 22*	*Mar. 23*
Mar. 24	*Mar. 25*	*Mar. 26*	*Mar. 27*	*Mar. 28*	*Mar. 29 Window Closes*	*Mar. 30*

Fall 2024 Regional Advisory Council Meeting Calendar

Last updated 3/3/2023

Due to travel budget limitations placed by Department of the Interior on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Office of Subsistence Management, the dates and locations of these meetings will be subject to change.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Aug. 18	*Aug. 19* ***Window Opens***	*Aug. 20*	*Aug. 21*	*Aug. 22*	*Aug. 23*	*Aug. 24*
	NSRAC (Utqiagvik)					
Aug. 25	*Aug. 26*	*Aug. 27*	*Aug. 28*	*Aug. 29*	*Aug. 30*	*Aug. 31*
Sep. 1	*Sep. 2* ***Labor Day Holiday***	*Sep. 3*	*Sep. 4*	*Sep. 5*	*Sep. 6*	*Sep. 7*
			KARAC (Unalaska)			
Sep. 8	*Sep. 9*	*Sep. 10*	*Sep. 11*	*Sep. 12*	*Sep. 13*	*Sep. 14*
Sep. 15	*Sep. 16*	*Sep. 17*	*Sep. 18*	*Sep. 19*	*Sep. 20*	*Sep. 21*
Sep. 22	*Sep. 23*	*Sep. 24*	*Sep. 25*	*Sep. 26*	*Sep. 27*	*Sep. 28*
Sep. 29	*Sep. 30*	*Oct. 1*	*Oct. 2*	*Oct. 3*	*Oct. 4*	*Oct. 5*
			WIRAC (Aniak)			
Oct. 6	*Oct. 7*	*Oct. 8*	*Oct. 9*	*Oct. 10*	*Oct. 11*	*Oct. 12*
		EIRAC (Tanana)		**SCRAC** (Anchorage)		
Oct. 13	*Oct. 14* ***Columbus Day Holiday***	*Oct. 15*	*Oct. 16*	*Oct. 17*	*Oct. 18*	*Oct. 19*
		YKDRAC (Bethel)				
Oct. 20	*Oct. 21*	*Oct. 22*	*Oct. 23*	*Oct. 24*	*Oct. 25*	*Oct. 26*
				SPRAC (Nome)		
		SEARAC (Ketchikan)				
Oct. 27	*Oct. 28*	*Oct. 29*	*Oct. 30*	*Oct. 31*	*Nov. 1* ***Window Closes***	*Nov. 2*
		BBRAC (Dillingham)				
	NWARAC (Kotzebue)					

Department of the Interior
U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

Charter

1. **Committee's Official Designation.** The Council's official designation is the Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council).

2. **Authority.** The Council is renewed by virtue of the authority set out in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) (16 U.S.C. 3115 (1988)) Title VIII, and under the authority of the Secretary of the Interior, in furtherance of 16 U.S.C. 410hh-2. The Council is regulated by the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), as amended, (5 U.S.C., Appendix 2).

3. **Objectives and Scope of Activities**. The objective of the Council is to provide a forum for the residents of the Region with personal knowledge of local conditions and resource requirements to have a meaningful role in the subsistence management of fish and wildlife on Federal lands and waters in the Region.

4. **Description of Duties.** Council duties and responsibilities, where applicable, are as follows:

a. Recommend the initiation, review, and evaluate of proposals for regulations, policies, management plans, and other matters relating to subsistence uses of fish and wildlife on public lands within the region.

b. Provide a forum for the expression of opinions and recommendations by persons interested in any matter related to the subsistence uses of fish and wildlife on public lands within the Region.

c. Encourage local and regional participation in the decision-making process affecting the taking of fish and wildlife on the public lands within the region for subsistence uses.

d. Prepare an annual report to the Secretary containing the following:

(1) An identification of current and anticipated subsistence uses of fish and wildlife populations within the Region;

(2) An evaluation of current and anticipated subsistence needs for fish and wildlife populations within the Region;

(3) A recommended strategy for the management of fish and wildlife populations within the Region to accommodate such subsistence uses and needs; and

(4) Recommendations concerning policies, standards, guidelines, and regulations to implement the strategy.

e. Appoint one member to the Wrangell-St. Elias National Park Subsistence Resource Commission in accordance with section 808 of the ANILCA.

f. Make recommendations on determinations of customary and traditional use of subsistence resources.

g. Make recommendations on determinations of rural status.

h. Provide recommendations on the establishment and membership of Federal local advisory committees.

5. Agency or Official to Whom the Council Reports. The Council reports to the Federal Subsistence Board Chair, who is appointed by the Secretary of the Interior with the concurrence of the Secretary of Agriculture.

6. Support. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will provide administrative support for the activities of the Council through the Office of Subsistence Management.

7. Estimated Annual Operating Costs and Staff Years. The annual operating costs associated with supporting the Council's functions are estimated to be $195,000, including all direct and indirect expenses and 1.15 Federal staff years.

8. Designated Federal Officer. The DFO is the Subsistence Council Coordinator for the Region or such other Federal employee as may be designated by the Assistant Regional Director – Subsistence, Region 11, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The DFO is a full-time Federal employee appointed in accordance with Agency procedures. The DFO will:

(a) Approve or call all Council and subcommittee meetings;

(b) Prepare and approve all meeting agendas;

(c) Attend all committee and subcommittee meetings;

(d) Adjourn any meeting when the DFO determines adjournment to be in the public interest; and

(e) Chair meetings when directed to do so by the official to whom the advisory committee reports.

9. Estimated Number and Frequency of Meetings. The Council will meet 1-2 times per year, and at such times as designated by the Federal Subsistence Board Chair or the DFO.

10. Duration. Continuing.

11. Termination. The Council will be inactive 2 years from the date the charter is filed, unless prior to that date, the charter is renewed in accordance with provisions of section 14 of the FACA. The Council will not meet or take any action without a valid current charter.

12. Membership and Designation. The Council's membership is composed of representative members as follows:

Thirteen members who are knowledgeable and experienced in matters relating to subsistence uses of fish and wildlife and who are residents of the region represented by the Council.

To ensure that each Council represents a diversity of interests, the Federal Subsistence Board in their nomination recommendations to the Secretary will strive to ensure that nine of the members (70 percent) represent subsistence interests within the region and four of the members (30 percent) represent commercial and sport interests within the region. The portion of membership representing commercial and sport interests must include, where possible, at least one representative from the sport community and one representative from the commercial community.

The Secretary of the Interior will appoint members based on the recommendations from the Federal Subsistence Board and with the concurrence of the Secretary of Agriculture.

Members will be appointed for 3-year terms. Members serve at the discretion of the Secretary.

If appointments for a given year have not yet been announced, a member may continue to serve on the Council following the expiration of his or her term until such appointments have been made. Unless reappointed, the member's service ends on the date of announcement even if that member's specific seat remains unfilled.

