

NORTHWEST ARCTIC Subsistence Regional Advisory Council



USFWS

Autumn creates a spectacular beauty in Northwest Alaska.

Meeting Materials

August 21–22, 2013

Kotzebue

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NORTHWEST ARCTIC SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Northwest Arctic Borough Chambers
 Kotzebue, AK
 August 21-22, 9:00 AM-5:00 PM

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.

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.

*Asterisk identifies action item.

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NOTE: Council will recess on first day prior to receiving a briefing on this issue. There will be a public hearing in the evening, at which time the rural determination issue will be briefed to the Council and public. Meeting will be facilitated by LT lead, ISC member and/or Board member. Council will conduct its own deliberations on the issue on second day.

11. Agency Reports

A. OSM89
 1. Budget Update
 2. Staffing Update
 3. Draft Tribal Consultation Implementation Guidelines (*Update*)
 4. Regulatory Cycle Update
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- A. Confirm date and location of winter 2014 meeting
- B. Select date and location of fall 2014 meeting

13. Closing Comments

14. Adjourn (*Chair*)

To teleconference into the meeting, call the toll free number: 1-877-638-8165, then when prompted enter the passcode: 9060609

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife is committed to providing access to this meeting for those with a disability who wish to participate. Please direct all requests for accommodation for a disability to the Office of Subsistence Management at least five business days prior to the meeting. If you have any questions regarding this agenda or need additional information, please contact Melinda Hernandez Burke, Council Coordinator at 907-786-3885, [melinda_burke@fws.gov], or contact the Office of Subsistence Management at 1-800-478-1456 for general inquiries.

REGION 8—NORTHWEST ARCTIC REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Seat	Yr Apptd <i>Term Expires</i>	Member Name & Address
1	2010 2013	Raymond Stoney Kiana
2	2004 2013	Victor Ray Karmun Kotzebue
3	2011 2013	Hannah Paniyavluk Loon Selawik
4	2010 2013	Michael Chad Kramer Kotzebue
5	2008 2014	Percy C. Ballot Sr. Buckland
6	2011 2014	Verne J. Cleveland, Sr. Noorvik
7	2006 2014	Walter G. Sampson Kotzebue
8	1999 2015	Enoch A. Shiedt Sr. Kotzebue
9	2015	VACANT
10	2012 2015	Calvin D. Moto Deering

MEETING MINUTES
Northwest Arctic Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
March 5-6, 2013
Northwest Arctic Borough Council Chambers
Kotzebue, Alaska

Call to Order

Meeting called to order by Vice-Chair Victor Karmun at 9:00 a.m.

Roll Call and Establish Quorum

Mr. Raymond Stoney called the roll. NWARAC Council members present: Raymond Stoney, Victor Karmun, Hannah Loon, Michael Kramer, Percy Ballot, Verne Cleveland,
Excused: Enoch Shiedt, Walter Sampson

Invocation

Mr. Stoney led an invocation to all present at the meeting.

Welcome and Introductions

Chair Reakoff welcomed guests and staff members.

The following personnel and members of the public were in attendance:

Government Agency Employees

Bud Cribley	Federal Subsistence Board Member (BLM)
Pat Petrivelli	Bureau of Indian Affairs Anchorage
Helen Armstrong	U.S. FWS OSM DFO
Susan Georgette	U.S. FWS Kotzebue
Karen Hyer	U.S. FWS OSM (via teleconference)
Jack Lorrigan	U.S. FWS OSM
Chris McKee	U.S. FWS OSM (via teleconference)
Branden Saits	U.S. FWS Kotzebue
Ken Adkisson	National Park Service
Frank Hayes	National Park Service
Marci Johnson	National Park Service
Drew Crawford	ADF&G Anchorage
Charlotte Westing	ADF&G Kotzebue

John Erlich
Shelly Jacobson

Bureau of Land Management
Bureau of Land Management

NGOs/Public

Charlie Green
Sean Greg
Noah Naylar

Northwest Arctic Borough
Northwest Arctic Borough
Northwest Arctic Borough

Review and Adoption of Agenda

Mr. Percy Ballot moved to adopt the agenda as amended. Mrs. Hannah Loon seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Election of Officers

Mr. Percy Ballot made a motion to postpone election of officers until the next meeting. Mr. Raymond Stoney seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Review/Approval of Minutes

Correction: Pg. 5 of the minutes needs a spelling correction: **Louie Commack** from Ambler

Mr. Percy Ballot made a motion to approve the minutes of the previous meeting. Mrs. Hannah Loon seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Council Member Reports

Raymond Stoney (Kiana): Was pleased with the caribou herd this winter in GMU 23; it was an impressing year. The overall size of herd is concerning, as caribou declines could mean cutting down subsistence uses in some form. Many non-resident hunters are seen coming into Unit 23 to hunt

Percy Ballot (Buckland): It is good to see the caribou back again. We did not have good fall hunts, but we have good winter hunts when the caribou are near. We are also seeing the jackrabbits and lynx. Concerns exist about the muskox this year.

Michael Kramer (Kotzebue): The caribou have wintered well, but the fall migration has been somewhat slow with nothing near our area. Seeing more wolves and wolverines in the area; flooding seems to have affected some small mammal populations.

Hannah Loon (Selawik): Last season was poor for drying pike. We did have good ice fishing, and I am getting caribou meat with good fat from my area. Seeing a lot of land erosion in our area and near our village. This may affect our food sources.

Verne Cleveland (Noorvik): Caribou are abundant in my area right now; also seeing many wolves. By late fall it is difficult to get moose, it was also harder to reach hunting grounds because of high water.

Victor Karmun (Kotzebue): There are caribou present near Wolf Creek behind Kotzebue, along with several wolves. One concern is taking of female caribou after freeze-up. Taking of females will affect the Western Arctic Caribou Herd. Water was exceptionally high in the fall time, making for difficult hunting. Small game has been scarce this winter, and few ptarmigan as well. Also concerned about taking of female caribou after the freeze-up.

WCR12-18—Sheep

Chris McKee (OSM Biologist) provided the presentation of the closure review for sheep in Unit 23. The closure was last reviewed in 2008. OSM preliminary conclusion is to maintain the closure; a harvestable surplus seems low. Maintaining the closure is consistent with sound management principles to conserve a healthy sheep population.

Mr. Percy Ballot made a motion to support the closure. Mr. Michael Kramer seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

WCR12-18—Sheep

Chris McKee provided the presentation of the closure review for muskox in Unit 23. The OSM preliminary conclusion is to maintain the closure.

Mr. Percy Ballot made a motion to support the closure. Mrs. Hannah Loon seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Review and Finalize DRAFT 2012 Annual Report

The Council reviewed the Draft 2012 Annual Report. There were two additional points brought up for inclusion in the letter: increased youth involvement and alternate councilmembers to ensure a quorum.

Mr. Michael Kramer made a motion to add two additional topics to the Annual Report for submission to the FSB. Mr. Percy Ballot seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Misc. Presentations and Updates

- Verne Cleveland provided a summary of his time representing the Council at the January Federal Subsistence Board Meeting. Verne also announced that he is the newly elected vice-chair for the Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group.
- Percy Ballot provided some comments and updates from the ICC which he is a member of. Recent projects include a project building a framework for assessing food security. Interviews are being conducted in the 9 regions in Alaska (especially those on the Chukchi and Bering Sea Coast). We hope to gather information from hunters and gatherers on what affects their food security (weather, animal health, development, etc.). ICC would like to use this information to

build an understanding of what affects food security and how to use traditional knowledge to build the framework. Carolina Behe is the TEK expert and she also made a presentation to the Council on this project.

- Ken Adkisson from the National Park Service provided a presentation on Unit 23 Muskox status and proposed regulatory modifications. Marci Johnson also provided updates on projects in the region.
- Frank Hayes from the National Park Service discussed budget cuts and how it is affecting activities such as SRC meetings and also discussed research projects.
- Lee Anne Ayers provided the agency report for the Selawik Refuge office, including priorities on the refuge for the coming year including local stewardship and support for the Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group, and biological programs. Charlotte Westing discussed partner activities and surveys.
- Jim Dau provided an update on the Western Arctic Caribou Herd population. There is still an overall decline in the herd; about 4%-6% per year.
- Jack Lorrigan (OSM Native Liaison) introduced himself and briefed the Council on the Tribal Consultation Policy Working Group and implementation guidelines. Jack also covered OSM updates including personnel changes and the MOU with the State of Alaska.
- Carolina Behe from the Inuit Circumpolar Conference introduced the group and discussed Food Security Project study taking place in the region.
- Shelly Jacobson provided an update on BLM activities, projects, and other work in the region.

Call for Wildlife Regulatory Proposals

The Council reviewed the news release announcing the coming deadline for submitting Federal proposals.

The Council submitted a proposal to eliminate the requirement for a State registration hunt to take brown bear in Unit 23 on Federal lands in order to align State and Federal regulations on the taking of the species. Removing the State permit requirement would ease confusion about hunting regulations for communities on Federal lands in the Unit so that brown bear can be harvested more opportunistically without the concern of having to have a State permit for such harvest.

Rural Determination Process Presentation:

Helen Armstrong (OSM) provided an overview of the Rural Determination Process and highlighted the call for public comment on the criteria.

- The Council felt like the 10 year review cycle should be shortened to 5 years. They also noted the importance of public comment on this process from communities.

Customary and Traditional Use Determinations

Helen Armstrong (OSM) and Pat Petrivelli (BIA) covered the request from the Southeast RAC to review the current Customary and Traditional Use Determination process.

Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program:

Helen Armstrong (OSM) provided an overview on the 2014 FRMP funding opportunity.

Confirm Dates and Locations of Future Meetings:

Fall 2013: August 21-22, 2013 in Kiana

Winter 2014: February 18-19, 2014 in Kotzebue

I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the forgoing minutes are accurate and complete.

Melinda Hernandez, Designated Federal Officer
USFWS Office of Subsistence Management

Victor Karmun, Vice-Chair

Northwest Arctic Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

These minutes will be formally considered by the Western Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council at its next public meeting, and any corrections or notations will be incorporated into the minutes of that meeting.

GUIDANCE ON 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 C.F.R. 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.

Northwest Arctic Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

c/o U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

1011 East Tudor Road, MS 121

Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Phone: (907) 786-3888, Fax: (907) 786-3898

Toll Free: 1-800-478-1456

RAC NWA13037.MH

AUG 06 2013

Mr. Tim Towarak, Chair
Federal Subsistence Board
c/o U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Office of Subsistence Management
1011 East Tudor Road, MS 121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Dear Mr. Towarak:

The Northwest Arctic Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council) appreciates the opportunity to submit this annual report to the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) under the provisions of Section 805(a)(3)(D) and Section 805(c) of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). At its August 2012 public meeting in Kotzebue, the Council identified concerns and recommendations for its FY 2012 annual report, then finalized and approved that report at its February 2013 meeting in Kotzebue. The Council understands and supports the importance of addressing fish and wildlife resource topics annually, expressing its concerns, and addressing long term planning needs that are not addressed through the regulatory cycles throughout the year. The Council looks forward to your continued guidance and support on the issues listed below.

1. Requested meeting in Kiana

In recent meetings, the Council has expressed strong interest in holding a future meeting in Kiana, a non-hub community. The Council has never been informed of a cost analysis conducted or of any follow up discussion with Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) leadership regarding this request. The Council feels it has an obligation to make this process available to the public, despite the budget and travel constraints that currently exist, which compel Council meetings to take place in hub communities within the given regions.

Kiana is located in a central and high traffic area for much of the caribou hunting which takes place in the region. Decisions made regarding this resource heavily impact the community. The residents of Kiana need to be given an opportunity to voice their concerns to the Council

regarding these important subsistence issues. Raymond Stoney, Council member from Kiana, has relayed strong interest and eagerness on the part of his community to host a Council meeting in the near future. Mr. Stoney is willing to work with the Council Coordinator in advance to obtain whatever information is needed in researching lodging and venue options for a cost analysis to be submitted to OSM leadership.

2. One day Council meetings

The Council is concerned about the one-day meeting trend for our region. Our most recent agenda did not contain any Federal or State regulatory proposals to review and appeared fairly thin. We were informed that a one-day meeting would be held in place of our originally scheduled two-day meeting due to the agenda size and also to cut down on overall costs. Despite a “light” agenda, the meeting still felt rushed through several presentations and pressure was felt to keep things moving along. One day is simply an insufficient amount of time for this Council to conduct its business.

Further, Federal and State staff members are often rushing to catch flights before the conclusion of the meetings and this gathering was no exception. It is important to the Council for all of the interested and affected parties to be present and for important dialogue and exchange of information to be taking place right up until adjournment. The critical issues being discussed are vital to the way of life of the people of this region and state. The Council is made up of volunteers who often sacrifice heavily to be present at these meetings, often missing out on key subsistence activities. With budget and travel being so extremely limited for all entities, we need to ensure that scheduled meetings are fully taken advantage of, so communication can flow as smoothly as possible in these rare instances when we are all in the same room.

3. Council Terms and Youth Involvement

This Council feels that a longer term for the Regional Advisory Councils members should be implemented, especially since the appointment process is so lengthy and is often delayed. Further, an alternate being available the week of scheduled meetings would be helpful to maintain quorums, if delays or scheduling conflicts occur.

This Council would also like to see more youth involvement with our Councils and representation at our meetings. A youth seat or representative for each community or seat in the region would be a great connection to make with future applicants and Council members. Some of these youth are already involved in hunting and need to be aware of policies and processes involved with Federal and State regulations. Beginning early on educating and getting youth engaged in the process will benefit youth, their communities, and future generations.

Thank you for the opportunity for this Council to assist the Federal Subsistence Program to meet its charge of protecting subsistence resources and uses of these resources on Federal Public lands

Tim Towarak

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and waters. We look forward to continuing discussions about the issues and concerns of subsistence users of the Northwest Arctic Region. If you have questions about this report, please contact me via Melinda Hernandez, Subsistence Council Coordinator, with the Office of Subsistence Management at 1-800-478-1456 or (907) 786-3885.

Sincerely,
/S/

Enoch Attamuk Shiedt
Chair

cc: Federal Subsistence Board
Northwest Arctic Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Kathleen M. O'Reilly-Doyle, Acting Assistant Regional Director, OSM
David Jenkins, Acting Deputy Assistant Regional Director, OSM
Carl Johnson, Council Coordination Division Chief, OSM
Interagency Staff Committee
Administrative Record

Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

January 22, 2013

Customary and Traditional Use Determination Recommendation Briefing

Issue:

The Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (SESRAC) does not agree that the current process of restricting access to fish and wildlife resources through a customary and traditional use (C&T) determination process was intended in ANILCA.

Although SESRAC recognizes that there are a number of possible solutions, its preferred solution is to eliminate the C&T determination regulations (36 CFR 242.16 and 50 CFR 100.16) and allocate resources as directed in section 804 of ANILCA.

Background:

The current Federal C&T determination regulations, including the eight factors, were adopted from pre-existing State regulations. The Federal program adopted this framework, with some differences, when it was thought that Federal subsistence management would be temporary.

The primary purpose of C&T determinations by the State is to limit the subsistence priority by adopting "negative" determinations for specific fish and wildlife species in specific areas. The C&T determination process is also used to establish non-subsistence use areas where NO species are eligible for subsistence use.

A "positive" C&T determination in State rules recognizes subsistence use and provides residents with a legal protection to engage in priority subsistence activities.

Unlike the State process, in which some lands are excluded from subsistence use (non-subsistence use areas); all Federal lands are available for subsistence use by rural residents.

The Federal program uses the C&T determination process to restrict which rural residents can participate in subsistence. The abundance of fish or wildlife is not the primary factor in deciding which rural residents can participate in subsistence and some residents may be restricted in times of abundance.

The Federal C&T determination process is actually a means of closing an area to some rural residents but there are no provisions for periodic review of this action similar to the review policy on other closures.

A draft policy on C&T determinations was subject to public comment during the fall 2007 Regional Advisory Council meeting window. The Federal Subsistence Board deferred finalization on the policy in March of 2008.