Alternate members may be appointed to the Council to fill vacancies if they occur out of cycle. An alternate member must be approved and appointed by the Secretary before attending the meeting as a representative. The term for an appointed alternate member will be the same as the term of the member whose vacancy is being filled.

Council members will elect a Chair, a Vice-Chair, and Secretary for a 1-year term.

Members of the Council will serve without compensation. However, while away from their homes or regular places of business, Council and subcommittee members engaged in Council, or subcommittee business, approved by the DFO, may be allowed travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence, in the same manner as persons employed intermittently in Government service under Section 5703 of title 5 of the United States Code.

13. Ethics Responsibilities of Members. No Council or subcommittee member will participate in any Council or subcommittee deliberations or votes relating to a specific party matter before the Department or its bureaus and offices including a lease, license, permit, contract, grant, claim, agreement, or litigation in which the member or the entity the member represents has a direct financial interest.

14. Subcommittees. Subject to the DFO's approval, subcommittees may be formed for the purpose of compiling information or conducting research. However, such subcommittees must act only under the direction of the DFO and must report their recommendations to the full Council for consideration. Subcommittees must not provide advice or work products directly to the Agency. Subcommittees will meet as necessary to accomplish their assignments, subject to the approval of the DFO and the availability of resources.

15. Recordkeeping. The Records of the Council, and formally and informally established subcommittees or other subgroups of the Council, must be handled in accordance with General Records Schedule 6.2, and other approved Agency records disposition schedules. These records must be available for public inspection and copying, subject to the Freedom of Information Act (5 U.S.C. 552).

/signature on the filed original/
Secretary of the Interior

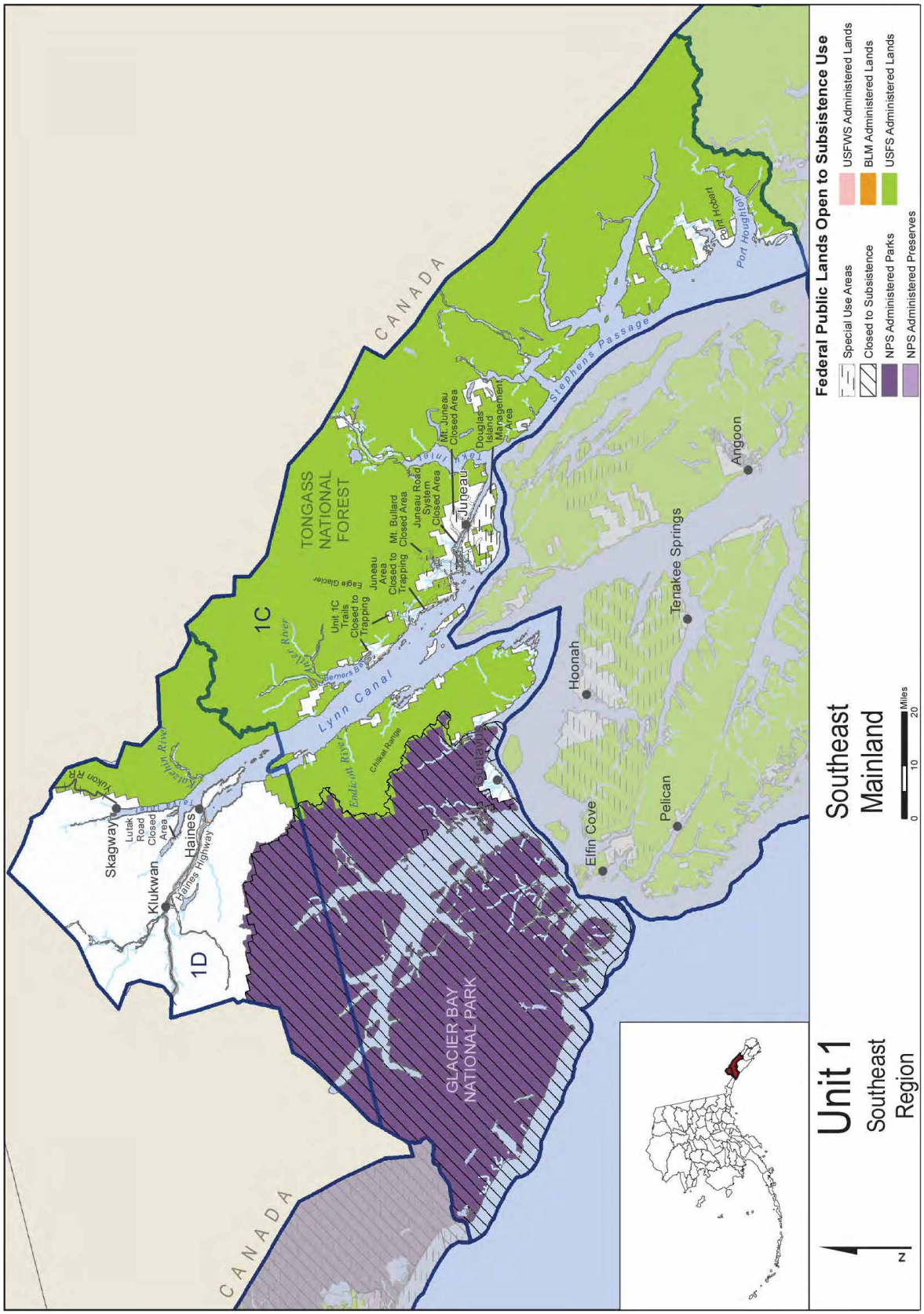
Dec. 10, 2021
Date Signed

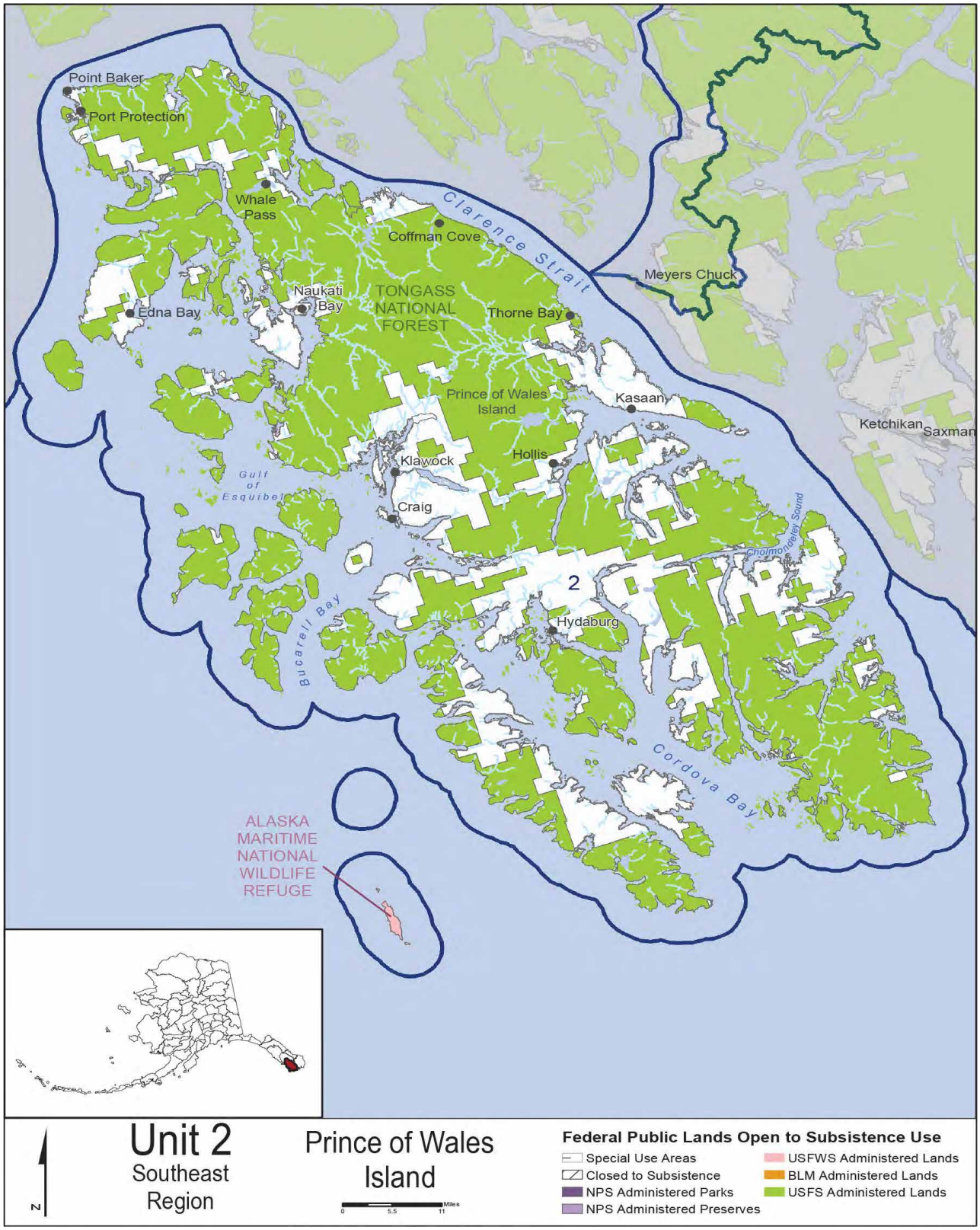
Dec. 13, 2021
Date Filed


Region 1
Southeast
Miles
0 20 40 60 80 100
Federal Public Lands Open to Subsistence Use
FWS Administered Land
NPS Administered Park
NPS Admin'd Preserve
BLM Administered Land
USFS Administered Land
Selected - Not Conveyed
Closed to Subsistence
Special Management Areas
Region Boundaries
Game Management Units
GULF OF ALASKA
NORTH PACIFIC OCEAN
DIXON ENTRANCE
WRANGELL - ST. ELIAS NATIONAL PARK
WRANGELL - ST. ELIAS NATIONAL PRESERVE
GLACIER BAY NATIONAL PRESERVE
GLACIER BAY NATIONAL PARK
TONGASS NATIONAL FOREST
KLONDIKE GOLD RUSH NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
SITKA NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
MISTY FJORDS NATIONAL MONUMENT
ALASKA MARITIME NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
1A
1B
1C
1D
2
4
5A
5B
JUNEAU AREA
Haines
Skagway
Juneau
Sitka
Petersburg
Wrangell
Ketchikan
Klawock
Craig
Hydaburg
Metlakatla
Yakutat
Gustavus
Elfin Cove
Hoonah
Pelican
Tenakee Springs
Kake
Angoon
Hoonah
Tulsequah
Dease Lake
Telegraph Creek
Cassiar
Atlin
Taku
Carcross
Tagish
Teslin
Morley River
Ranchería
Watson La
Lower
Johnsons Crossing
WHITEHORSE
MacRae
Jakes Corner
Bennett
Lower Laberge
Burwash Landing
Beaver Creek
Haines Junction
Alice
Kincolith
Arrandale
Georgetown Mills
PRINCE RUPERT
Port Essing
Hunts Inlet
Oona River
Stewart
Hyder