In October of 2009, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar announced that there would be “a review of the Federal subsistence program to ensure that the program is best serving rural Alaskans and that the letter and spirit of Title VIII are being met”.

In a detailed report from the U.S. Department of the Interior in September 2010, the Secretary of the Interior with concurrence of the Secretary of Agriculture, directed the subsistence Board to do several tasks.

The first relevant task was to “review, with RAC input, federal subsistence procedural and structural regulations adopted from the state in order to ensure federal authorities are fully reflected and comply with Title VIII (changes would require new regulations)”.

The second relevant task was to “review customary and traditional determination process to provide clear, fair, and effective determinations in accord with Title VIII goals and provisions (changes would require new regulations)”.

In a letter to Mr. Tim Towarak in December 2010, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar requested that the FSB; “review, with RAC input, the customary and traditional use determination process and present recommendations for regulatory changes”.

In their 2011 Annual Report, the SESRAC suggested that the Board consider modifying current regulations to be more representative of the way people use subsistence resources. The SESRAC suggested the following specific regulatory change:

*Modify 50 CFR 100.16 (a). The regulation should read: “The Board shall determine which fish and wildlife have been customarily and traditionally used for subsistence. These determinations shall identify the specific community’s or area’s use of ~~{specific fish stocks and wildlife populations}~~ **all species of fish and wildlife that have been traditionally used, in their (past and present) geographic areas.**”*

In the Annual Report reply, the Board encouraged the SESRAC to develop recommendations in a proposal format for additional review. The Office of Subsistence Management pledged staff assistance if the Council wished to pursue the matter further.

During the March 2012 meeting in Juneau, an update on the Secretarial Review stated that 9 Councils felt the C&T determination process was adequate and only the SESRAC had comments for changes to the process.

The SESRAC formed a workgroup to review materials and provide a report on the issue during the March 2012 SESRAC meeting and develop a recommendation for consideration by the SESRAC at the September 2012 meeting.

Southeast Council Findings:

An eight factor framework for Federal C&T determination analysis was first adopted by the Alaska Board of Fisheries and is not found in ANILCA.

Although there are clearly some instances where it is appropriate to provide a preference to local residents (for instance, an early start to the moose season in Yakutat), the SESRAC has a history of recommending C&T determinations for a large geographic area.

When necessary, the Federal Subsistence Board can restrict who can harvest a resource by applying ANILCA Section 804 criteria:

- Customary and direct dependence upon the populations as the mainstay of livelihood;
- Local residency; and
- The availability of alternative resources.

The ANILCA Section 804 process is a management tool that allows seasons on Federal public lands and waters to remain open to all rural residents until there is a need to reduce the pool of eligible harvesters.

Replacing the Federal C&T determination eight factors with ANILCA Section 804 three criteria may be a preferred method of restricting who can harvest a resource.

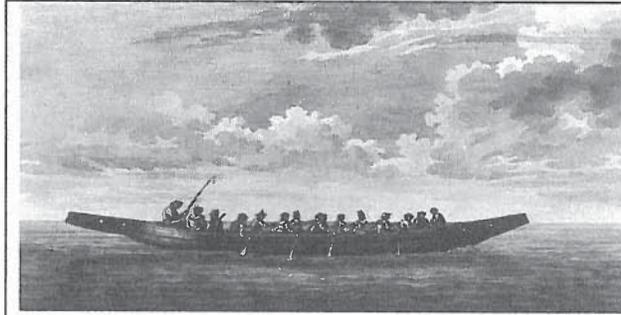
Action:

In January 2013, the SESRAC sent a letter to the other Federal regional advisory councils regarding the deficiencies in the current C&T determination process. This letter asks the other councils to review, during their fall 2013 meetings, whether the process is serving the needs of the residents of their region and report their findings to the SESRAC. If it is the desire of the other councils, a proposal for amending or eliminating current regulations could be developed for consideration by all the councils.

Key Contacts:

Bert Adams, Chair SESRAC – 907-784-3357

Robert Larson – SESRAC Coordinator – 907-772-5930



**Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional
Advisory Council**

**Bertrand Adams Sr., Chair
P. O. Box 349
Yakutat, Alaska 99689**

kaadashan@alaska.net

RAC SE13001.RL

JAN 11 2013

Mr. Enoch A. Shiedt, Sr., Chair
Northwest Arctic Alaska Subsistence
Regional Advisory Council
P.O. Box 234
Kotzebue, Alaska 99752

Dear Mr. Shiedt:

During the spring of 2011, pursuant to the Secretarial Review of the Federal Subsistence Program, the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) sought input from the Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils (Councils) on the current customary and traditional use determination process. The Board subsequently reported to the Secretaries that 9 of the 10 Councils thought the process was working. The Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (SE Council) does not agree that the process is being implemented as intended in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). We are asking your Council to review your evaluation of the current customary and traditional use determination process (36 CFR 242.16 and 50 CFR 100.16) and join with us in crafting a petition to the Secretaries to address deficiencies in the current regulations. The SE Council's preferred solution is to eliminate the customary and traditional use determination regulations and allocate resources as directed in Section 804 of ANILCA.

The SE Council has formed a workgroup to assist us in evaluating the current customary and traditional use determination process. The workgroup reviewed the 2007 draft Customary and Traditional Use Determination Policy, the public comments to this policy, the 2011 transcripts from all 10 Council meetings, and the 2012 Board transcripts where each of the Councils' input was summarized. The 2007 draft Customary and Traditional Use Determination Policy and the public comments to this policy are enclosed with this letter.

The SE Council workgroup noted that there were inconsistent briefings in 2011 regarding the input sought from the Councils. Different staff presented different levels of information, and in some instances Councils were led to believe other Councils thought the process was working.

Mr. Enoch A. Shiedt, Sr.

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In addition, there was a lack of direction or background information provided to the Councils that would be necessary to formulate an informed opinion. There was no mention or discussions of the strengths and deficiencies of the current customary and traditional use determination process as detailed in the review of the 2007 draft Customary and Traditional Use Determination Policy.

During its March 2011 meeting, the SE Council included the topic in its 2011 Annual Report. The SE Council made the following recommendation to the Board:

Given that ANILCA does not require the Board make customary and traditional use determinations, the Council recommends the Federal Subsistence Board eliminate the current regulations for customary and traditional use determinations, and task the Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) with drafting regulations which adhere to provisions contained within Section 804 of ANILCA.

The current Federal customary and traditional use determination regulations (and the eight factors) were based on pre-existing State regulations. Customary and traditional use determinations are a necessary step in State of Alaska management because only fish and wildlife with a “positive” determination are managed for the subsistence preference and those with a “negative” determination do not have the preference. The decision whether there is or is not a subsistence priority is not necessary under Federal rules because ANILCA already provides rural residents a preference for subsistence uses on Federal public land. The current customary and traditional use determination process is being used to allocate resources between rural residents, often in times of abundance. This is an inappropriate method of deciding which residents can harvest fish or wildlife in an area and may result in unnecessarily restricting subsistence users. The SE Council has a history of generally recommending a broad geographic scale when reviewing proposals for customary and traditional use determinations. Subsistence users primarily harvest resources near their community of residence and there is normally no management reason to restrict use by rural residents from distant communities. If there is a shortage of resources, Section 804 of ANILCA provides direction in the correct method of allocating resources.

The SE Council has determined that the Office of Subsistence Management did not give the directive from the Secretaries the due diligence it deserves and the program would benefit from additional evaluation and dialog. We request your Council reconsider its recommendation to the Board on how well the current customary and traditional use process is serving the needs of the residents in your region. The SE Council is interested in either eliminating or improving the process but, since this is a statewide issue, we do not want to propose a solution that is not supported by the other Councils. We encourage your Council to read the briefing paper provided to you by the SE Council at a winter 2013 Council meeting and review the enclosed background information. We would like your Council to consider what would be most beneficial to your region: eliminate customary and traditional use determinations, change the way customary and traditional use determinations are made, or make no change. After reviewing these materials, we

Mr. Enoch A. Shiedt, Sr.

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encourage your Council to include this subject as an agenda action item at its fall 2013 meeting. The Office of Subsistence Management has committed personnel to help in your further consideration of the customary and traditional use process at your fall 2013 meeting.

Please address any questions and report any actions taken regarding this request either directly to me or through Mr. Robert Larson, Council Coordinator, U. S. Forest Service, Box 1328, Petersburg, Alaska 99833, 1-907-772-5930, robertlarson@fs.fed.us.

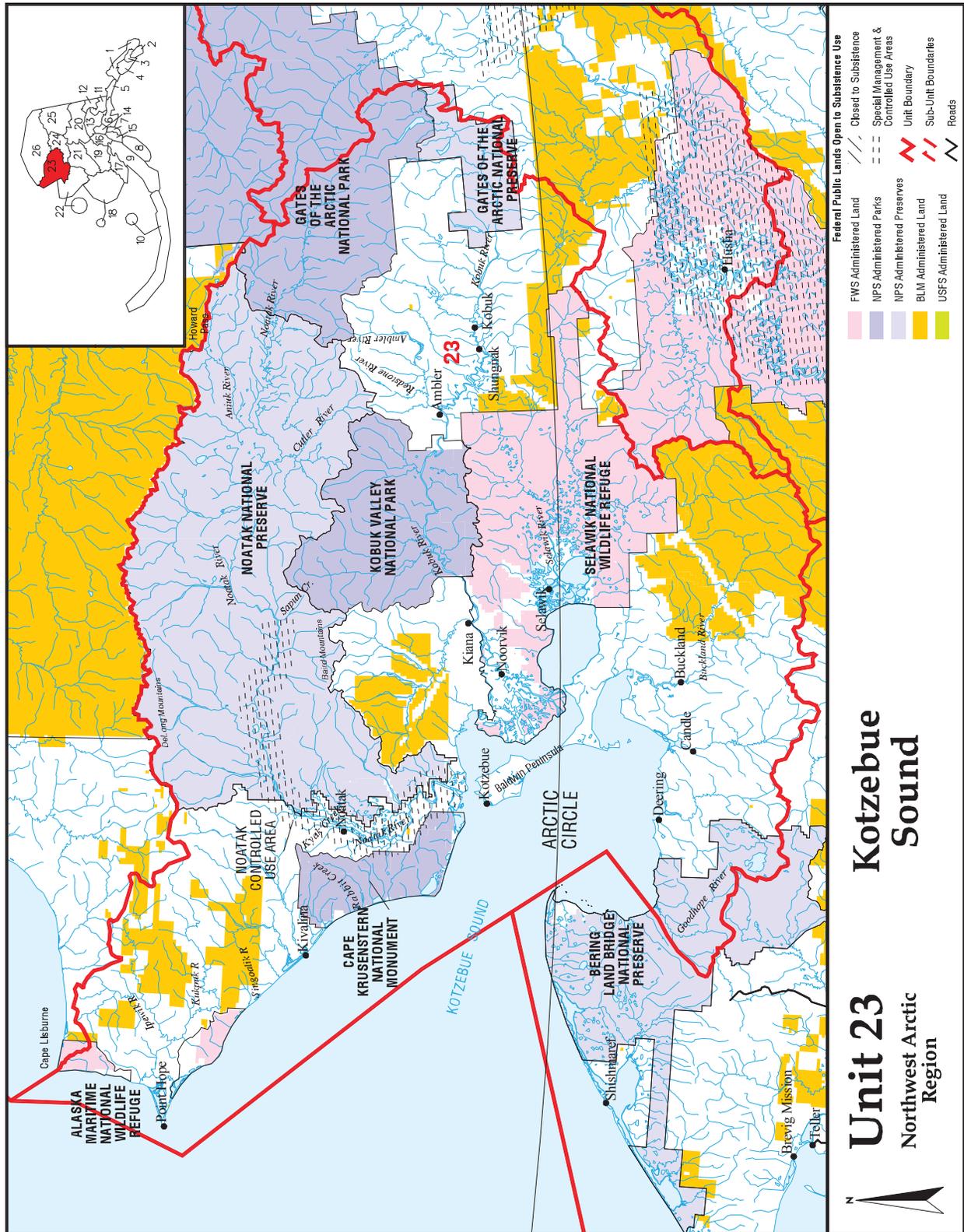
Gunalchéesh (thank you).

Sincerely,
/S/

Bertrand Adams Sr., Chair

Enclosures

cc: Peter J. Probasco, Assistant Director, OSM
Kathy O'Reilly-Doyle, Deputy Assistant Director, OSM
Federal Subsistence Board
Interagency Staff Committee
Administrative Record



WP14-01 Executive Summary	
General Description	<p>Proposal WP14-01 requests the establishment of new statewide provisions for Federal trapping regulations that require trapper identification tags on all traps and snares, establish a maximum allowable time limit for checking traps, and establish a harvest/trapping report form to collect data on non-target species captured in traps and snares. <i>Submitted by Kevin Bopp.</i></p>
Proposed Regulation	<p>§___.26 <i>Subsistence taking of wildlife</i></p> <p><i>(d) The following methods and means of trapping furbearers for subsistence uses pursuant to the requirements of a trapping license are prohibited or required, in addition to the prohibitions listed at paragraph (b) of this section.</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * * *</p> <p><i>(7) Traps and snares must be individually marked with a permanent metal tag upon which is stamped or permanently etched the trapper's name and address, or the trapper's Alaska driver's license number or State identification card number, or is set within 50 yards of a sign that lists the trapper's name and address, or the trapper's Alaska driver's license number or State identification card number. If a trapper chooses to place a sign at a trap/snaring site rather than tagging individual trap/snares, the sign must be at least 3 inches by 5 inches in size, be clearly visible, and have numbers and letters that are at least one-half inch high and one-eighth inch wide in a color that contrasts with the color of the sign.</i></p> <p><i>(8) All traps and snares must be checked within 6 days of setting them and within each 6 days thereafter.</i></p> <p><i>(9) Trappers must record and report all non-targeted species taken and their condition when found. Non-targeted species harvest reports must be turned in within 30 days of the end of the trapping season.</i></p>

continued on next page

WP14-01 Executive Summary (continued)	
	<p>Units 1–5—Special Provisions</p> <p><i>Trappers are prohibited from using a trap or snare unless the trap or snare has been individually marked with a permanent metal tag upon which is stamped or permanently etched the trapper’s name and address, or the trapper’s permanent identification number, or is set within 50 yards of a sign that lists the trapper’s name and address, or the trapper’s permanent identification number. The trapper must use the trapper’s Alaska driver’s license number or State identification card number as the required permanent identification number. If a trapper chooses to place a sign at a snaring site rather than tagging individual snares, the sign must be at least 3 inches by 5 inches in size, be clearly visible, and have numbers and letters that are at least one-half inch high and one-eighth inch wide in a color that contrasts with the color of the sign.</i></p>
OSM Preliminary Conclusion	Oppose
Southeast Regional Council Recommendation	
Southcentral Regional Council Recommendation	
Kodiak/Aleutians Regional Council Recommendation	
Bristol Bay Regional Council Recommendation	
Yukon/Kuskokwim Delta Regional Council Recommendation	
Western Interior Regional Council Recommendation	
Seward Peninsula Regional Council Recommendation	
Northwest Arctic Regional Council Recommendation	
Eastern Interior Regional Council Recommendation	
North Slope Regional Council Recommendation	
Interagency Staff Committee Comments	
ADF&G Comments	
Written Public Comments	2 Oppose

DRAFT STAFF ANALYSIS WP14-01

ISSUES

Proposal WP14-01, submitted by Kevin Bopp, requests the establishment of new statewide provisions for Federal trapping regulations that require trapper identification tags on all traps and snares, establish a maximum allowable time limit for checking traps, and establish a harvest/trapping report form to collect data on non-target species captured in traps and snares.

DISCUSSION

The proponent states the regulatory changes would result in more responsible trappers and trapping. Requiring identification tags with the trapper's name and license number may increase accountability of trappers. Some trappers may be less likely to set traps and snares close to people's homes and high public-use areas, which could ease tension between user groups. The trap checking interval requirement will ensure that animals do not remain in traps or snares too long, which could help ensure furs are found in good condition and increase the likelihood of releasing any captured non-target species. The proponent also recommends that all non-target species caught in traps and snares be recorded on a new harvest report form. Information included on the form would include the species captured, whether the animal was found dead or alive, and whether it was released in good or bad condition. If animals are found dead, the report would also include information on whether the animal was consumed by other animals.