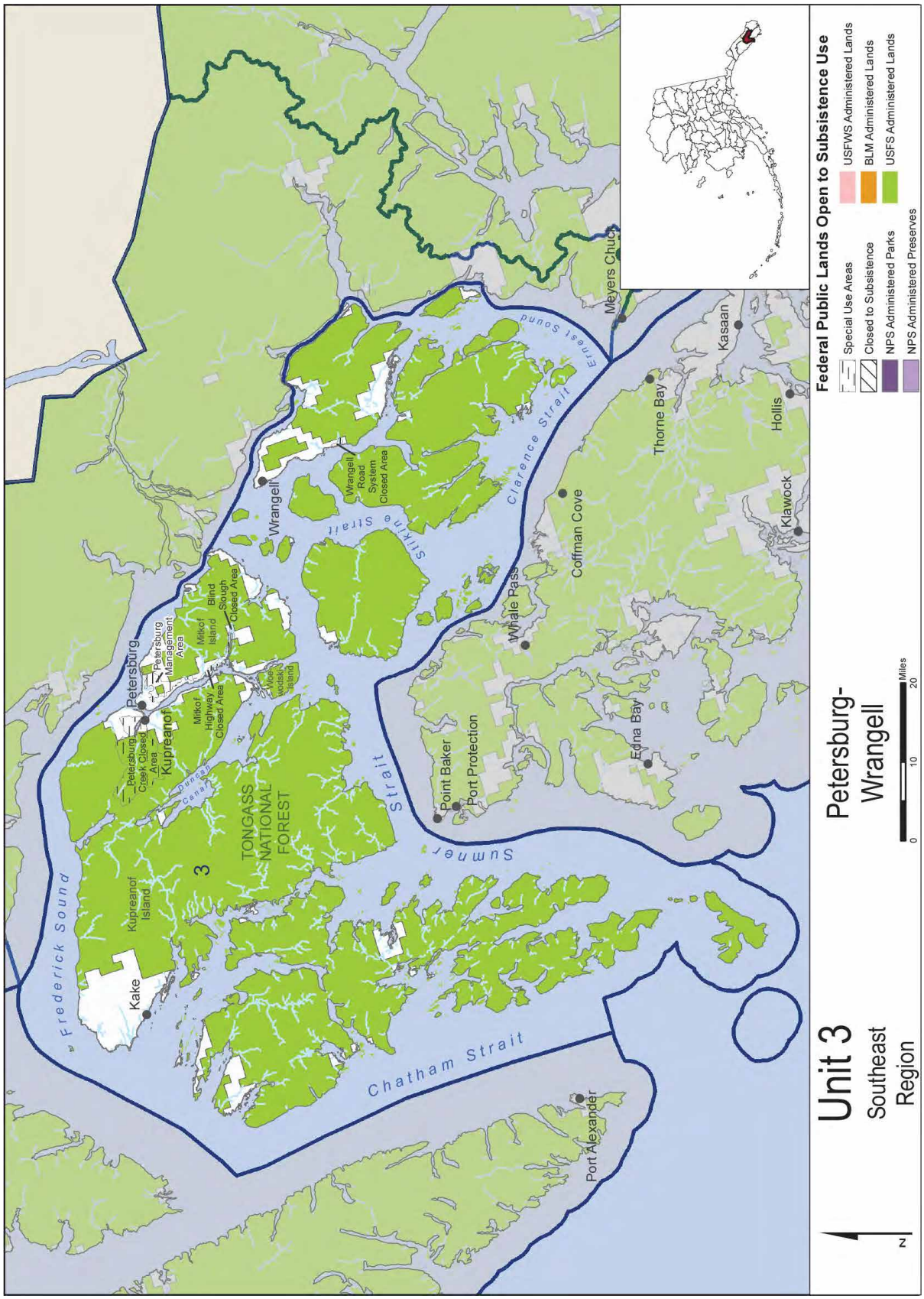

1B
1A
CANADA
Kupreanof
Petersburg
LeConte Bay
Stikine River
Wrangell
Anan Creek Closed Area
Hyder Salmon River Closed Area
Hyder
Point Baker
Port Protection
Revillagigedo Island
Behm Canal
Margaret Creek Closed Area
MISTY FJORDS NATIONAL MONUMENT
Whale Pass
Coffman Cove
Ketchikan Road System Closed Area
Edna Bay
Naukati Bay
Thorne Bay
Cleveland Peninsula
Kasaan
Ketchikan
Clarence Strait
Saxman
Klawock
Hollis
Craig
Metlakatla
Hydaburg
Unit 1
Southeast Region
Southeast Mainland
Miles
0
9.5
19
N
Federal Public Lands Open to Subsistence Use
Special Use Areas
Closed to Subsistence
NPS Administered Parks
NPS Administered Preserves
USFWS Administered Lands
BLM Administered Lands
USFS Administered Lands

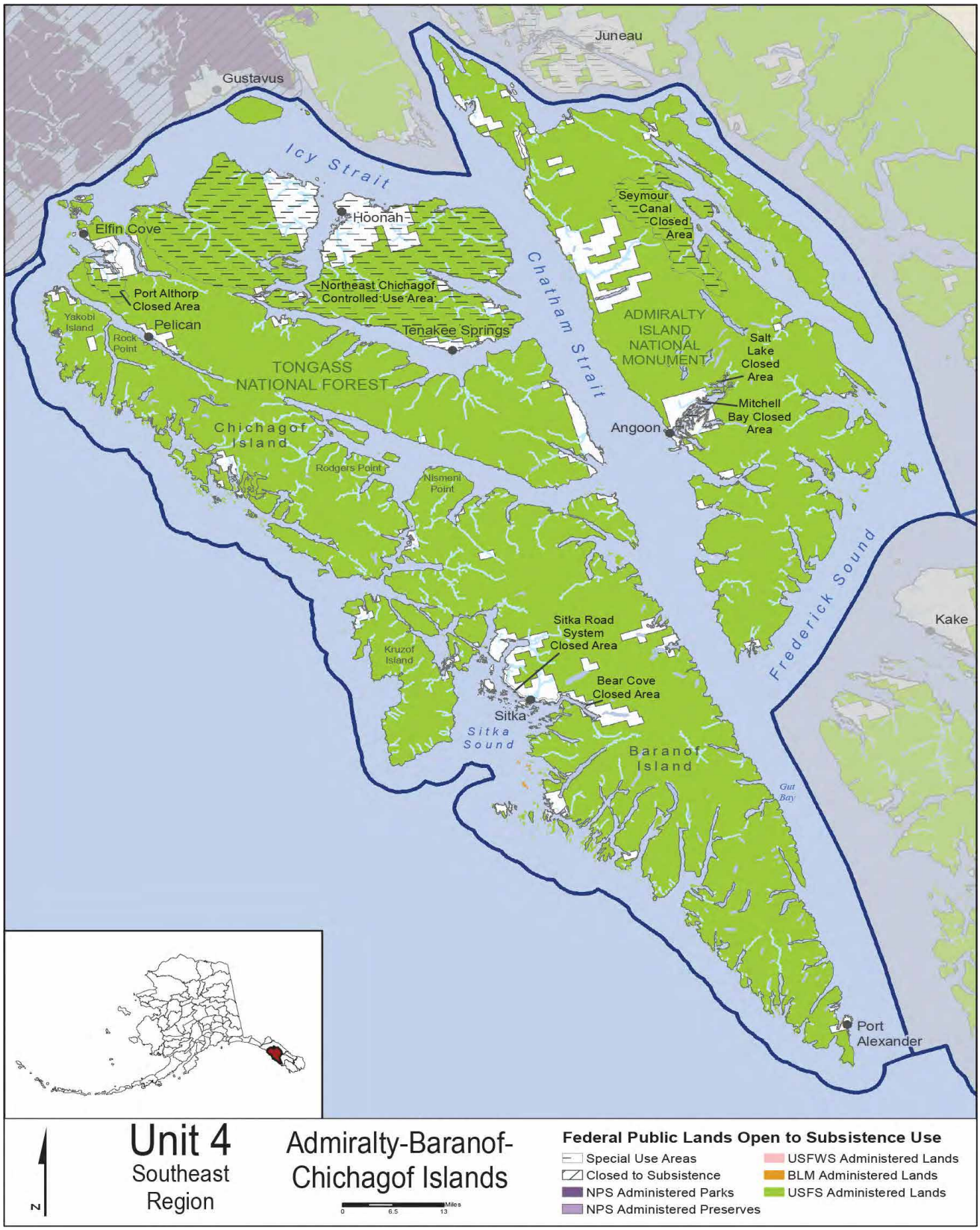
WILDLIFE


Unit 1
Southeast
Region
Southeast
Mainland
Miles
0
10
20
N
Federal Public Lands Open to Subsistence Use
Special Use Areas
Closed to Subsistence
NPS Administered Parks
NPS Administered Preserves
USFWS Administered Lands
BLM Administered Lands
USFS Administered Lands
WILDLIFE
CANADA
CANADA
1C
1D
TONGASS
NATIONAL
FOREST
GLACIER BAY
NATIONAL PARK
Lynn Canal
Stephens Passage
Port Houghton
Port Hobart
Douglas
Island
Management
Area
Mt. Juneau
Closed Area
Juneau Road
System
Closed Area
Mt. Bullard
Closed Area
Juneau
Area
Closed to
Trapping
Unit 1C
Trails
Closed to
Trapping
Eagle Glacier
Eagle River
Berners Bay
Juneau
Angoon
Tenakee Springs
Hoonah
Pelican
Elfin Cove
Chilkat Range
Endicott River
Glacier Hwy
Haines Highway
Lutak
Road
Closed
Area
Skagway
Haines
Klukwan
Yukon R.
Alsek River

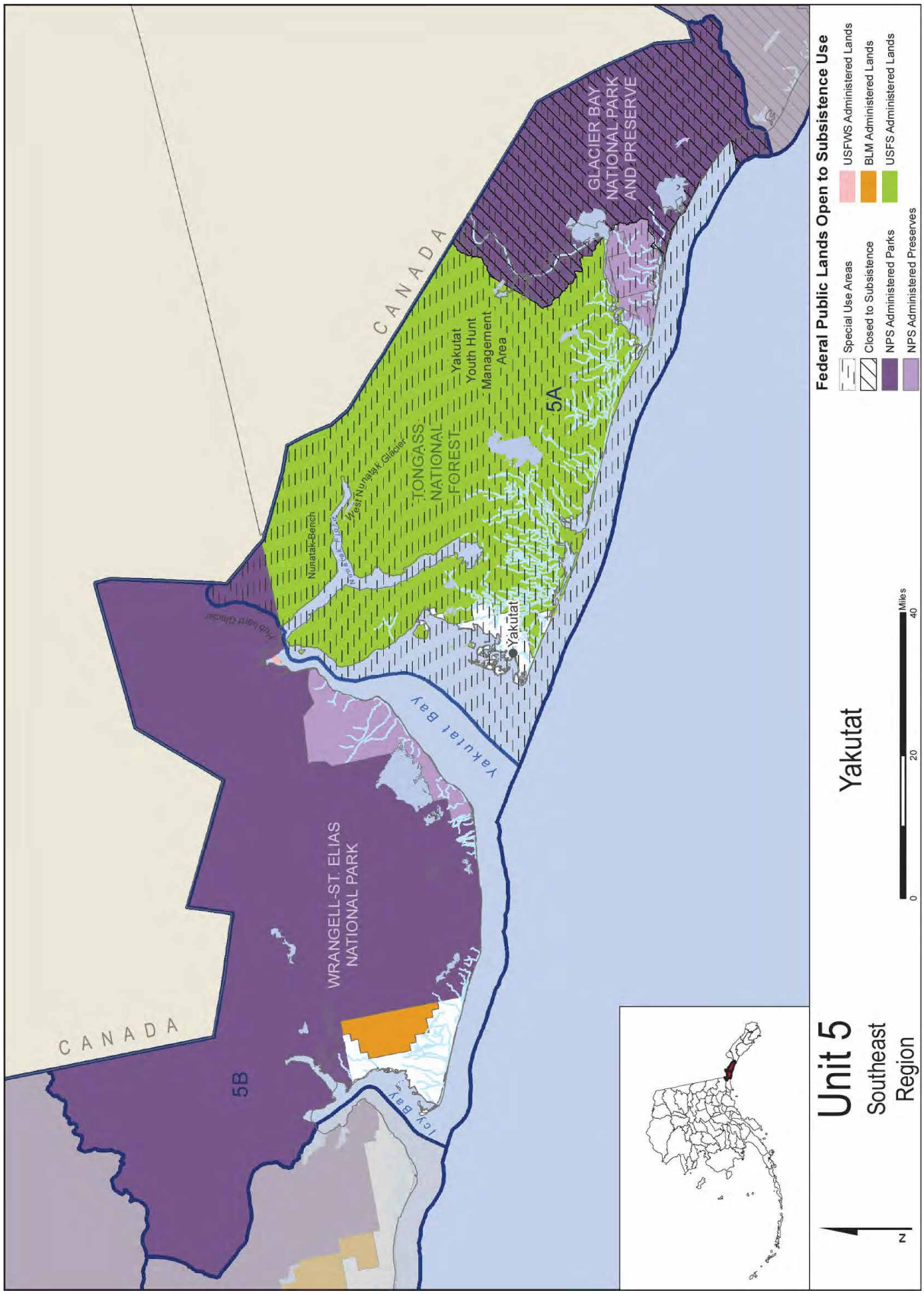

Point Baker
Port Protection
Whale Pass
Coffman Cove
Clarence Strait
Meyers Chuck
Naukati Bay
TONGASS NATIONAL FOREST
Edna Bay
Thorne Bay
Prince of Wales Island
Kasaan
Ketchikan
Saxman
Klawock
Hollis
Craig
Gulf of Esquibel
Chomondeley Sound
2
Hydaburg
Bucarelli Bay
Cordova Bay
ALASKA MARITIME NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
Unit 2
Southeast Region
Prince of Wales Island
Miles
0 5.5 11
N
Federal Public Lands Open to Subsistence Use
Special Use Areas
Closed to Subsistence
NPS Administered Parks
NPS Administered Preserves
USFWS Administered Lands
BLM Administered Lands
USFS Administered Lands