Existing Federal Regulation

No Statewide regulations currently exist that require the marking of traps and snares with identification tags, trap-check intervals, and reporting of non-target species captured in traps and snares.

Units 1–5—Special Provisions

Trappers are prohibited from using a trap or snare unless the trap or snare has been individually marked with a permanent metal tag upon which is stamped or permanently etched the trapper's name and address, or the trapper's permanent identification number, or is set within 50 yards of a sign that lists the trapper's name and address, or the trapper's permanent identification number. The trapper must use the trapper's Alaska driver's license number or State identification card number as the required permanent identification number. If a trapper chooses to place a sign at a snaring site rather than tagging individual snares, the sign must be at least 3 inches by 5 inches in size, be clearly visible, and have numbers and letters that are at least one-half inch high and one-eighth inch wide in a color that contrasts with the color of the sign.

Proposed Federal Regulation

§____.26 *Subsistence taking of wildlife*

*(d) The following methods and means of trapping furbearers for subsistence uses pursuant to the requirements of a trapping license are prohibited **or required**, in addition to the prohibitions listed at paragraph (b) of this section:*

* * * *

(7) Traps and snares must be individually marked with a permanent metal tag upon which is stamped or permanently etched the trapper's name and address, or the trapper's Alaska driver's license number or State identification card number, or is set within 50 yards of a sign that lists the trapper's name and address, or the trapper's Alaska driver's license number or State identification card number. If a trapper chooses to place a sign at a trap/snaring site rather than tagging individual trap/snares, the sign must be at least 3 inches by 5 inches in size, be clearly visible, and have numbers and letters that are at least one-half inch high and one-eighth inch wide in a color that contrasts with the color of the sign.

(8) All traps and snares must be checked within 6 days of setting them and within each 6 days thereafter.

(9) Trappers must record and report all non-targeted species taken and their condition when found. Non-targeted species harvest reports must be turned in within 30 days of the end of the trapping season.

Units 1–5—Special Provisions

Trappers are prohibited from using a trap or snare unless the trap or snare has been individually marked with a permanent metal tag upon which is stamped or permanently etched the trapper's name and address, or the trapper's permanent identification number, or is set within 50 yards of a sign that lists the trapper's name and address, or the trapper's permanent identification number. The trapper must use the trapper's Alaska driver's license number or State identification card number as the required permanent identification number. If a trapper chooses to place a sign at a snaring site rather than tagging individual snares, the sign must be at least 3 inches by 5 inches in size, be clearly visible, and have numbers and letters that are at least one-half inch high and one-eighth inch wide in a color that contrasts with the color of the sign.

Existing State Regulation

Units 1–5—Trappers are prohibited from using a trap or snare unless the trap or snare has been individually marked with a permanent metal tag upon which is stamped or permanently etched the trapper's name and address, or the trapper's permanent identification number, or is set within 50 yards of a sign that lists the trapper's name and address, or the trapper's permanent identification number; the trapper must use the trapper's Alaska driver's license number or state identification card number as the required permanent identification number; if a trapper chooses to place a sign at a snaring site rather than tagging individual snares, the sign must be at least 3 inches by 5 inches in size, be clearly visible, and have numbers and letters that are at least one-half inch high and one-eighth inch wide in a color that contrasts with the color of the sign.

Unit 1C, Gustavus, that portion west of Excursion Inlet, north of Icy Passage—All traps/snares must be checked within 3 days of setting them and within each 3 days thereafter.

Units 12 and 20E—You may not trap within one-quarter mile of any publicly maintained road, by using a snare with a cable diameter of 3/32 inch or larger that is set out of water, unless the snare has been individually marked with a permanent metal tag upon which is stamped or permanently etched the trapper's name and address, or the trapper's permanent identification number, or is set within 50 yards of a sign that lists the trapper's name and address, or the trapper's permanent identification number; the trapper must use the trapper's Alaska driver's license number or state

identification card number as the required permanent identification number; if a trapper chooses to place a sign at a snaring site rather than tagging individual snares, the sign must be at least 3 inches by 5 inches in size, be clearly visible, and have numbers and letters that are at least one-half inch high and one-eighth inch wide in a color that contrasts with the color of the sign.

Incidental Catch—Continuing to take, or attempting to take, furbearers at a site where a moose, caribou, or deer has been taken incidentally is a violation. Any moose, caribou, or deer that dies as a result of being caught in a trap or snare, whether found dead or euthanized, is the property of the state. The trapper who set the trap or snare must salvage the edible meat and surrender it to the state. No trapper may use any part of a moose, caribou or deer caught incidentally in a trap or snare. If such an incidental take occurs, the trapper must move all active traps and snare at least 300 feet from the site for the remainder of the regulatory year.

Extent of Federal Public Lands

The proposal would apply to all Federal public lands in Alaska. Federal public lands comprise approximately 65% of Alaska and consist of 23% BLM, 21% FWS, 15% NPS, and 6% USFS managed lands.

Customary and Traditional Use Determinations

Customary and traditional use determinations for specific areas and species are found in subpart C of 50 CFR part 100, § __.24(a)(1) and 36 CFR 242 § __.24(a)(1).

Regulatory History

The Alaska Board of Game adopted a marking requirement for traps and snares in Units 1–5 in 2006. Federal regulations were aligned with the State requirements in Units 1–5 when the Federal Subsistence Board adopted Proposal WP12-14 in 2012. The Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council) supported the proposal due to the benefit of aligning State and Federal regulations and reducing the uncertainty of whether current regulations required traps to be marked. However, the Council expressed concern that there was a lack of evidence as to why traps should be marked under either State or Federal regulations (FWS 2012)

Trapping Background

In an overview of trapping controversies, Andelt et al. (1999; *references therein*) listed recommended trap-check intervals of daily or almost daily for live-capture traps set on land in response to animal welfare concerns; however, daily trap checks would not be practicable in much of Alaska due to the remoteness of areas, length of trap lines, and harsh weather conditions. Some considerations for how often traps should be checked include the intent of the trap (live capture or kill trap), ambient temperatures, and placement of traps, which could allow rodents or scavengers to destroy the pelt (Stanek 1987). Other considerations for trap check schedules includes work schedules, distance to traplines, river ice conditions, price of fuel (Scotton 2013, pers. comm.). The average trapline was 23.1 miles long in 2006/2007, and the longest reported trapline was 250 miles (ADF&G 2010). Trap-checking intervals of two to three days were generally used by trappers near Kaiyuh Flats, Alaska to prevent pelt damage from scavengers, and beaver sets were also checked frequently to prevent any captured beavers from being frozen in the ice (Robert 1984). Trappers from Skwentna, Stevens Village, and Fort Yukon reportedly checked trap lines “once a week or every few days”, but some trappers “waited ten days to two weeks”

(Wolfe 1991:27). During 2010/2011, 79% of trappers from across the state reportedly conducted trapping activities 1–3 days per week (ADF&G 2012a).

Effects of the Proposal

If the proposal is adopted, Federally qualified subsistence users trapping under Federal regulations throughout the State will be required to mark traps and snares with identification tags, check snares and traps every 6 days or less, and record any non-target species caught in traps or snares on a newly established trapping report form. The proposed requirements have the potential to benefit all users by promoting responsible and ethical trapping techniques and practices. However, dramatic differences in land ownership, population concentrations, terrain, and habitats would limit the effectiveness of the proposed statewide regulations. Individual traplines can span across Federal and State managed lands and, therefore, could have different regulatory requirements. Alternatively, Federally qualified subsistence users could simply choose to trap under State regulations and avoid the proposed requirements, as both Federal and State trapping regulations are applicable on Federal public lands, as long as the State regulations are not inconsistent with or superseded by Federal regulations.

In most situations, the requirement to individually mark traps and snares with identification tags would result in inconsistent State and Federal regulations on Federal public lands that would necessitate an outreach effort to avoid confusion among users. Under Federal regulations, traps and snares are required to be marked with identification tags only in Units 1–5, but these marking requirements were adopted to align with State regulations to reduce regulatory complexity (see Regulatory History). Within portions of Unit 15, over 60 percent which lies within Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, and those portions of Unit 7 that are contained within Kenai NWR, a trapping permit is required and a stipulation of Kenai NWR's permit includes the marking of traps and snares. Also, under State regulations, all snares within a ¼ mile of a public road in Units 12 and 20E are required to be marked. Federally qualified subsistence users trapping on Federal public lands outside of these specific areas would be required to mark traps and snares with identification tags that include the trapper's name and license number. However, Federally qualified subsistence users or non-Federally qualified users trapping on Federal public lands would not be required to mark traps and snares under State regulations.

The requirement to mark traps and snares would also result in additional burden and cost for Federally qualified subsistence users trapping under Federal regulations. Copper tags stamped with a trapper's identification information, including fasteners, cost approximately \$26 per 100 tags (including shipping) or less (approximately \$15–\$20) for “write-your own” tags (FWS 2012). In addition, trappers often trade or borrow equipment from family members or friends, and changes of identification tags on large numbers of traps or snares would require significant effort (Scotton 2013, pers. comm.).

Frequent trap checks are beneficial for animal welfare and can decrease the likelihood of pelt damage of trapped furbearers. The trap check time requirement would also result in inconsistent State and Federal regulations, and would require significant law enforcement and public educational efforts. The requirement could result in human health and safety issues by requiring trappers to check traps during periods of inclement weather, especially in remote units where traplines are long. The back cover of the State trapping regulations includes a Code of Ethics, reprinted from the Alaska Trappers Manual, which includes checking traps regularly and trapping in the most humane way possible. While the items listed in the Code of Ethics are not regulatory in nature, they provide general guidelines for responsible trapping.

Few requirements for trap check intervals are currently in State or Federal regulations, and those regulations have been put in place in response to specific incidents or in areas with high potential for user conflict. Under State regulation in Alaska, the only trap check time requirement in regulation is a 72-hour

trap check in a small area near Gustavus in Unit 1C under State regulations, which was adopted due to multiple moose being incidentally caught in snares (ADF&G 2012b). A 4-day trap check requirement is required on the more accessible and heavily trapped portions of the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge (Kenai NWR) as a stipulation of the Refuge Special Use Permit in order to increase the potential for safe release of incidentally caught, non-target animals, including bald eagles, moose and domestic dogs.

If the proposal is adopted, a new trapping report form would be established to report any non-target species caught under Federal trapping regulations. Trapping reports may provide useful information regarding which non-target species are captured and how often they can be released in good condition. However, some of the information requested for the report form may be difficult to interpret, especially subjective observations such as the condition of trapped animals. In addition, it is unknown what the data from the proposed form would be used for, as there is no indication of any management agency that is requesting information on the incidental capture of non-target species across the state. To limit the capture of non-target species, trappers can review informational sources such as the Best Management Practices for Trapping in the United States, which evaluate traps and trapping systems based on animal welfare, efficiency, selectivity, practicality, and safety (AFWA 2006). Overall, it is in the best interest of trappers to minimize the capture of non-target animals, as those traps or snares become unavailable for capturing target animals.

The new trapping report form for non-target species would require additional time commitments for Federally qualified subsistence users and staff of Federal land management agencies. The time commitment for Federally qualified subsistence users would be minimal, but may be an incentive to simply trap under State regulations where a report is not required. The time commitment for Federal staff could be substantial, as trapping reports from Federal lands across the state may have to be collected and analyzed.

The establishment of a new trapping report form would have to meet the information collection requirements subject to approval by the Office of Management and Budget, 50 CFR § 100.9 [2009], and in accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act, OMB Control Number 1018-0075.

OSM PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

Oppose Proposal WP14-01.

Justification

The proposed requirements for individually marking traps and snares, setting maximum trap check intervals, and reporting the incidental harvest of non-target species could lead to more humane trapping methods under Federal regulations; however, these regulatory provisions would not likely be manageable on a statewide basis due to vast differences in land ownership, population concentrations and habitats. Regulations of this nature would be better suited in response to issues on an area-specific basis (e.g., Kenai NWR Refuge Special Use Permit requirements), like similar restrictions currently in State and Federal trapping regulations. Alignment issues would require a substantial increase in law enforcement and public educational efforts, and requiring trappers to check traps during inclement weather could lead to health and safety issues. In many instances, Federally qualified subsistence users may simply trap under State regulations to avoid the additional proposed Federal restrictions.

While the information gathered from a harvest report form of non-target species caught in traps and snares could provide useful information, it would be an unnecessary requirement for Federally qualified subsistence users. In addition, the report would require additional time commitments for Federally

qualified subsistence users and Federal staff that are currently unwarranted. Similar reports would be more useful in areas with specific issues with the capture of non-target species, such as areas with threatened or endangered species or significant user-conflict issues.

LITERATURE CITED

ADF&G. 2010. Trapper Questionnaire Statewide Annual Report, 1 July 2006–30 June 2007. Wildlife Management Report. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Juneau, AK.

ADF&G. 2012a. Trapper Questionnaire Statewide Annual Report, 1 July 2010–30 June 2011. Wildlife Management Report ADF&G/DWC/WMR-2012-2. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Juneau, AK.

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Andelt, W. F., R. L. Phillips, R. H. Schmidt, and R. B. Gill. 1999. Trapping furbearers: an overview of the biological and social issues surrounding a public policy controversy. *Wildlife Society Bulletin* 27:53–64.

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Robert, M. 1984. Trapping patterns in the vicinity of the Kaiyuh Flats, west central Alaska. ADF&G, Division of Subsistence, Technical Paper No. 84. Fairbanks, AK.

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Stanek, R. T. 1987. Historical and contemporary trapping in the western Susitna Basin. ADF&G, Division of Subsistence, Technical Paper No. 134. Anchorage, AK.

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WRITTEN PUBLIC COMMENTS

Oppose Proposal WP14-01. We oppose Statewide Proposal WP14-01 to create new regulations for requiring that identification tags be put on traps and snares and that traps and snares be checked every 6 days.

It will be cumbersome, unnecessary and burdensome for federally qualified trappers to have constraints placed upon them to have to put identification tags on snares and traps and to check traps and snares every 6 days. Incidental catch of non-target species and reporting it is good, and should be done voluntarily by trappers. Traps and snares should only be checked if weather conditions are safe to check snares and traps. In rural areas, temperature conditions can be minus forty to fifty for 3 consecutive weeks. It would be unsafe to have regulations in place stating that snares and traps must be checked every six days.

Ahtna Inc. Customary and Traditional Use Committee

Oppose Proposal WP14-01. With kind personal regards to Kevin Bopp, who gave us one of the best lead dogs we ever had, I strongly disagree with this. Trap tags might work for short traplines, but when you run 80 miles of traps, tags for every trap would be very onerous and also subject to loss when an animal is caught. The time limit proposal is utterly unworkable for many people. It usually takes us 10-12 days by dog team to make the round trip of up to 130 miles to check our traps. If we had to check every trap every 6 days, we would have to cut the length of our line in half, which would eliminate the most profitable distant areas, cutting profit more than in half; AND we'd be forced to travel even when it was not safe, eg -60° or blowing in excess of 50 mph. Additionally there are times travel is physically impossible due to flooding, bad ice or other hazards. That's why previously proposed time limits have never been established. This becomes even more unworkable for fly-in pilots for whom travel in weather extremes can quickly prove fatal. Neither of these even actually directly address the mentioned problem of trapping near settlements/highways.

Miki and Julie Collins, Lake Minchumina

WP14-40 Executive Summary	
General Description	Proposal WP14-40 requests that the requirement for a State registration permit to harvest brown bears in Unit 23 be eliminated. <i>Submitted by the Northwest Arctic Subsistence Regional Advisory Council,</i>
Proposed Regulation	<p>Unit 23—Brown Bear</p> <p><i>Unit 23—1 bear by State registration permit Aug. 1 – May 31</i></p> <p>___.26(n)(23)(iii) You may hunt brown bear by State registration permit in lieu of a resident tag in Unit 23 if you have a State registration permit prior to hunting. Aircraft may not be used in any manner for brown bear hunting under the authority of a brown bear State registration permit, including transportation of hunters, bear, or parts of bear. However, this does not apply to transportation of bear hunters or bear parts by regularly scheduled flights to and between communities by carriers that normally provide scheduled service to this area, nor does it apply to transportation of aircraft to or between publicly owned airports.</p>
OSM Preliminary Conclusion	Support Proposal WP14-40 with modification to insert the word “subsistence” and to clarify the permit requirements.
Northwest Arctic Regional Council Recommendation	
Eastern Interior Regional Council Recommendation	
Interagency Staff Committee Comments	
ADF&G Comments	
Written Public Comments	None

DRAFT STAFF ANALYSIS WP14-40

ISSUES

Proposal WP14-40, submitted by the Northwest Arctic Subsistence Regional Advisory Council, requests that the requirement for a State registration permit to harvest brown bears in Unit 23 be eliminated.

DISCUSSION

The proponent requests eliminating the requirement for a State registration permit to harvest brown bears in Unit 23 in order to align State and Federal regulations. Additionally, the proponent states that removing the permit requirement would ease confusion about hunting regulations for communities that hunt on Federal lands in the unit, allowing for more opportunistic harvest without having to possess a State permit for such harvest.

Note: Removal of the State registration permit requirement for subsistence harvest of brown bears in Unit 23 would cause Federal and State regulations to become misaligned as harvest under State subsistence regulations requires the use of a State registration permit.

Existing Federal Regulation

Unit 23—Brown Bear

Unit 23—1 bear by State registration permit

Aug. 1 – May 31

___26(n)(23)(iii) You may hunt brown bear by State registration permit in lieu of a resident tag in Unit 23 if you have a State registration permit prior to hunting. Aircraft may not be used in any manner for brown bear hunting under the authority of a brown bear State registration permit, including transportation of hunters, bear, or parts of bear. However, this does not apply to transportation of bear hunters or bear parts by regularly scheduled flights to and between communities by carriers that normally provide scheduled service to this area, nor does it apply to transportation of aircraft to or between publicly owned airports.

Proposed Federal Regulation

Unit 23—Brown Bear

Unit 23—1 bear by State registration permit

Aug. 1 – May 31

~~__26(n)(23)(iii)You may hunt brown bear by State registration permit in lieu of a resident tag in Unit 23 if you have a State registration permit prior to hunting. Aircraft may not be used in any manner for brown bear hunting under the authority of a brown bear State registration permit, including transportation of hunters, bear, or parts of bear. However, this does not apply to transportation of bear hunters or bear parts by regularly scheduled flights to and between communities by carriers that normally provide scheduled service to this area, nor does it apply to transportation of aircraft to or between publicly owned airports.~~

Existing State Regulation

Unit 23 – Brown Bear

<i>Residents— one bear every regulatory year</i>	<i>Aug. 1 – May 31</i>
<i>Nonresidents- one bear every regulatory year by drawing permit</i>	<i>Sept. 1 – Oct. 31</i>
<i>Or</i>	
<i>Nonresidents—one bear every regulatory year by drawing permit</i>	<i>Apr. 15 – May 31</i>
<i>In addition to other regulations, subsistence regulations apply to the following “Residents Only” hunt:</i>	
<i>Residents—one bear every regulatory year by permit available in Kotzebue and Unit 23 license vendors beginning July 2</i>	<i>Aug. 1 – May 31</i>

*The following information compares the requirements of subsistence versus general State regulations:

Subsistence hunting	General hunting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Meat must be salvaged for human consumption</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Meat need not be salvaged</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>No tag required but you must register to hunt</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>See units for seasons</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Hide and skull need not be sealed unless removed from subsistence area or presented for commercial tanning; if sealing is required, it must be completed by an authorized sealing agent; at the time of sealing, the skin of the head and front claws are removed and kept by ADF&G.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>Hide and skull must be sealed by an authorized sealing agent statewide</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ <i>No use of aircraft for subsistence hunting in Units 21D, 22, 23, 24, and 26A. See units for season dates.</i> 	

*From page 28 of the 2013 – 2014 Alaska Hunting Regulations

Extent of Federal Public Lands

Federal public lands comprise approximately 69% of Unit 23 and consist of 42% National Park Service managed lands, 17% Bureau of Land Management managed lands and 10% US Fish and Wildlife Service managed lands (see **Unit 23 Map**).

Customary and Traditional Use Determinations

Rural residents of Units 21 and 23 have a positive customary and traditional use determination for brown bear in Unit 23.

Regulatory History

At its April 1992 meeting, the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) adopted regulations mirroring the State with regard to the use of subsistence registration permits for brown bear in Unit 23. The Alaska Board of Game (BOG) adopted regulations establishing two brown bear management areas in the state, one in western Alaska and one in northwestern Alaska, which included Unit 23 (FSB 1992). These were areas of the state where the use of brown bears for food had been found to occur at significant levels. Regulations adopted by the State provided subsistence users a liberalized harvest limit of one bear per year, an extended season and elimination of the resident brown bear tag requirement. All edible meat was required to be salvaged. Sealing requirements were eliminated if the skin and skull of a harvested bear was not taken from the designated hunt area. An additional prohibition precluding the use of aircraft to hunt or take brown bears under subsistence regulations was also adopted for the northwestern bear hunting area. Resident sport hunting differs from subsistence registration permit hunts in several ways: only one bear every four years may be harvested; the salvage of meat is not required; a brown bear tag must be purchased; and sealing of the skull and hide is required. In Unit 23 with the exception of the Baldwin Peninsula north of the Arctic Circle, individuals may harvest brown bears using a subsistence registration permit (FSB 1992).

In 1992, Proposals 74–76, 78, 86 and 167 all requested changes in Unit 23 Federal brown bear regulations and were addressed concurrently by the Board. The Board adopted the proposals with the following modifications: the brown bear harvest limit was set at one bear per year, with a season of Sept. 1 – May 31, and Federally qualified users did not have to seal the hide and skull unless they were transported outside of Unit 23 (FSB 1992).

In 2005, Proposal WP05-17 requested the brown bear season be lengthened in Unit 23 and the requirement to use the State subsistence registration permit be eliminated, due to the reported abundance of brown bears in the unit. It was suggested that the proposed changes would provide subsistence users additional opportunity to harvest brown bears and align State and Federal regulations. The Board adopted the proposal with modification to remove the exclusion of the Baldwin Peninsula area north of the Arctic Circle and to retain the State subsistence registration permit requirement. Retention of the subsistence registration permit requirement was considered necessary to allow managers to track and monitor harvests to prevent future conservation concerns. It should be noted that while the State non-subsistence hunt was not a registration hunt, brown bear harvests were sealed and therefore the harvest was recorded. In the State subsistence hunt, brown bear harvests were not sealed and therefore, a registration permit was needed to make the sure the harvest was recorded.

In 2007, Proposal WP07-50 requested elimination of the State subsistence registration permit for brown bear hunting in Unit 23. The proposal was withdrawn by the proponent.

Biological Background

State management objectives for brown bear are as follows (Westing 2011):

- Conduct a brown bear population estimate for some portion on Unit 23 in cooperation with the Department of Interior (DOI) staff at least once every reporting period.
- Continue community-based assessments to collect brown bear harvest information from residents of Unit 23.
- Seal bear skins and skulls, determine sex, and extract a tooth for aging.
- Monitor harvest data (age, sex, and skull size) for changes related to selective pressure.
- Improve communication between the public and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to improve harvest reporting and prevent defense of life and property situations from occurring.

The first Unit 23 brown bear population estimate was made in 1987 using a mark-recapture method (Ballard et al. 1993). A density of 15.6 adult brown bears 2.5+ years of age /1000 km² was calculated for a 1,862 km² area in the vicinity of the Red Dog Mine (**Table 1**). In a more recent survey in 2007, a stratified random sampling method was used to estimate the brown bear population in the Upper Noatak River in Unit 23 (Shults pers. comm. 2013). Shults estimated an adult (2.5+ years of age) brown bear density of 18/1000 km². An estimate for the Lower Noatak conducted in 2008 found an adult brown bear density of 24/1000km², while another estimate of brown bears in Gates of the Arctic National Park in 2010 found an adult bear density of 20/1000km² (Shults, pers. comm. 2013). By comparison, a study in the Western Brooks Range estimated the brown bear density to be 24.3 adult brown bears/1000 km² (**Table 1**) (Reynolds 1992).

Residents of Unit 23 report brown bear numbers have increased since the 1940s or 1950s. The numbers of moose, caribou and muskox in the region have increased substantially since the 1950s, providing a stable prey base for large predators like brown bears. Increases in the number of prey species led to a decrease in the subsistence harvest of brown bear in the unit, and with the decline of the commercial salmon fishery in Kotzebue Sound, more salmon have been allowed to reach spawning areas further inland, thereby increasing this food source for bears (Westing 2011).

Changes in hunting regulations may have also contributed to increases in brown bear numbers in Unit 23. Until the early 1990s, brown bear hunting regulations were mainly geared towards sport hunting rather than subsistence hunters who were not interested in dealing with sealing requirements, but rather, were interested in brown bears as a source of meat. In addition, prior to statehood and the implementation of hunting regulations, subsistence hunters commonly harvested bears in dens, especially in areas where bears provided the only reliable source of terrestrial hides, meat and fat to local peoples (Stoney as cited in Westing 2011). Regulations prohibiting the harvest of sows with cubs have precluded this method of hunting and the strong selection of large male bears by non-subsistence hunters may have also helped to increase cub survival (Westing 2011).

Harvest History

Local residents in Unit 23 hunt for brown bear primarily in the spring and fall, with the largest portion of reported harvest occurring during the month of September. Between 2000 and 2010, 61% of the total harvest of brown bears in Unit 23 occurred in September (Westing 2011). Brown bear are commonly

Table 1. Quantitative estimates of brown bear abundance in northwest Alaska (Ballard et al. 1993, Reynolds 1992, ADF&G 1994, Shults 2013).

Survey Area	Year	Estimation Method	Estimation Area (km ²)	Point Estimate Total Adults	Adult Bear Density/1000km ²	Total Bears/1000km ²
Red Dog Mine Area ¹	1987	Mark-Recapture	1,862		15.6 95% CI (13.4-19.3)	17.9 95% CI (15.6-21.0)
Utukok Kokolik Rivers Brooks Range ²	1992	Mark-Recapture	2,228		24.3 95% CI (23.1-26.0)	29.5 95% CI (28.1-31.7)
NE GAAR, ANWR ³	2004	Line Transect	20,220			18.3 95% CI ±34%
Upper Noatak ⁴	2005	Stratified Random Sampling	17,871	171 80% CI (73-132)	8	
BELA ⁴	2006	Stratified Random Sampling	23,007	96 80% CI (14-179)	4	
Upper Noatak River	2007	Stratified Random Sampling	17,871	326 80% CI (232-420)	18	
Lower Noatak River ⁴	2008	Stratified Random Sampling ⁵	20,774	504 95% CI (402-609)	24	
GAAR ⁴	2010	Stratified Random Sampling ⁵	17,314	346 95% CI (230-463)	20	

¹ Ballard et al. 1993

² ADF&G 1994

³ ADF&G, NPS Unpublished data

^{4,5} NPS Unpublished Data; Estimates Preliminary.

ANWR = Arctic National Wildlife Refuge

BELA = Bering Land Bridge National Preserve

GAAR = Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve

used for food and raw materials in inland communities, whereas coastal communities seldom use brown bear for food (Loon and Georgette 1989). Trophy hunting by villagers for brown bear is rare, although

the practice is relatively common in the Kotzebue area and among non-Natives in the region (Loon and Georgette 1989).

Reported brown bear harvest in the unit has increased over the last 20 years, however the number of bears harvested varied substantially between years (**Figure 1**). Since 1992, State brown bear hunting regulations in Unit 23 have been liberalized, resulting in an increase in the number of bear hunters in the unit. Household survey data from rural communities in Unit 23 show relatively low numbers of brown bears being harvested annually. With the exception of Kotzebue, the highest estimate of reported brown bear harvested in a given year was 6 bears from the village of Kobuk in 2009. The average annual harvest is estimated at 2.1 bears for all years and villages combined, though interpretation of these numbers is difficult given the sporadic nature of data collection (**Table 2**).

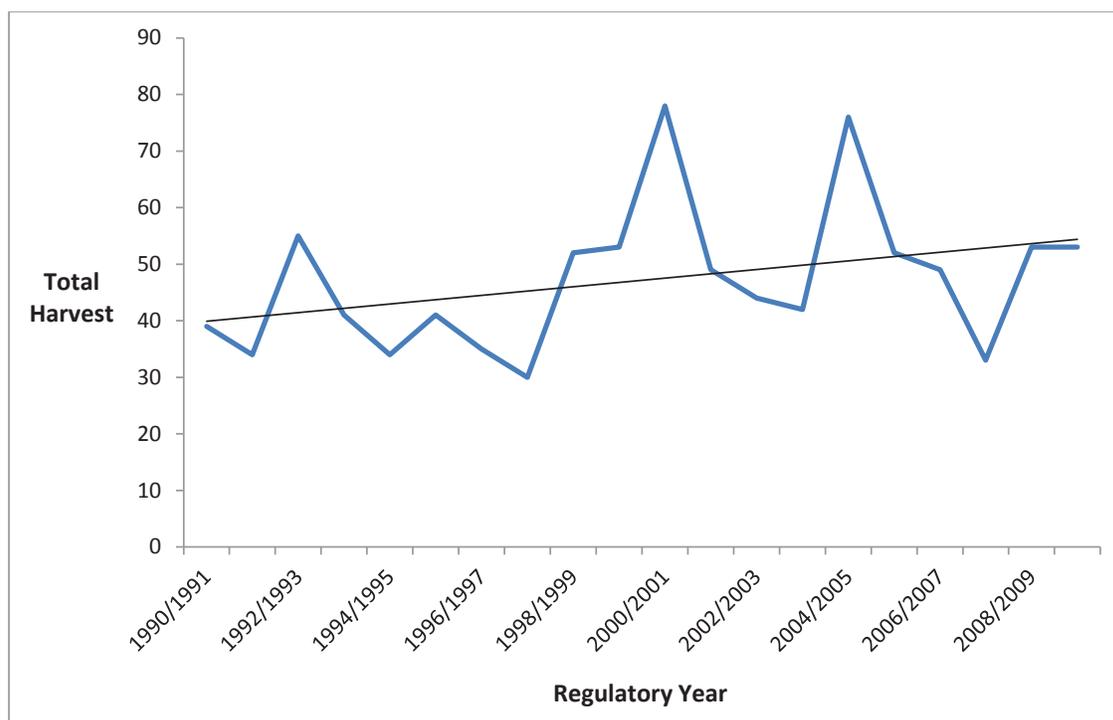


Figure 1. Total reported harvest of brown bears in Unit 23, 1990-2010.

Although use of the State subsistence registration permit (RB700) has likely increased the proportion of harvest being reported, there is probably some amount of under reporting occurring. Between 2000 and 2010, the average number of brown bears harvested under RB700 was 3.3 animals, but the subsistence registration hunt has never accounted for more than 13% of the total brown bear harvest since 2000 and it is unlikely that it has had an effect on the long-term trend of increasing harvest since the hunt was established in 1992 (Westing 2011).

Cultural Knowledge

Many Alaska Native cultures have strong traditional and spiritual beliefs centered on the hunting of wildlife, and bears in particular are seen to possess magical or supernatural powers. Bears are the most feared and respected of all animals and are known to have a prominent physical and symbolic role in the

Table 2. The harvest of brown bear by communities included in the customary and traditional use determination for brown bear in Unit 23, based on household surveys (ADF&G 2013).