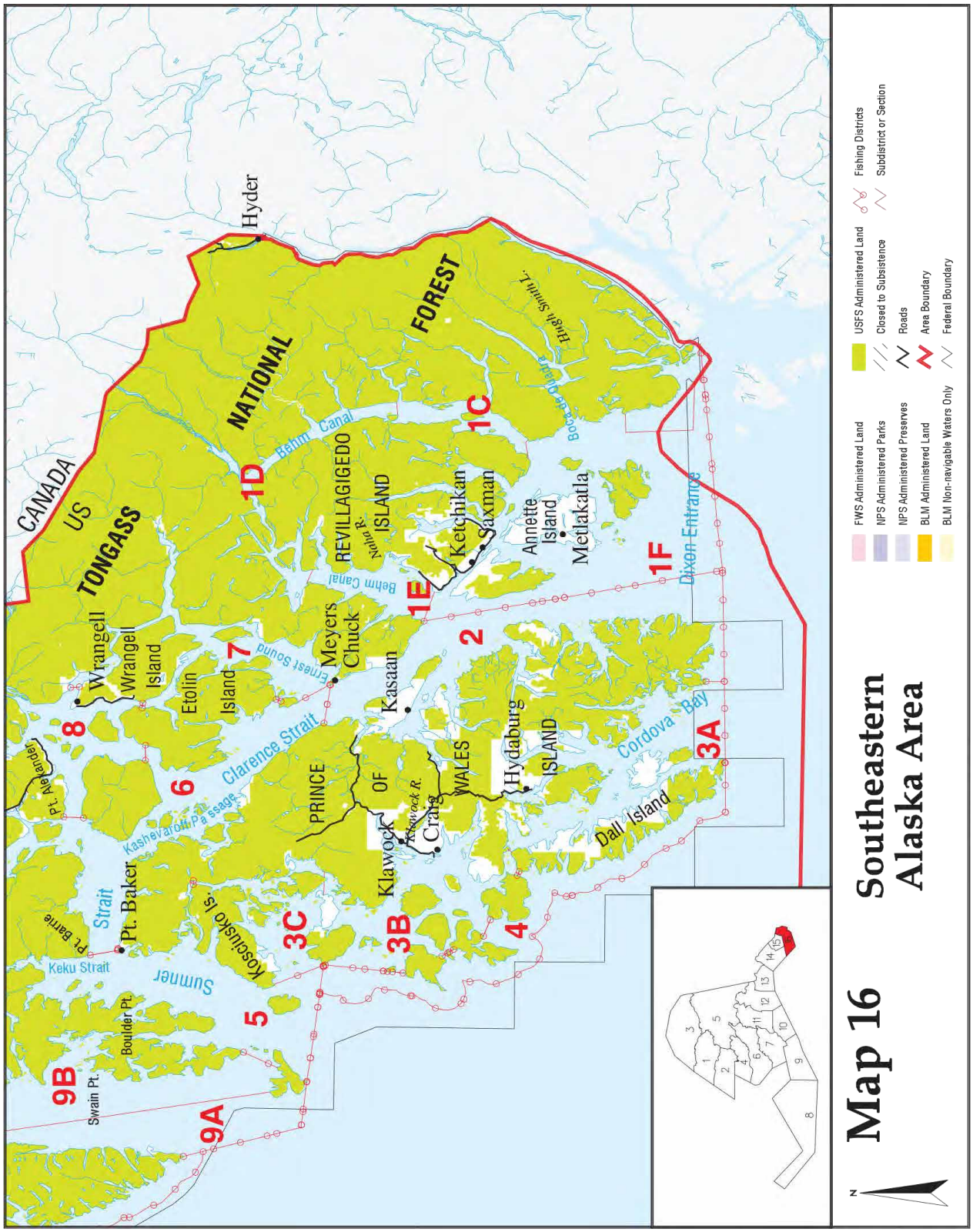
WILDLIFE

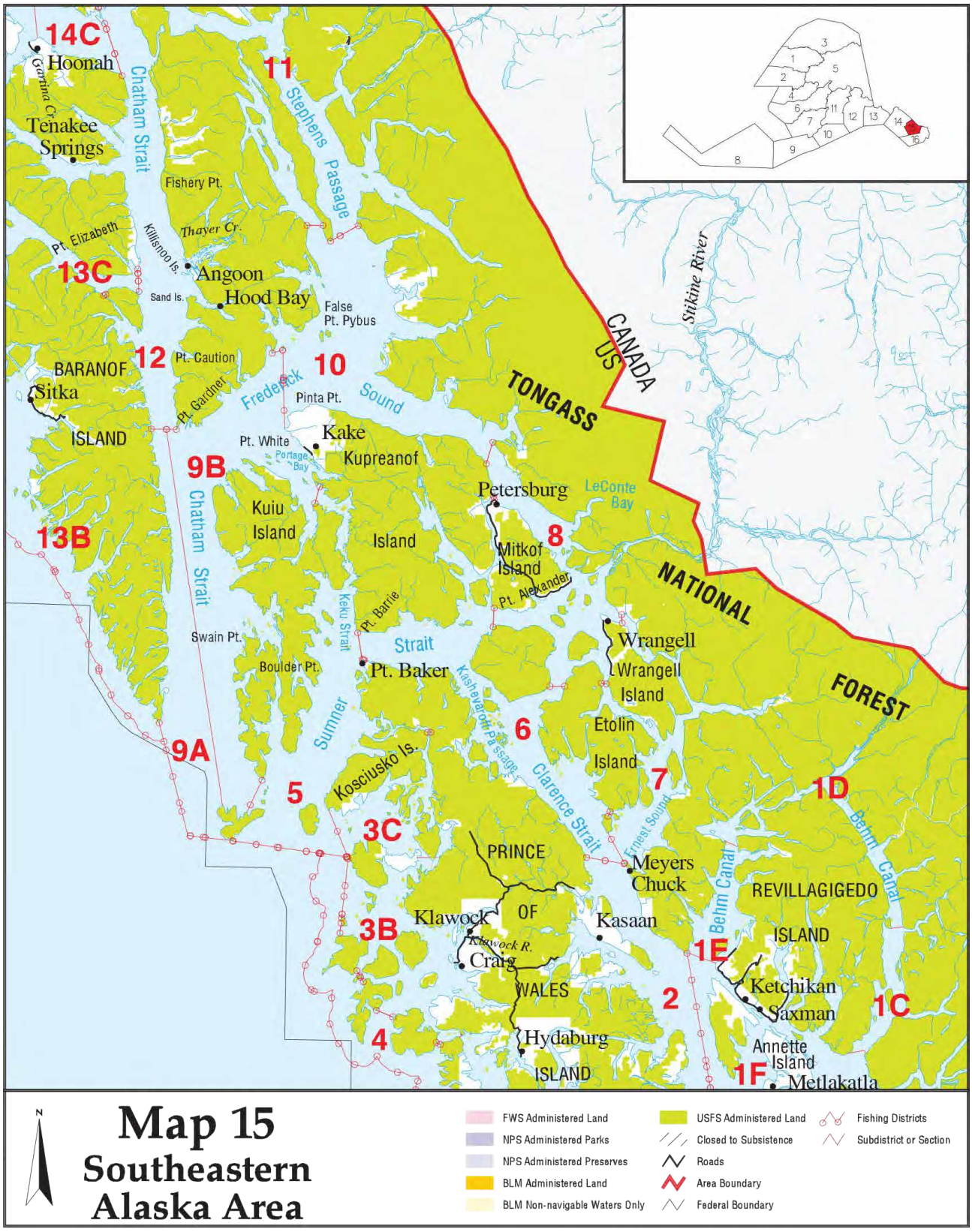

Unit 3
Southeast
Region
Petersburg-
Wrangell
Miles
0
10
20
WILDLIFE
Federal Public Lands Open to Subsistence Use
Special Use Areas
Closed to Subsistence
NPS Administered Parks
NPS Administered Preserves
USFWS Administered Lands
BLM Administered Lands
USFS Administered Lands
Frederick Sound
Chatham Strait
Sumner Strait
Clarence Strait
Ernest Sound
Stikine Strait
Duncan Canal
TONGASS NATIONAL FOREST
3
Kupreanof Island
Petersburg Creek Closed Area
Petersburg Management Area
Mitkof Highway Closed Area
Mitkof Island
Blind Slough Closed Area
Wrangell Road System Closed Area
Petersburg
Kupreanof
Wrangell
Kake
Port Alexander
Point Baker
Port Protection
Whale Pass
Coffman Cove
Edna Bay
Thorne Bay
Hollis
Klawock
Kasaan
Meyers Chuck