Community	Study Year	Brown Bear Harvest			
		Reported (Number)	Expanded to Households Not Surveyed (Number)	Lower Estimate (Number)	Higher Estimate (Number)
Ambler	2003	1	1	1	2
	2009	3	4	3	6
Buckland	2009	2	3	2	4
Kiana	1999	1	2	0	3
	2006	0	0	0	0
	2009	0	0	0	0
Noatak	1994	1	1	0	2
	1999	3	3	2	5
	2002	1	1	0	2
	2007	2	3	2	4
Noorvik	2010	3	4	3	8
	2002	3	5	3	8
Selawik	2008	2	2	2	4
	1999	1	1	1	2
Shugnak	2006	1	1	1	1
	2011	0	0	0	0
	1998	1	1	1	1
Kobuk	2002	1	1	1	2
	2008	2	2	2	3
	2004	4	4	4	4
Kotzebue	2009	5	6	5	8
	1986		9		
	1991	1	8	1	23

Blank cell = question not asked or information not available.

lives of Northwest Eskimos (FSB 1992). Hunters followed certain prescribed practices to show the bear respect, including speaking carefully about bears, being humble about one's bear hunting activities, and removing the hyoid bone and/or leaving the skull in an appropriate place so as not to upset the bears spirit (Georgette 2001). Many taboos still exist with regard to bear hunting which are present even before a hunt commences. For instance, discussing the intent to hunt bears prior to a hunt is considered bragging and is discouraged. It is believed that the animals "allow" themselves to be taken, and if they "hear" an individual say they are going hunting or bragging about their abilities, the hunter will not be successful. Such beliefs may play a role in under reporting of harvest due to the strong taboos against discussing bear hunting in general.

Other Alternative Considered

Another alternative considered was to replace the State subsistence registration permit with a Federal registration permit as an alternative way to track bear harvest to prevent conservation concerns from overharvest. However, this would require some hunters to have both a State and Federal permit, depending upon the land status of the area in which they are hunting. Such a requirement would only serve to add more regulatory complexity for Federally qualified users, which goes against the intent of the proponent and therefore was not given further consideration.

Effects of the Proposal

If the proposal is adopted it would not provide for a brown bear harvest reporting mechanism in Unit 23. Eliminating the requirement for a State subsistence registration permit for Federally qualified subsistence users would effectively eliminate the ability of either State or Federal wildlife managers to track the harvest of brown bears. Maintaining a reporting requirement is an important tool for documenting population trends and helps ensure the long-term conservation of bears in the region. In addition, removal of the State subsistence registration permit would result in misalignment of State and Federal regulations, adding to regulatory complexity.

Brown bears in this area of Alaska occur at low densities and their productivity is low; it is important to monitor harvest to maintain a healthy bear population. Eliminating the State subsistence registration permit requirement could potentially result in increased harvest because hunters would no longer be required to report whether or not they were successful. In addition, village residents who have indicated difficulty in obtaining permits in the past would not be compelled to contact State personnel to report their harvest if permits were not required. Currently there is no sealing requirement for bear hides or skulls that stay within Unit 23. If the permit requirement were dropped, there would be no way to track Federal subsistence brown bear harvest. Without these data there would be no way to track the number of bears harvested, or population trends.

Finally, without the use of a subsistence registration permit, Federally qualified users would only be able to harvest brown bears in Unit 23 under the State’s general brown bear hunting regulations. This would entail the use of a harvest ticket and require sealing of the hide and skull, adding a reporting requirement on Federally qualified users which would go against the intent of the proponent.

OSM PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

Support Proposal WP14-40 **with modification** to insert the word “subsistence” and to clarify the permit requirements.

The modified regulation should read:

Unit 23 —Brown Bear

*Unit 23—1 bear by State **subsistence** registration permit*

Aug. 1 – May 31

~~___26(n)(23)(iii)You may hunt brown bear by State registration permit in lieu of a resident tag in Unit 23 if you have a State registration permit prior to hunting. Aircraft may not be used in any manner for brown bear hunting under the authority of a brown bear State registration permit, including transportation of hunters, bear, or parts of bear. However, this does not apply to transportation of bear hunters or bear parts by regularly scheduled flights to and between communities by carriers that normally provide scheduled service to this area, nor does it apply to transportation of aircraft to or between publicly owned airports.~~

Justification

Maintaining a harvest reporting mechanism is essential to the sound management of brown bears in Unit 23. Brown bears in this area of Alaska occur at low densities and their productivity is low; it is important to monitor harvest to maintain a healthy bear population. The State subsistence registration permit requirement provides both State and Federal wildlife managers with valuable harvest and population trend information necessary to properly manage brown bears. Currently, there is no practical alternative to the State registration permit for monitoring brown bear harvest, hunter success or population trends as a separate Federal permit would only add regulatory complexity for the user. Permits can be obtained relatively easily by calling the local ADF&G biologist in Kotzebue who will mail them out to villages if vendors are not available.

Under current regulations, qualified rural residents have two options when hunting brown bear on Federal lands in Alaska. They can harvest an animal under the State's general harvest regulations, which does not require a registration permit, but does require sealing of the hide and skull, or they can hunt under State/Federal subsistence regulations, which require a State subsistence registration permit and salvage of all edible meat. Under this option, sealing is only required if the animal is removed from the unit.

Clarification of registration permit requirements is needed given past regulatory history. The proponent states that removal of the permit requirement is needed to align State and Federal brown bear populations, but this is not the case. A State subsistence registration permit has been required for Federally qualified users hunting under subsistence regulations since the early 1990s. Removal of the permit requirement would result in misalignment of State and Federal regulations, not the other way around. Previous language under special provisions for brown bear in Unit 23 made it appear as if subsistence hunters could use either a general hunting tag or a registration permit for subsistence harvest of brown bear when only the latter option is legal for those interested in hunting brown bear for food without the need for sealing.

Amending the language under the special provisions section for Unit 23 brown bear hunting to more accurately reflect the requirement for hunters to have a State subsistence registration permit will clarify regulations as it pertains to the subsistence harvest of brown bears. As it reads now, the use of the phrase "you may hunt brown bear by State registration permit in lieu of a resident tag in Unit 23 if you have a State registration permit prior to hunting" gives the appearance that use of a State registration permit for subsistence hunting of brown bears is optional for subsistence harvest of brown bear when in fact it is not and never has been since the regulation was adopted by the Federal Subsistence Board in 1992.

Eliminating the requirement for a State subsistence registration permit would result in Federally qualified users only being able to hunt brown bears in Unit 23 under the State's general brown bear hunting regulations, which would require the hide and skull to be sealed. Such a requirement would add an unwanted reporting burden on Federally qualified users, which goes against the intent of the proponent.

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WP14-41 Executive Summary	
General Description	Proposal WP14-41 requests that the season and harvest limit for muskox in Unit 23SW (south of Kotzebue Sound and west of and including the Buckland River drainage) be changed to eliminate the cow hunt and create a continuous season from Aug. 1 to Mar. 15. In addition, it requests that language be added to authorize Federal managers to restrict the number of Federal permits to be issued. <i>Submitted by the National Park Service,</i>
Proposed Regulation	<p>Unit 23—Muskox</p> <p><i>Unit 23 — south of Kotzebue Sound and west of and including the Buckland River drainage — 1 bull by Federal permit or State Tier II permit. Aug.1 – Dec.31Mar. 15</i></p> <p><i>Or</i></p> <p><i>1 muskox by Federal permit or State permit Jan.1–Mar. 15</i></p> <p><i>Federal public lands are closed to the taking of muskox except by Federally qualified subsistence users hunting under these regulations. Annual harvest quotas, the number of Federal permits to be issued, and any needed closures will be announced by the Superintendent of the Western Arctic National Parklands, in consultation with ADF&G and BLM.</i></p>
OSM Preliminary Conclusion	Support Proposal WP14-41 with modification to delete the regulatory language found in the Unit 23 muskox regulations, eliminate language specifying a Tier II permit requirement, and delegate authority to close the season, determine annual quotas and the number of permits to be issued via a delegation of authority letter only.
Northwest Arctic Regional Council Recommendation	
Interagency Staff Committee Comments	
ADF&G Comments	
Written Public Comments	None

**DRAFT STAFF ANALYSIS
WP14-41**

ISSUES

Proposal WP14-41, submitted by the National Park Service, requests that the season and harvest limit for muskox in Unit 23SW (south of Kotzebue Sound and west of and including the Buckland River drainage) be changed to eliminate the cow hunt and create a continuous season from Aug. 1 to Mar. 15. In addition, it requests that language be added to authorize Federal managers to restrict the number of Federal permits to be issued.

DISCUSSION

The proponent states there are emerging conservation concerns regarding the muskox population on the Seward Peninsula which have led to significant changes in hunt management that are likely to persist into the foreseeable future. The proponent states the current regulations no longer reflect the actual hunt requirements as they have been changed numerous times through State Emergency Orders and Federal Special actions. The proponent believes the proposed changes are needed to reduce confusion among users and improve management flexibility.

Existing Federal Regulation

Unit 23—Muskox

Unit 23 — south of Kotzebue Sound and west of and including the Buckland River drainage — 1 bull by Federal permit or State permit. *Aug.1 – Dec.31*

Or

1 muskox by Federal permit or State permit *Jan.1– Mar. 15*

Federal public lands are closed to the taking of muskox except by Federally qualified subsistence users hunting under these regulations. Annual harvest quotas and any needed closures will be announced by the Superintendent of the Western Arctic National Parklands, in consultation with ADF&G and BLM.

Proposed Federal Regulation

Unit 23—Muskox

*Unit 23 — south of Kotzebue Sound and west of and including the Buckland River drainage – 1 bull by Federal permit or State **Tier II** permit* *Aug.1 – ~~Dec.31~~Mar. 15*

Or

1 muskox by Federal permit or State permit

Jan. 1 – Mar. 15

*Federal public lands are closed to the taking of muskox except by Federally qualified subsistence users hunting under these regulations. Annual harvest quotas, **the number of Federal permits to be issued**, and any needed closures will be announced by the Superintendent of the Western Arctic National Parklands, in consultation with ADF&G and BLM.*

Existing State Regulation

Unit 23 — Muskox

Unit 23 — Seward Peninsula west of and including the Buckland River drainage *Aug. 1 – Mar. 15*

Residents, one bull by permit

Extent of Federal Public Lands

Federal public lands comprise approximately 60% of Unit 23SW and consist of 40% Bureau of Land Management managed lands, 20% National Park Service managed lands (see **Unit 23 Map**).

Customary and Traditional Use Determinations

Rural residents of Unit 23 south of Kotzebue Sound and west of and including the Buckland River drainage have a positive and customary traditional determination for muskox in Unit 23 south of Kotzebue Sound and west of and including the Buckland River drainage.

Regulatory History

Proposal 44 (1995) — submitted by the Seward Peninsula Subsistence Regional Advisory Council, requested a Federal registration permit hunt for muskox in Units 22D and 22E. Federal public lands in each subunit were closed to non-subsistence hunting of muskox. The Federal Subsistence Board adopted the proposal with modification, at its April 1995 meeting, to include that portion of Unit 23 including and west of the Buckland River drainage with a season from Sept. 1 – Jan. 31.

Proposal 99-46 — submitted by the Seward Peninsula Subsistence Regional Advisory Council, requested that the Federal muskox season in Unit 23SW be Aug. 1 – Mar. 15 with a harvest limit of one bull by Federal registration or State Tier II permit. The proposal was adopted by the Federal Subsistence Board at its May 1999 meeting.

Proposal WP01-35 — submitted by the Seward Peninsula Muskox Cooperators Group, requested a change in the harvest limit and the harvest quotas for Unit 23SW. The requested harvest limit change was from one bull to one muskox by Federal registration permit or State Tier II permit, however cows would only be taken during the period Jan. 1 – Mar. 15. The requested harvest quota of 8 cows, and the total combined harvest would not exceed 13 animals. The proposal was adopted by the Federal Subsistence Board at its May 2001 meeting.

Proposal WP02-37 — submitted by the Seward Peninsula Subsistence Regional Advisory Council, requested that the Federal subsistence muskox harvest in Unit 23SW be revised such that annual harvest

quotas and any needed closures could be announced by the Superintendent of the Western Arctic National Parklands, in consultation with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and BLM. The proposal was adopted by the Federal Subsistence Board at its May 2002 meeting.

Proposal WP06-55 — submitted by Seward Peninsula Muskoxen Cooperators Group, requested the use of a designated hunter permit for muskoxen in Unit 23SW. The proposal was adopted by the Federal Subsistence Board at its January 2006 meeting.

Proposal WP10-84 — submitted by the Northwest Arctic Regional Advisory Council, requested that the regulation allowing for the harvest of one muskox by Federal permit or State Tier II permit be revised to change the State Tier II permit to a State Tier I subsistence registration permit and to change the harvest during the Aug. 1 – Dec. 31 season to bulls only and allow the harvest of any muskox during the Jan. 1 – Mar. 31 season. The Federal Subsistence Board adopted the proposal with modification at its January 2010 meeting to clarify the regulatory language for the Aug. 1 – Dec. 31 season.

In 2011 the Alaska Board of Game adopted Proposal RC34A making the muskox hunting regulation in Unit 23SW part of a threshold-based hunt regime conditioned on the harvestable surplus available in Units 22B, 22C, 22D, and 23SW of the Seward Peninsula population. The regulatory thresholds for this portion of the population defined conditions for Tier II hunts, Tier I registration hunts and registration/drawing hunts. This change was in response to significant population declines, low bull:cow ratios, and high harvest of mature bulls documented by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), Bureau of Land Management, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Park Service. Based on further population declines indicated by March 2012 population surveys, State Tier II hunts were required in Unit 23 SW for 2012–2013 regulatory year, because the harvestable surplus was below the State of Alaska's Amounts Necessary for Subsistence (ANS).

Biological Background

Muskox management on the Seward Peninsula has been guided by recommendations from the Seward Peninsula Muskox Cooperators Group. The group is composed of staff from ADF&G, NPS, BLM, USFWS, Bering Straits Native Corporation, Kawerak Inc., Reindeer Herders Association, Northwest Alaska Native Association, residents of Seward Peninsula communities, and representatives from other interested groups or organizations. The following management goals form the basis of the cooperative interagency management plan for Seward Peninsula muskoxen developed from 1992 through 1994 (Nelson 1994) and follow the guidelines of the ADF&G Muskox Management Policies (ADF&G 1980):

- Manage population to allow for continued growth and range expansion of the Seward Peninsula Muskox
- Provide for a limited harvest in a manner consistent with the existing State and Federal laws by following the goals/objectives endorsed by the Seward Peninsula Muskox Cooperators Group and the Seward Peninsula Cooperative Muskox Management Plan
- Manage muskoxen along the Nome road systems of Unit 22B and 22C for viewing, education, and other nonconsumptive uses
- Work with local reindeer herding interests to minimize conflicts between reindeer and muskoxen
- Protect and maintain the habitats and other components of the ecosystem upon which muskoxen depend

- Encourage cooperation and sharing of information among agencies and users of the resource in developing and executing management and research programs

A muskox population estimate conducted in 2010 for Unit 23 SW resulted in an estimate of 175 animals, which was 12% lower than the minimum count in 2007, but within the confidence intervals for the distance sampling estimate (Westing 2011). Muskox numbers in Unit 23 SW varied between 1995 and 2011 (**Figure 1**). The population is believed to be stable and the variability in population counts may be a result of movement of animals between Units 22B (the Inglutalik drainage), 22D, 22E, eastern 23 (the Tag River drainage) and 23 SW. However, there has been a decrease in the number of mature bulls and yearlings throughout the Seward Peninsula, including Unit 23SW. Population composition counts from March 2010 showed 19 mature bulls per 100 cows and 18 yearlings per 100 cows (Westing 2011). However, low bull:cow ratios, coupled with high cow mortality in recent years is a concern (Adkisson 2012, pers. comm.) and recently completed population estimates show a decline of almost 25% for the species on the Seward Peninsula as a whole between 2010 and 2012 (Gorn 2012).

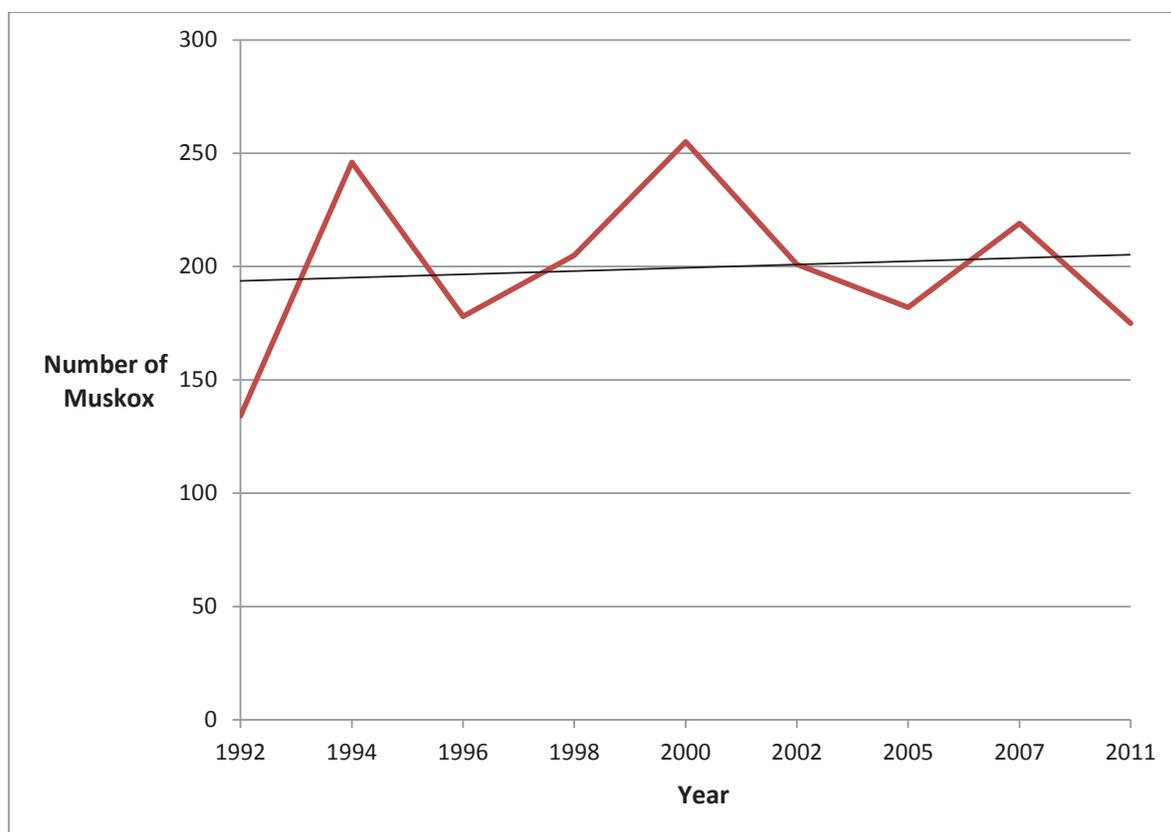


Figure 1. Muskox population estimates for Unit 23SW, 1992-2011 (Gorn 2012).

Harvest History

Harvest in Unit 23SW until 1998 was strictly from Federally qualified users. In 1998, harvest under State Tier II permits was allowed. Harvest increased between 1995 and 2009, but declined in recent years along with the number of permits issued and the harvest quota. There was a marked increase in harvest from 2007–2009 due to the implementation of a State Tier I permit system (RX106), which did not limit the number of permits that were issued (**Table 1**). Emergency orders closing the muskox hunt in Unit 23SW

Table 1. Muskox harvest history for Unit 23 SW, 1995-2011 (Westing 2012, pers. comm., Merben 2013, pers. comm., Adkisson 2013, pers. comm.)

Year	Federal Permits Issued	FX 116 Harvest	Tier II Permits Issued	Tier II TX106 Harvest	*DX106 Harvest	*DX106 Permits Issued	*RX106 Harvest	*RX106 Permits Issued	Total Harvest	Total Permits Issued	Quota
1995	7	6							6	7	7
1996	9	3							3	9	9
1997	6	1							1	6	6
1998	8	2	2	1					3	10	8
1999	8	0	2	1					1	10	10
2000	4	1	8	5					6	12	12
2001	6	3	11	6					9	17	13
2002	3	0	9	9					9	12	10
2003	6	2	10	1					3	16	10
2004	5	1	12	6					7	17	10
2005	2	1	8	3					4	10	9
2006	3	1	13	3					4	16	15
2007	6	1	26	10					11	32	18
2008	5	0			0	2	16	49	16	56	18
2009					1	2	17	52	18	54	18
2010							7	25	7	25	8
2011							7	25	7	25	7
2012	8	0	4	0							

FX = Federal permit, DX = State drawing permit, RX = State registration permit

have been issued several times since 2008 (Adkisson 2012, pers. com.). During the 2011-2012 regulatory year, the muskox hunt was closed on January 12th, about two months prior to the season closing date of March 15. In April 2012, the State announced that State Seward Peninsula muskox hunts would be available by State Tier II permits only. This change was made due to a significant population decline and because of low bull and yearling numbers, which resulted in the harvestable surplus being below the State of Alaska's Amounts Necessary for Subsistence (Gorn 2012).

Effects of the Proposal

If adopted, this proposal would eliminate the harvest of cows and create a continuous season from Aug. 1 to Mar. 15. In addition, it would add specific language that would authorize Federal managers to restrict the number of Federal permits that could be issued. Eliminating the cow season will help rebuild the muskox population on the Seward Peninsula by increasing reproductive capacity of the herd. Allowing Federal managers to limit the number of Federal permits will help prevent the overharvest of a declining muskox population. Changing of the season dates will align Federal and State regulations, thereby reducing regulatory complexity for Federal users.

OSM PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

Support Proposal WP14-41 **with modification** to delete the regulatory language found in the Unit 23 muskox regulations, eliminate language specifying a Tier II permit requirement, and delegate authority to close the season, determine annual quotas and the number of permits to be issued via a delegation of authority letter only (**Appendix A**).

The regulation would read:

Unit 23—Muskox

Unit 23 — south of Kotzebue Sound and west of and including the Buckland River drainage — 1 bull by Federal permit or State ~~Tier II~~ permit Aug. 1 – ~~Dec. 31~~ Mar. 15

Or

1 muskox by Federal permit or State permit Jan. 1 – Mar. 15

*Federal public lands are closed to the taking of muskox except by Federally qualified subsistence users hunting under these regulations. Annual harvest quotas, **the number of Federal permits to be issued**, and any needed closures will be announced by the Superintendent of the Western Arctic National Parklands, in consultation with ADF&G and BLM.*

The following language would be deleted from the Unit 23 muskox regulations:

Federal public lands are closed to the harvest of muskox except by Federally qualified subsistence users. ~~Annual harvest quotas and any needed closures for Unit 23 will be announced by the Superintendent of the Western Arctic National Parklands, in consultation with ADF&G and BLM.~~

Justification

The muskox population within the Seward Peninsula has declined significantly since 2010. While the population within Unit 23SW appears to be stable, though there appears to be a decrease in mature bulls and yearlings throughout the Seward Peninsula, including Unit 23SW. The muskox hunt in Unit 23SW has been closed early by State of Alaska Emergency Order since 2008 after harvest quotas were reached. In addition, the State has now changed from a Tier I to Tier II permitting system in Unit 23 SW, in response to significant declines in the population across the Seward Peninsula. Elimination of the cow harvest and limiting the number of Federal permits will help rebuild the muskox population on the Seward Peninsula through proper management of the stable population in Unit 23SW and prevent overharvest. The proposed season changes will serve to align Federal and State regulations, which will help reduce regulatory complexity for Federal users. Creation of a delegation of authority letter for the Federal land manager will serve to clarify regulations and allow for hunt management flexibility through in season adjustment of hunt parameters. Eliminating the language specifying the use of a State Tier II permit will allow managers to adjust hunt parameters without the need to make adjustments through the regulatory process.

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APPENDIX A

Superintendent Frank Hays
 Western Arctic National Parklands
 P.O. Box 1029
 Kotzebue, Alaska 99752

Dear Superintendent Hays:

This letter delegates specific regulatory authority from the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) to the Superintendent of the Western Arctic National Parklands, as approved by the Board, to issue emergency special actions if necessary to ensure the continued viability of a wildlife population, to continue subsistence uses of wildlife, or for reasons of public safety; or temporary special actions if the proposed temporary change will not interfere with the conservation of healthy wildlife populations, will not be detrimental to the long-term subsistence use of wildlife resources, and is not an unnecessary restriction on non-subsistence users. This delegation only applies to the Federal public lands subject to ANILCA Title VIII within Unit 23 south of Kotzebue Sound and west of and including the Buckland River drainage as it applies to muskox on these lands.

It is the intent of the Board that actions related to management of muskox by Federal officials be coordinated, prior to implementation, with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), and the Chair of the Northwest Arctic Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council) to the extent possible. Federal managers are expected to work with State managers and the Chair and applicable members of the Council to minimize disruption to resource users and existing agency programs, consistent with the need for special action.

DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY

1. Delegation: The Superintendent of the Western Arctic National Parklands is hereby delegated authority to issue emergency or temporary special actions affecting muskox on Federal lands as outlined under 3. Scope of Delegation of this section. Any action greater than 60 days in length (temporary special action) requires a public hearing before implementation. Special actions are governed by Federal regulation at 36 CFR 242.19 and 50 CFR 100.19.

2. Authority: This delegation of authority is established pursuant to 36 CFR 242.10(d)(6) and 50 CFR 100.10(d)(6), which states: “The Board may delegate to agency field officials the authority to set harvest and possession limits, define harvest areas, specify methods or means of harvest, specify permit requirements, and open or close specific fish or wildlife harvest seasons within frameworks established by the Board.”

3. Scope of Delegation: The regulatory authority hereby delegated is limited to the following authorities within the limits set by regulation at 36 CFR 242.26 and 50 CFR 100.26:

- To set a harvest quota, the number of permits issued, and the season opening and closing dates for the muskox on Federal public lands in Unit 23 south of Kotzebue Sound and west of and including the Buckland River drainage.

This delegation may be exercised only when it is necessary to conserve the muskox population or to continue subsistence uses.

All other proposed changes to codified regulations, such as customary and traditional use determinations, adjustments to methods and means of take, or closures to only non-Federally qualified users shall be directed to the Federal Subsistence Board.

The Federal public lands subject to this delegated authority are those within Unit 23 south of Kotzebue Sound and west of and including the Buckland River drainage.

3. Effective Period: This delegation of authority is effective from the date of this letter and continues until superseded or rescinded.

4. Guidelines for Delegation: You will become familiar with the management history of the wildlife species relevant to this delegation in the region, with current State and Federal regulations and management plans, and be up-to-date on population and harvest status information. You will review special action requests or situations that may require a special action and all supporting information to determine (1) consistency with 36 CFR 242.19, (2) if the request/situation falls within the scope of authority, (3) if significant conservation problems or subsistence harvest concerns are indicated, and (4) what the consequences of taking an action or no action may be on potentially affected subsistence users and non-subsistence users. Requests not within your delegated authority will be forwarded to the Federal Subsistence Board for consideration. You will maintain a record of all special action requests and rationale for your decision. A copy of this record will be provided to the Administrative Records Specialist in the Office of Subsistence Management no later than sixty days after development of the document.

You will notify the Office of Subsistence Management and coordinate with local ADF&G managers, the Bureau of Land Management (Central Yukon Field Office) and the Chair of the Northwest Arctic Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council regarding special actions under consideration. You will issue decisions in a timely manner. Before the effective date of any decision, reasonable efforts will be made to notify the public, the Office of Subsistence Management, affected State and Federal managers, law enforcement personnel, and Council representatives. If an action is to supersede a State action not yet in effect, the decision will be communicated to the public, the Office of Subsistence Management, affected State and Federal Managers, and the local Council representatives at least 24 hours before the State action would be effective. If a decision to take no action is made, you will notify the proponent of the request immediately.

You may defer a special action request, otherwise covered by this delegation of authority, to the Federal Subsistence Board in instances when the proposed management action will have a significant impact on a large number of Federal subsistence users or is particularly controversial. This option should be exercised judiciously and may be initiated only when sufficient time allows for it. Such deferrals should not be considered when immediate management actions are necessary for conservation purposes. The Federal Subsistence Board may determine that a special action request may best be handled by the Board, subsequently rescinding the delegated regulatory authority for the specific action only.

5. Support Services: Administrative support for regulatory actions will be provided by the Office of Subsistence Management, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior.

Sincerely,

Tim Towarak
Chair, Federal Subsistence Board

cc: Assistants to the Board
Interagency Staff Committee
Chair, Northwest Arctic Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Coordinator, Northwest Arctic Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Subsistence Liaison, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
ARD, Office of Subsistence Management
Administrative Record

DRAFT 2014 FISHERIES RESOURCE MONITORING PLAN

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Since 1999, under the authority of Title VIII of ANILCA, the Federal government has managed subsistence fisheries on Federal public lands in Alaska. Subsistence fisheries management requires substantial informational needs. Section 812 of ANILCA directs the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture, cooperating with the State of Alaska and other Federal agencies, to undertake research on fish and wildlife and subsistence uses on Federal public lands. To increase the quantity and quality of information available for management of subsistence fisheries, the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program (Monitoring Program) was established within the Office of Subsistence Management. The Monitoring Program was envisioned as a collaborative, interagency, and interdisciplinary approach to support fisheries research for subsistence fisheries management on Federal public lands.

Biennially, the Office of Subsistence Management announces a funding opportunity for projects addressing subsistence fisheries on Federal public lands. The 2014 Funding Opportunity was focused on priority information needs developed either by strategic planning efforts or by expert opinion, followed by review and comment by the Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils. The Monitoring Program is administered by region, and strategic plans sponsored by this program were developed by workgroups of fisheries managers, researchers, Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils' members, and other stakeholders for three of the six regions: Southeast, Southcentral (excluding Cook Inlet Area), and Southwest Alaska. These plans identify prioritized information needs for each major subsistence fishery and can be viewed on, or downloaded from, the Office of Subsistence Management's website: <http://alaska.fws.gov/asm/index.cfm>. Independent strategic plans were completed for the Yukon and Kuskokwim regions for salmon in 2005. For the Northern Region and the Cook Inlet Area, assessments of priority information needs were developed from the expert opinions of the Regional Advisory Councils, the Technical Review Committee, Federal and State managers, and staff from the Office of Subsistence Management. A strategic plan for research on whitefish species in the Yukon and Kuskokwim River drainages was completed in spring 2011 as a result of Monitoring Program project 08-206.

Cumulative effects of climate change will likely affect subsistence fishery resources, their uses, and how these resources are managed. Therefore, all investigators were asked to consider examining or discussing climate change effects as part of their project. Investigators conducting long-term projects were encouraged to participate in a standardized air and water temperature monitoring program for which the Office of Subsistence Management will provide calibrated temperature loggers and associated equipment, analysis and reporting services, and access to a temperature database. The Office of Subsistence Management has also specifically requested projects that would focus on effects of climate change on subsistence fishery resources and uses, and that would describe management implications.

The mission of the Monitoring Program is to identify and provide information needed to sustain subsistence fisheries on Federal public lands, for rural Alaskans, through a multidisciplinary, collaborative program.

To implement the Monitoring Program, a collaborative approach is utilized in which five Federal agencies (Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and U.S. Forest Service) work with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Regional Advisory Councils, Alaska Native organizations, and other organizations. An interagency Technical Review Committee provides scientific evaluation of investigation plans. The Regional Advisory Councils provide

review and recommendations, and public comment is invited. The Interagency Staff Committee also provides recommendations. The Federal Subsistence Board takes into consideration recommendations and comments from the process, and approves the final monitoring plan.

PROJECT EVALUATION PROCESS

The Technical Review Committee evaluates investigation plans and makes recommendations for funding. The committee is co-chaired by the Fisheries and Anthropology Division Chiefs, Office of Subsistence Management, and is composed of representatives from each of the five Federal agencies and three representatives from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Fisheries and Anthropology staff from the Office of Subsistence Management provide support for the committee.

Four factors are used to evaluate studies:

1. Strategic Priority

Proposed projects should address the following and must meet the first criteria to be eligible for Federal subsistence funding.

Federal Jurisdiction—Issue or information needs addressed in projects must have a direct association to a subsistence fishery within a Federal conservation unit as defined in legislation, regulation, and plans.