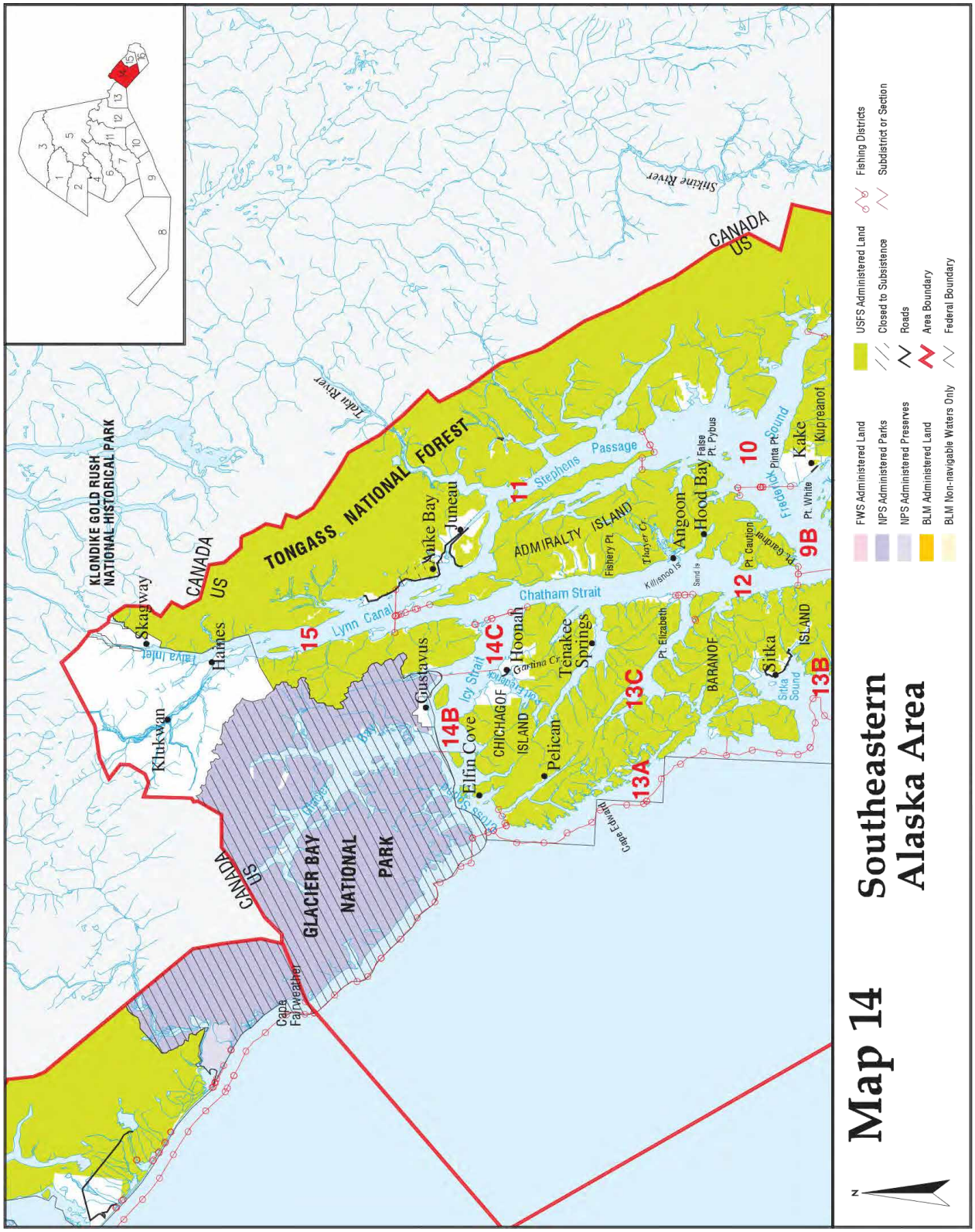

Juneau
Gustavus
Icy Strait
Hoonah
Elfin Cove
Seymour Canal Closed Area
Chatham Strait
Port Althorp Closed Area
Yakobi Island
Rock Point
Pelican
Northeast Chichagof Controlled Use Area
Tenakee Springs
ADMIRALTY ISLAND NATIONAL MONUMENT
Salt Lake Closed Area
TONGASS NATIONAL FOREST
Mitchell Bay Closed Area
Angoon
Chichagof Island
Rodgers Point
Nismeni Point
Frederick Sound
Kake
Sitka Road System Closed Area
Kruzof Island
Bear Cove Closed Area
Sitka
Sitka Sound
Baranof Island
Gut Bay
Port Alexander
N
Unit 4
Southeast Region
Admiralty-Baranof-Chichagof Islands
0 6.5 13 Miles
Federal Public Lands Open to Subsistence Use
Special Use Areas
Closed to Subsistence
NPS Administered Parks
NPS Administered Preserves
USFWS Administered Lands
BLM Administered Lands
USFS Administered Lands

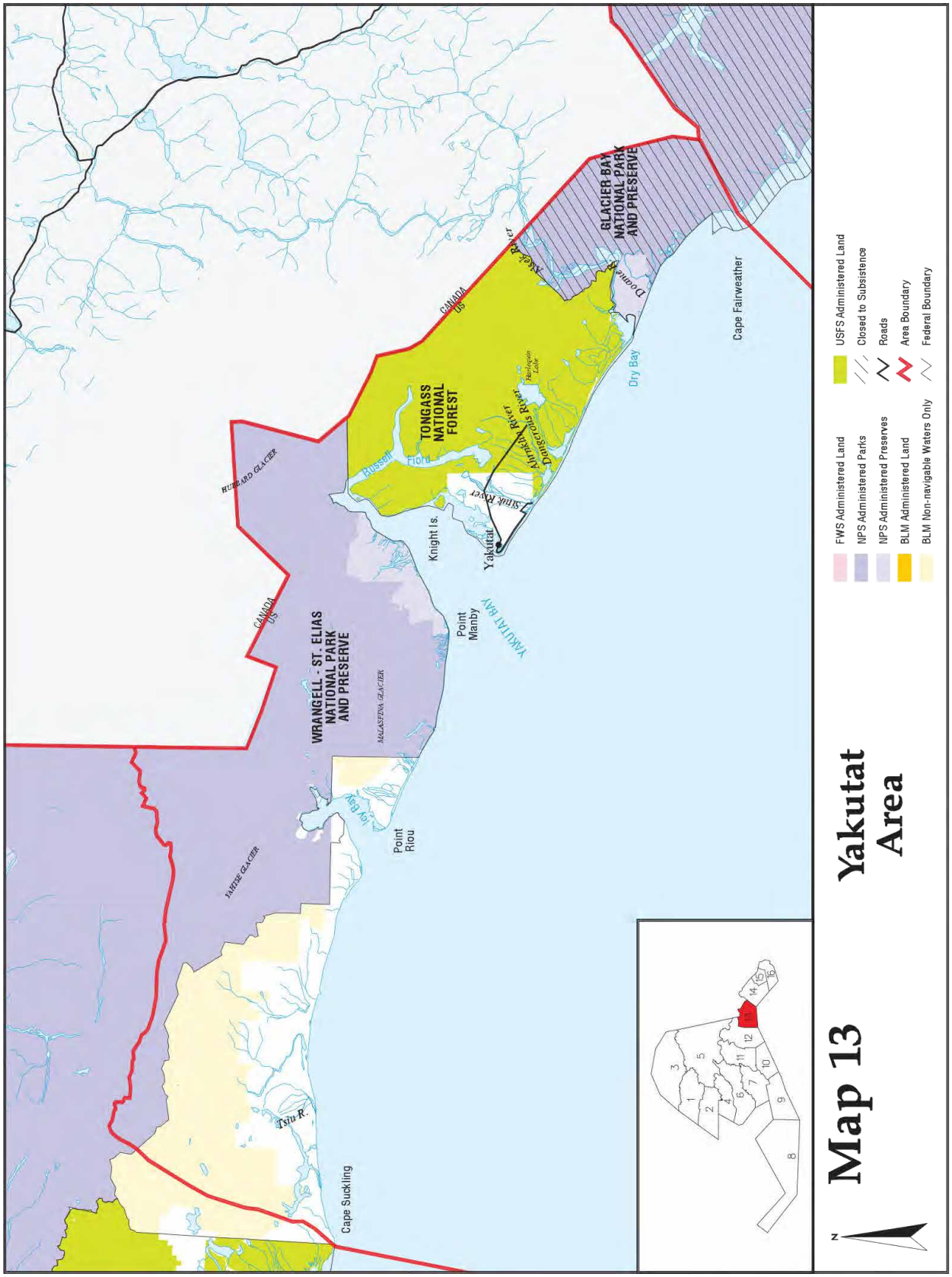
WILDLIFE


CANADA
CANADA
GLACIER BAY NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE
TONGASS NATIONAL FOREST
Yakutat Youth Hunt Management Area
5A
5B
WRANGELL-ST. ELIAS NATIONAL PARK
Yakutat Bay
Icy Bay
Nunatak Bench
West Nunatak Glacier
Yakutat
Hubbard Glacier
Federal Public Lands Open to Subsistence Use
Special Use Areas
Closed to Subsistence
NPS Administered Parks
NPS Administered Preserves
USFWS Administered Lands
BLM Administered Lands
USFS Administered Lands
Yakutat
Unit 5
Southeast Region
N
0
20
40
Miles
WILDLIFE


Map 16
Southeastern Alaska Area
FISH
CANADA
US
TONGASS
NATIONAL
FOREST
Hyder
Behm Canal
REVILLAGIGEDO ISLAND
Ketchikan
Saxman
Annette Island
Metlakatla
Dixon Entrance
Meyers Chuck
Kasaan
Wrangell
Wrangell Island
Etolin Island
Clarence Strait
Kashevarof Passage
PRINCE OF WALES ISLAND
Hydaburg
Craig
Klawock
Klawock R.
Cordova Bay
Dall Island
Pt. Alexander
Pt. Baker
Pt. Barrie
Keku Strait
Summer Strait
Kosciusko Is.
Boulder Pt.
Swain Pt.
Tlingit-Haida
Thorne Bay
1C
1D
1E
1F
2
3A
3B
3C
4
5
6
7
8
9A
9B
FWS Administered Land
NPS Administered Parks
NPS Administered Preserves
BLM Administered Land
BLM Non-navigable Waters Only
USFS Administered Land
Closed to Subsistence
Roads
Area Boundary
Federal Boundary
Fishing Districts
Subdistrict or Section


14C
Hoonah
Gartina Cr.
Tenakee Springs
Chatham Strait
11
Stephens Passage
Fishery Pt.
Thayer Cr.
Pt. Elizabeth
Killisnoo Is.
13C
Angoon
Sand Is.
Hood Bay
False Pt. Pybus
12
Pt. Caution
BARANOF
Sitka
ISLAND
Pt. Gardner
Frederick Sound
10
Pinta Pt.
Pt. White
Portage Bay
Kake
Kupreanof
9B
Kuiu Island
Island
13B
Chatham Strait
Swain Pt.
Keku Strait
Pt. Barrie
Strait
Boulder Pt.
Pt. Baker
Sumner
9A
Kosciusko Is.
5
3C
PRINCE
OF
WALES
ISLAND
Klawock
Klawock R.
Craig
3B
4
Hydaburg
CANADA
US
TONGASS
NATIONAL
FOREST
Stikine River
Petersburg
LeConte Bay
Mitkof Island
8
Pt. Alexander
Wrangell
Wrangell Island
Kashevarof Passage
6
Etolin Island
7
Clarence Strait
Ernest Sound
Meyers Chuck
Kasaan
1D
Behm Canal
REVILLAGIGEDO ISLAND
1E
Ketchikan
Saxman
2
1C
Annette Island
1F
Metlakatla
1
3
5
2
4
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
16
Map 15
Southeastern Alaska Area
FISH
FWS Administered Land
NPS Administered Parks
NPS Administered Preserves
BLM Administered Land
BLM Non-navigable Waters Only
USFS Administered Land
Closed to Subsistence
Roads
Area Boundary
Federal Boundary
Fishing Districts
Subdistrict or Section


Map 14
Southeastern
Alaska Area
FISH
FWS Administered Land
NPS Administered Parks
NPS Administered Preserves
BLM Administered Land
BLM Non-navigable Waters Only
USFS Administered Land
Closed to Subsistence
Roads
Area Boundary
Federal Boundary
Fishing Districts
Subdistrict or Section
TONGASS NATIONAL FOREST
GLACIER BAY NATIONAL PARK
KLONDIKE GOLD RUSH NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
ADMIRALTY ISLAND
CHICHAGOF ISLAND
BARANOF ISLAND
Chatham Strait
Lynn Canal
Stephens Passage
Icy Strait
Cross Sound
Sitka Sound
Frederick Sound
Glacier Bay
Taku River
Skagway
Haines
Klukwan
Gustavus
Elfin Cove
Hoonah
Tenakee Springs
Pelican
Sitka
Kake
Kupreanof
Juneau
Auke Bay
Angoon
Hood Bay
Pt. Elizabeth
Pt. White
Pt. Caution
Cape Fairweather
Cape Edgecumbe
Shkine River
CANADA
US
15
14B
14C
13A
13B
13C
12
11
10
9B


FISH
Map 13
Yakutat Area
USFS Administered Land
Closed to Subsistence
Roads
Area Boundary
Federal Boundary
FWS Administered Land
NPS Administered Parks
NPS Administered Preserves
BLM Administered Land
BLM Non-navigable Waters Only
GLACIER BAY NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE
TONGASS NATIONAL FOREST
WRANGELL - ST. ELIAS NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE
CANADA
US
Dry Bay
Cape Fairweather
Yakutat
Knight Is.
Point Manby
YAKUTAT BAY
Point Riou
Cape Suckling
Russell Fiord
Ahrnklin River
Doame River
Situk River
Alsek River
Tsiu R.
HUBBARD GLACIER
MALASPINA GLACIER
YAHTSE GLACIER
Ivy Bay

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