Conservation Mandate—Risk to the conservation of species and populations that support subsistence fisheries, and risk to conservation unit purposes as defined in legislation, regulation, and plans.

Allocation Priority—Risk of failure to provide a priority to subsistence uses.

Data Gaps—Amount of information available to support subsistence management (i.e., higher priority given where a lack of information exists).

Role of Resource—Contribution of a species to a subsistence harvest (e.g., number of villages affected, pounds of fish harvested, miles of river) and qualitative significance (e.g., cultural value, unique seasonal role).

Local Concern—Level of user concerns over subsistence harvests (e.g., upstream vs. downstream allocation, effects of recreational use, changes in fish abundance, and population characteristics).

2. Technical-Scientific Merit

The proposed projects must meet accepted standards for design, information collection, compilation, analysis, and reporting. Projects should have clear study objectives, an appropriate sampling design, correct statistical analysis, a realistic schedule and budget, and appropriate products, including written reports. Projects must not duplicate work already being done.

3. Investigator Ability and Resources

Investigators must have the ability and resources to successfully complete the proposed work. Ability will be evaluated in terms of education and training, related work experience, publications, reports, presentations, and past or ongoing work on Monitoring Program studies. Resources

will be considered in terms of office and laboratory facilities (if relevant), technical and logistic support, and personnel and budget administration.

4. Partnership-Capacity Building

Partnerships and capacity building are priorities of the Monitoring Program. ANILCA mandates that the Federal government provide rural residents a meaningful role in the management of subsistence fisheries, and the Monitoring Program offers tremendous opportunities for partnerships and participation of local residents in monitoring and research. Investigators are requested to include a strategy for integrating local capacity development in their investigation plans. Investigators must complete appropriate consultations with local villages and communities in the area where the project is to be conducted. Letters of support from local organizations add to the strength of a proposal. Investigators and their organizations should demonstrate their ability to maintain effective local relationships and commitment to capacity building.

POLICY AND FUNDING GUIDELINES

Several policies have been developed to aid in implementing funding.

- Projects of up to four years duration may be considered in any year's monitoring plan.
- Studies must be non-duplicative with existing projects.
- Most Monitoring Program funding is dedicated to non-Federal agencies.
- Activities not eligible for funding under the Monitoring Program include: a) habitat protection, restoration, and enhancement; b) hatchery propagation, restoration, enhancement, and supplementation; c) contaminant assessment, evaluation, and monitoring; and d) projects where the primary objective is capacity building (e.g., science camps, technician training, intern programs). These activities would most appropriately be addressed by the land management agencies.
- When long-term projects can no longer be funded by agencies, and the project provides direct information for Federal subsistence fisheries management, the Monitoring Program may fund up to 50% of the project cost.

Finances and Guideline Model for Funding

The Monitoring Program was first implemented in 2000, with an initial allocation of \$5 million. Since 2001, a total of \$6.25 million has been annually allocated for the Monitoring Program. In 2010, the total funding was reduced to \$6.05 million. The Department of the Interior, through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, has provided \$4.25 million. The Department of Agriculture, through the U.S. Forest Service, has historically provided \$1.80 million annually, but amount of 2014 funds available through the U.S. Forest Service for projects is uncertain. If the Department of Agriculture funding is not provided, none of the project investigation plans submitted for the Southeast Region would be funded.

The Monitoring Program budget funds continuations of existing projects (year-2, 3 or 4 of multi-year projects), and new projects in the biennial year. The Office of Subsistence Management issued funding opportunities on an annual basis until 2008, and then shifted to a biennial basis. Therefore, the next funding opportunity after 2014 will be in 2016. Budget guidelines are established by geographic region and data type, and for 2014, \$3.7 million is projected to be available for new project starts. Investigation Plans are solicited according to the following two data types:

5. Stock Status and Trends Studies (SST).

These projects address abundance, composition, timing, behavior, or status of fish populations that sustain subsistence fisheries with linkage to Federal public lands. The budget guideline for this category is two-thirds of available funding.

6. Harvest Monitoring and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (HM-TEK).

These projects address assessment of subsistence fisheries including quantification of harvest and effort, and description and assessment of fishing and use patterns. The budget guideline for this category is one-third of available funding.

2014 FISHERIES RESOURCE MONITORING PLAN

For 2014, a total of 56 investigation plans were received for consideration for funding (**Table 1**). Of these, 43 are SST projects and 13 are HM-TEK projects. The Technical Review Committee recommends funding 40 of these investigation plans.

Table 1. Number of Investigation Plans received for funding consideration in 2014, and number of recommended for funding by the Technical Review Committee. Data types are stock status and trends (SST), and harvest monitoring and traditional ecological knowledge (HM-TEK).

Geographic Region	Investigation Plans			Technical Review Committee		
	SST	HMTEK	Total	SST	HMTEK	Total
Northern Alaska	4	1	5	3	0	3
Yukon	9	3	12	7	2	9
Kuskokwim	8	6	14	6	5	11
Southwest Alaska	2	1	3	2	0	2
Southcentral Alaska	7	2	9	3	0	3
Southeast Alaska	12	0	12	11	0	11
Multiregional	1	0	1	1	0	1
Total	43	13	56	33	7	40

Total funding available from the Department of the Interior, through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, for new projects in 2014 is \$3.7 million. Currently, the amount of funding available from the Department of Agriculture, through the U.S. Forest Service, is unknown. The proposed cost of funding all 56 projects submitted would be \$6.6 million. The 40 investigation plans recommended for funding by the Technical Review Committee have a total cost of \$4.8 million. In making its recommendations, the committee weighed the importance of funding new projects in 2014 with the knowledge that the next request for proposals will be issued in 2016. As has been done in past years, any unallocated Monitoring Program

funds from the current year will be used to fund subsequent years of new and ongoing projects so that more of the funds available in 2016 can be used to fund new projects.

The 2014 draft Monitoring Plan recommended by the Technical Review Committee would provide 21% of the funding to Alaska Native organizations, 29% to State agencies, 43% to Federal agencies, and 7% to other non-government organizations.

Northern Alaska Region Overview

Issues and Information Needs

The 2014 Funding Opportunity for the Northern Region identified three priorities:

1. Baseline and ongoing harvest assessment and monitoring of subsistence fisheries in the Northwest Arctic and North Slope regions to supplement available information.
2. Historic trends and variability in harvest locations, harvests and uses of non-salmon fish, particularly for North Slope communities.
3. Iñupiaq natural history of fish, land use, place name mapping, species distribution, and methods for and timing of harvests, and Iñupiaq natural history of fish.

Projects Funded Under the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program

Since the inception of the Monitoring Program in 2000, 38 projects have been funded in the Northern Region; five are funded through 2014 (**Tables 1 and 2**). Two of these projects concern sheefish assessment in the Kobuk and Selawik river drainages (projects 12-100 and 12-103), one concerns Dolly Varden assessment in the Noatak River (project 12-104), one concerns local harvest information of non-salmon fishes in northwest Alaska (project 12-153), and one concerns TEK and harvest monitoring of emerging North Slope salmon fisheries (project 12-154).

Investigation Plans Forwarded for Funding

Five investigation plans for research in the Northern Region were submitted to the Office of Subsistence Management in response to the 2014 Funding Opportunity. In June 2013, the Technical Review Committee reviewed the investigation plans and recommended three investigation plans for funding. Detailed budgets submitted with each investigation plan allowed identification of funds requested by Alaska Native, State, Federal, and other organizations; funds that would be used to hire local residents; and matching funds from investigating agencies and organizations (**Tables 3 and 4**).

Available Funds

Federal Subsistence Board guidelines direct initial distribution of funds among regions and data types. While regional budget guidelines provide an initial target for planning, they are not rigid allocations. Upon further review and evaluation, the Technical Review Committee, Regional Advisory Councils, Interagency Staff Committee and the Federal Subsistence Board have the opportunity to address the highest priority projects across regions. For 2014, approximately \$629,000 is available for funding new project in the Northern Alaska Region.

Recommendations for Funding

The mission of the Monitoring Program is to identify and provide information needed to sustain subsistence fisheries on Federal public lands for rural Alaskans through a multidisciplinary, collaborative program. It is the responsibility of the Technical Review Committee to develop the strongest possible monitoring plan for each region and across the entire state. After reviewing the five investigation plans, the Technical Review Committee recommended funding three of the proposed projects (**Table 5**):

14-101	Unalakleet River Chinook Salmon Escapement Assessment	\$115,023
14-103	Beaufort Sea Dolly Varden Dispersal Pattern	\$156,222
14-104	Selawik River Sheefish Age Structure and Spawning Abundance	\$ 0*
	Total	\$271,245

*No funding allocated for first year of project.

The three projects recommended for funding by the Technical Review Committee comprise a strong Monitoring Plan for the region by addressing strategically important information needs based on sound science and by promoting cooperative partnerships. All three projects recommended for funding are SST projects; no HM-TEK projects are recommended for funding. Each project submitted for funding in the Northern Alaska Region in 2014 is summarized below (see Executive Summaries for more details on all projects).

14-101 Unalakleet River Chinook Salmon Escapement Assessment. Fund. The Unalakleet River supports the largest Chinook salmon subsistence fishery within Norton Sound. A decline in abundance over the last several years has resulted in a decline in subsistence harvests. This project supports a continuing effort to monitor Unalakleet River Chinook salmon with a floating weir. Monitoring of the Unalakleet River Chinook salmon began in 2010. The results from this project would provide Chinook salmon inseason daily passage estimates and run timing. This information aids Federal and State fishery managers in making timely decisions. In addition, the proposed work provides managers with information to characterize spawner/recruit relationships and develop an escapement goal for Unalakleet River Chinook salmon.

14-102 North Slope Climate Change. Do Not Fund. This project proposes a prospective experiment to describe the effects of warming under a climate change scenario. This project addresses the 2014 priority information need of exploring changes in subsistence fishery resources in the context of climate change. The North Slope of Alaska, including the National Petroleum Reserve Alaska, Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and Gates of the Arctic National Park, contain extensive lake ecosystems supporting substantial subsistence fisheries which are sensitive to climate change. The investigator proposes establishing two lakes as control and two lakes to receive a warming treatment, then measuring and quantifying changes in the primary, secondary and fish production. The sample size in both the control and the treatment is small $n=2$. Inferences to be made from this experiment are ambitious for such a small sample size, a larger sample size would result in a more precise estimate. In addition, during warming periods the uplands warm as well as the lakes. It is unclear how results from just warming the water would be interpreting in an overall environmental context.

14-103 Beaufort Sea Dolly Varden Dispersal Pattern. Fund. While this project does not address a specific priority information need in Northern Alaska, Dolly Varden are listed as a general priority for all three Northern Councils in the 2014 Priority Information Needs document. The investigators plan describes using PSAT tags to document marine movement and feeding habitat locations of Dolly Varden in the Beaufort Sea. Since Dolly Varden populations have complex life histories and migration patterns, methods to identify populations or stocks are needed to assess the status of this important resource. The tags will provide information about duration of river residency, timing of ocean entry, swimming speed while transitioning to feeding areas, and duration of summer feeding. Information gained from this project will allow fishery managers to evaluate the important summer feeding areas for the Dolly Varden populations and possible human impact.

14-104 Selawik River Sheefish Age Structure and Spawning Abundance. Fund. This investigation plan requests continued funding for Monitoring Program project 12-100 to study the effect of a permafrost slump located about 40 km upstream from the sheefish spawning area in the Selawik River. In 2004, the permafrost slump began emitting large amounts of sediment into the river. In 2010, the investigators began monitor the annual abundance and age structure of the Selawik River sheefish spawning population to determine if the sediment emitted from the permafrost slump resulted in an identifiable impact to the sheefish population over time. The proposed work is technically sound and addresses an important subsistence sheefish fishery associated with Selawik National Wildlife Refuge. This project builds upon

several Monitoring Plan projects (02-020, 02-040, 03-016 and 04-101). Investigators have successfully completed two years of work funded through Monitoring Plan project 12-100. They have collected age structure data for both the Selawik and Kobuk river sheefish populations. In 2011 and 2012, they successfully sampled sheefish using DIDSON sonar to enumerate abundance. Currently, the investigators are funded to collect four years of data, funding this project would add three more years of data.

14-151 Kotzebue Sound Whitefish Ecology and Seasonal Dynamics. Do Not Fund. As written, this investigation plan should not be funded at this time. Although this proposal attempted to address three 2014 priority needs for the Northern region, it needs a more systematic and thoughtful approach. The study objectives and methods need to be better explained and clearly detailed. A professional anthropologist or social scientist is needed, particularly to oversee objective 1. The proposal is directly linked to subsistence resources in three Federal conservation units, and whitefish are an important subsistence resource for the people living in the communities of this region. If adequately revised and submitted in the future, this study would build on previous work and has potential to help managers and scientists better understand the relationship between whitefish and the coastal communities in the rural Kotzebue area. If adequately revised and submitted in the future, this study could increase local capacity and partnering by providing rural people with meaningful roles in research and new ways to learn about and get involved with subsistence research and management.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project Number: 14-101

Title: Unalakleet River Chinook Salmon Assessment Continuation

Geographic Region: Unalakleet Wild River

Data Type: Stock Status and Trends (SST)

Principal Investigator: Scott M. Kent, Assistant Area Management Biologist, Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game (ADF&G) Division of Commercial Fisheries

Co-Investigators: Merlyn Schelske, United States Bureau of Land Management (BLM),
Wes Jones, Norton Sound Economic Development (NSEDC).

Project Cost:

2014	2015	2016	2017	TOTAL
\$115,013	\$117,322	\$119,731	\$122,250	\$474,316

Recommendation: Fund

Issue: This proposal seeks funding to continue operating a 320-ft resistance board floating weir on the mainstem of the Unalakleet River from mid-June to mid-August. Since 2010, the weir has been used to fill important data gaps by monitoring the magnitude and age structure of the Chinook salmon *Onchorhynchus tshawytscha* spawning escapement. This has included the collection of age, sex, and length (ASL) data for the long term goals of establishing biological spawning goals and examining trends in relation to environmental changes and harvest practices.

The Unalakleet River Chinook salmon run supports the largest subsistence fishery in Norton Sound and constitutes the northernmost Chinook salmon population of significant size in Alaska. Past radiotelemetry studies revealed that 47–66% of Chinook salmon that return to the Unalakleet River drainage, spawn within the upper mainstem of the Unalakleet River watershed within the Federally-designated Wild and Scenic portion (Wuttig 1999; Joy and Reed *In Prep*). However, Chinook salmon returns to the Unalakleet River have declined precipitously since 2000, eliciting tremendous concern by subsistence users on the river. Existing sustainable escapement goals on the North River tributary have only been reached half the time since 1999 despite management measures aimed at conserving Chinook salmon (Kent and Bergstrom 2012). As a result, Unalakleet River Chinook salmon were designated a stock of yield concern in 2004 by the Alaska Board of Fisheries (board); the board reaffirmed this classification in 2007, 2010, and 2013. Beginning in 2009, the Federal Subsistence Board also took action by prohibiting all fishing for Chinook salmon in the Wild and Scenic corridor of the Unalakleet River to all users.

The mainstem weir escapement and ASL data are used to manage Chinook salmon subsistence and sport fisheries, develop outlooks of run abundance for subsequent years, evaluate brood year productivity, and evaluate effects of harvest practices on the spawning escapement. Concurrent operation of the mainstem weir and North River tower has also led to three years of accurate drainagewide escapement counts and has provided a means to examine historical estimates of drainagewide escapement indexed from North River tower counts and radiotelemetry (Wuttig 1999; Joy and

Reed *in prep*). Construction of a comprehensive database integrating North River and Unalakleet River mainstem escapement, harvest, and ASL data has also been initiated. However, several more years of these data must be compiled before meaningful recruit-per-spawner analyses can be conducted and a scientifically defensible escapement goal established. Thus, long-term operation of the Unalakleet River weir is critical in order to develop a drainagewide escapement goal, and possibly elucidate primary causes for the nearly 15-year pattern of diminishing runs. More importantly, accomplishing these latter two objectives provides the best opportunity for restoring the Unalakleet River Chinook salmon stock to historic abundance levels and consequently, ensuring customary levels of subsistence harvests are reached.

Objectives:

1. Determine daily and total Chinook salmon escapement from mid-June to mid-August.
2. Describe the timing of the Unalakleet River mainstem Chinook salmon escapement.
3. Estimate the ASL composition of the annual Unalakleet River mainstem Chinook salmon spawning escapement such that 95% confidence intervals of age composition will be no wider than $\pm 10\%$ ($\alpha=0.05$, $d=0.10$).

Methods: This proposal seeks funding to continue to operate a 320 ft resistance board floating weir on the mainstem of the Unalakleet River for the 2014–2017 field seasons. The weir was constructed in Unalakleet in 2010 following methods described by Stewart (2002) and Tobin (1994) and successfully operated through 2012. The weir site (63°53.32'N, 160°29.41'W) is located approximately 22 rkm upstream from the mouth of the Unalakleet River. Weir operations will occur from mid-June until mid-August in order to fully enumerate the Unalakleet River mainstem Chinook salmon escapement. In addition to timely and accurate escapement counts, the floating weir and integral live trap platform will continue to facilitate collection of large annual sample sizes of unbiased ASL data from the mainstem Chinook salmon spawning escapement. Age class information representative of the entire Chinook salmon run is needed to conduct recruits-per-spawner (R/S) analyses that characterize productivity through time and to develop scientifically defensible escapement goals.

Inseason estimates of Chinook salmon escapements will be available to state and federal fishery managers for evaluating Chinook salmon run strength and timing. Accurate ASL data will also allow managers to assess the impacts of harvest practices on the quality and quantity of the spawning escapement. Long-term datasets compiled of escapement, age data, and harvest information will be used to reconstruct the total run and develop scientifically defensible drainagewide Chinook salmon escapement goals. This will lead to better informed management of the Unalakleet River Chinook salmon subsistence fishery.

Partnerships/Capacity Building: Requested funding is for ADF&G, Native Village of Unalakleet, (NVU), and NSEDC to support one crew leader fishery biologist 1 (ADF&G), one NVU fisheries technician, and one NSEDC fisheries technician. Technicians trained by ADF&G, NSEDC, and BLM staff will be responsible for the bulk of field work. The proposed project would continue to seek local hires to promote involvement of resource users in the fisheries management and assessment process, and partnership with NVU and NSEDC encourages even greater local involvement and capacity building in the Unalakleet area. ADF&G, BLM, and NSEDC are providing matching funds towards the Unalakleet River weir in the form of biologist and technician time for weir installation, operation, and removal (BLM and NSEDC), project operational planning, personnel supervision, operations oversight (ADF&G), and

data analysis and report writing (ADF&G). ADF&G and NSEDC are also providing matching funds by operating the North River tower project for the 2014–2017 field seasons.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project Number: 14-102

Title: Climate change and subsistence fisheries: quantifying the direct effects of climatic warming on arctic fishes and lake ecosystems using whole-lake manipulations on the Alaska North Slope

Geographic Region: Northern Alaska

Information Type: Stock status and trends (SST)

Investigators: Phaedra Budy; Unit Leader, US Geological Survey-Utah Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit/Professor, Department of Watershed Sciences, Utah State University, Principal Investigator; 5210 Old Main Hill, Logan, UT, 84322; Phone: (435)-797-7564, phaedra.budy@usu.edu, FAX: (435)-797-4025, DUNS: 072984355

Stephen Klobucar; Ph.D. student, Department of Watershed Sciences, Utah State University; 5210 Old Main Hill, Logan, UT, 84322; Phone: (608)-289-5687, stephen.klobucar@gmail.com, FAX: (435)-797-4025

Project Cost:

2014	2015	2016	2017	TOTAL
\$184,104	\$148,937	\$151,603	\$168,967	\$653,611

Recommendation: Do Not Fund

Issue Addressed: Arctic ecosystems are already warming as a result of global climate change. Understanding the direct impacts on system productivity (e.g., harvestable fishes) as a result of this warming is essential to adapt and efficiently manage these systems. In particular, the Alaska North Slope (including the National Petroleum Reserve Alaska, Arctic National Wildlife Refuge Wilderness Area and Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve), contains extensive lake ecosystems which are not only sensitive to climatic warming, but also comprise important and valuable subsistence fisheries for Alaska Natives. However, our ability to detect and quantify specific biological responses (e.g., fish growth and survival) in these fisheries is currently limited to modeled scenarios and observational studies in uncontrolled environments. A much greater and active understanding is required and of paramount importance in order to adapt management as these North Slope fisheries are subjected to climatic warming. By implementing a controlled, system-level experimental manipulation, we will directly measure and quantify the potential effects of climate change on critical fish populations and overall system productivity in lakes representative of North Slope subsistence fisheries. Our results will 1) quantify changes in whole-lake production (primary, secondary, fish) as a result of climate change, 2) address the sustainability and guide management of important subsistence fisheries for Alaska Natives, and 3) provide empirical data to test current model predictions across other systems and regions. Implications of this research are of paramount importance. Our current model predictions indicate that if primary and secondary production does not increase with the warming climate, lakes, such as those that support subsistence fisheries on the North Slope, could experience extinctions of fish populations (Budy and Luecke, 2013). Alternatively, if production at lower trophic levels increase, fish production and growth could increase as well, allowing for better and more sustainable subsistence fisheries.

Objectives:

1. Identify lake systems representative of regional subsistence fisheries and quantify current and historical trends in system productivity
2. Experimentally extend growing season via whole-lake manipulation to simulate climate change
3. Measure and quantify changes in primary, secondary, and fish production in experimental systems
4. Estimate overwinter survival and measure growth of important fish species; compare with historical data for average length growing seasons
5. Measure bioenergetic inputs (fish growth, fish diet, water temperature) and compare outputs with previous simulations derived from climate change models
6. Calibrate existing models to match observed changes in fish production

Methods: We will implement a large-scale experimental manipulation of arctic lakes (within Toolik Lake Research Natural Area) with three distinct phases:

1. We will select two control lakes and two experimental lakes and monitor production at all trophic levels (e.g., primary production, fish growth), along with a suite of abiotic limnological factors (e.g., temperature, dissolved oxygen). We will census long-term aerial imagery files to determine the historical range of ice-off-on-dates on adjacent locations throughout the landscape (Objective I). Combining long-term data and existing bioenergetics models, we will estimate growth and production of trophic levels within the study lakes.
2. We will test predictions from the initial phase by implementing an ecosystem level, experimental manipulation to simulate climatic warming (Objective II). For designated experimental lakes, we will deploy developed lake warming equipment to extend the growing season by at least 15 days. Thus, we will replicate effects of climatic warming which have already been observed across the northern hemisphere. The control lakes will not be altered. We will again monitor production and limnological factors for the control and experimental lakes as in the initial phase (Objectives III, V).
3. We will allow natural ice conditions to return to the experimental lakes and the control lakes will remain unchanged. Again, we will monitor response variables as in the initial and implementation phase. We will investigate if any changes in trophic production (e.g., fish growth) are manifested in the following year, or if winter conditions bring the levels of production back to pre-manipulation conditions (Objective IV). We will analyze the experimental outcomes in regards to our model predictions (Objective VI).

Capacity Building: We will develop a series of interactive presentations that will engage native communities and subsistence fisherman in understanding the scientific background and methods of fisheries and aquatic science as they relate to climate change and Native subsistence culture. However, we will not be limited to the presentation of aquatic science. When applicable, we will invite other scientists from Toolik Research Station to present on topics ranging from permafrost to small mammals and birds, within the context of climate change and subsistence.

Specifically we will travel to and engage citizens of all ages and backgrounds in the community of Anaktuvuk Pass. For children, we will work with local teachers to develop hands-on educational

demonstrations that will allow students to learn about general biology and ecology including fish and water basics such as life cycles and life history. We will provide projects and handouts, which can be built upon as our educational series progresses. Children will also be able to view organisms (e.g., zooplankton) and fish parts (e.g., otoliths) through microscopes, and we will use various engaging multimedia techniques (e.g., observing feeding strategies of fishes through underwater video recordings or real time demonstrations). Older students, if interested, would be given the opportunity to spend a day on-site at our study lakes to assist with data collection and learn the scientific process. For adults and elders, we will present short, interactive lectures. Our presentations will begin by covering basics of fish ecology and climate change for the lay person and evolve based on our interactions with community members, likely towards the futures of management and resources in a changing climate. Furthermore, we would initiate an annual field trip to Toolik Research Station. Again, children would get hands on experiences, and in this setting be to learn and practice laboratory and computer skills (e.g., filter chlorophyll from water, examine fish diets). Interested citizens from Anaktuvuk Pass could visit our actual study lakes and view the manipulation in progress, and we would provide real-time updates on our progress and findings. In closing each of these on and off-site events, we would have an informal discussion and social gathering during which we could answer questions while simultaneous engaging and learning about Native livelihoods in respect to fishing, subsistence, and life in general.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project Number: Project 14-103

Title: Dispersal patterns and summer ocean distribution of adult Dolly Varden in the Beaufort Sea using satellite telemetry

Geographic Region: Northern Region

Data Type: Stock Status and Trends

Principle Investigator: Andrew Seitz, Assistant Professor, UAF-SFOS

Co-Investigator: Brendan Scanlon, Fishery Biologist, ADF&G-SFD

Collaborator: Randy Brown, Fishery Biologist, US FWS-FES

Project Cost:

2014	2015	2016	Total
\$156,222	\$158,333	\$83,662	\$398,217

Recommendation: Fund

Issues: Fisheries managers have long recognized the importance of Dolly Varden to subsistence users on the North Slope. The number of Dolly Varden harvested for subsistence purposes is largely undocumented in northern Alaska, but it is known that residents of villages in this region rely heavily upon this fish species. For example, in Kaktovik, fishers harvested 15,388 pounds of fish for subsistence from 2000–2002, of which 12,297 pounds (80%) was Dolly Varden, equating to approximately 96 pounds of Dolly Varden harvested each year per household. Dolly Varden are captured at river mouths and lagoons with gill nets or beach seines during open water periods, and with hook and line during winter ice fishing.

To understand the biology and ecology of this anadromous fish species that overwinters in rivers and feeds in the summer in the ocean, managers and biologists have conducted periodic aerial survey indices to monitor overwintering abundance dating back to 1971. Most of the surveys have been conducted on overwintering aggregations in the Ivishak River, with occasional surveys conducted on other rivers. A variety of other projects have also been conducted on Dolly Varden during their freshwater phase.

In contrast to the information that is available about Dolly Varden during their freshwater phase, fisheries managers have little direct information about the summer ocean ecology and distribution of Dolly Varden that overwinter in North Slope rivers. This information is important to evaluate the potential effects of habitat perturbations and climatic change, which ultimately may be important for understanding population dynamics and the effects of regulatory proposals and actions on this species.

Developments in satellite telemetry now provide an opportunity to examine the movements of fish as well as their depth and temperature preferences while in saltwater without having to recapture the study organism. In the past, pop-up satellite archival transmitting (PSAT) tags have been used to study the movements of relatively large fishes, however, as the size of the tags has become smaller, PSAT tags have been successfully used to describe movements of smaller fishes such as the striped bass *Morone saxatilis*. More recently, PSAT tags have been used successfully by the investigators of this proposed project to examine the summer oceanic movements and behavior of Dolly Varden that overwinter in northwest

Alaska. Specifically, the tags provided information about duration of river residency, timing of ocean entry, swimming speed while transiting to feeding areas, duration of summer feeding, and depth-specific information about transit and feeding behaviors.

Therefore, we propose to use PSAT tags to provide baseline information about the oceanic habits, distribution and migration patterns of Dolly Varden that are found just after ice-out in the Kaktovik area and spend their summers in the Beaufort Sea.

Objectives: The objectives of this proposed project are:

1. Describe baseline ecological information about Dolly Varden tagged in the lagoons near Kaktovik, Alaska, including:
 - a. Timing of outmigration to the Beaufort Sea
 - b. Summer dispersal
 - c. Temporal and spatial distribution
 - d. Depth and temperature occupancy
2. Describe temporal and spatial distribution in relation to areas where human activities such as shipping and hydrocarbon extraction are taking place to provide information to the public, biological resource managers and marine gas and oil resource managers to better understand potential interactions among Dolly Varden and human activities in the Beaufort Sea.

Methods: PSAT tags will be used to examine the marine movement and distribution of Dolly Varden that occur in the lagoon system near Kaktovik, AK in the spring. PSAT tags are a fisheries-independent means of studying fish, which is extremely important because there are no large-scale fisheries in the Beaufort Sea in the summer in which to capture Dolly Varden, therefore there is no financially efficient and logistically reasonable alternative to obtaining Dolly Varden migration and distribution data.

During fieldwork in the summers of 2014 and 2015, we propose to externally attach PSAT tags to 15 large (>55 cm) Dolly Varden each year. While externally attached to a fish, the tags measure and record temperature, pressure, and ambient light intensity (for daily geolocation estimates), detach from the fish on a preprogrammed date, “pop-up” to the surface, and transmit the archived data to Argos satellites, which will then be retrieved by the project investigators. While transmitting, the location of the PSAT tag is determined by passing satellites. The pop-up dates will be staggered throughout July and August, with all tags programmed to release before the fish purportedly reenter freshwater in September, as these tags need at least 5 ppt saltwater for the release mechanism to function. Oceanic dispersal and behavior of Dolly Varden from the lagoon near Kaktovik will be inferred from PSAT tag end locations, and depth, temperature and ambient light data.

Based on past PSAT tag experiments conducted by the investigators of this proposed project, combined with the short duration that these Dolly Varden will carry the tags (<10 weeks), it is anticipated that data recovery from the deployed tags will be >80%.

Partnerships and Capacity Building: Prior to starting the project, traditional local knowledge of Dolly Varden movements, timing, and capture methods and locations will be solicited from the Kaktovik IRA, North Slope RAC, North Slope Borough Wildlife Department and members of the public. Consultation with the Kaktovik IRA will be conducted to describe the project objectives and to inform fishers about returning tags if they are recaptured prior to their scheduled pop-up date. Additionally, a letter of support will be solicited from the North Slope RAC at their Fall/Winter 2013 meeting in Barrow. During tagging

fieldwork, a portion of the requested funds will provide a honorarium for a locally-hired technician from the village of Kaktovik to assist with fish capture and tag deployment for approximately one week each year. After the tags have popped-up and reported their data each year, annual educational outreach trips to Kaktovik to describe project results and updates will be conducted to give presentations to the public and school classes. These trips will be scheduled to coincide with the annual meeting of the Kaktovik IRA, to whom we will also give an outreach presentation. Additionally, a project investigator will attend a Federal RAC meeting held in Barrow annually to describe project results and updates. Finally, as interest and resources allow, presentations may be made at other regional villages and schools, such as Barrow, Nuiqsut, and Atqasuk and project results will be presented at State Advisory Committees, and in regional newspapers and radio shows.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**Project Number:** 14-104**Title:** Selawik River Inconnu Spawning Population Abundance and Age Structure Evaluation**Geographic Region:** Northwest Alaska**Data Type:** Stock Status and Trends**Principal Investigator:** Raymond Hander, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service**Co-Investigator:** Randy J. Brown, USFWS**Project Cost:**

2014	2015	2016	2017	TOTAL
\$0	\$144,654	\$146,144	\$68,791	\$359,589

Recommendation: Fund

Issue Addressed: The Selawik National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) has a congressional mandate through ANILCA to conserve inconnu (sheefish) *Stenodus leucichthys* populations. This project is a continuance to two priority issues identified for the Northern Region in the 2012 Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program: “spawning distribution, timing, and stock structure of Selawik River whitefish species”; and “identify and characterize critical factors affecting population dynamics of Selawik River inconnu”. This project benefits from information provided by FRMP projects 12-100 (in progress), 04-101, 03-016, 02-040, and 02-020.

There are two known populations of inconnu in Northwest Alaska, one that spawns in the upper Kobuk River and another that spawns in the upper Selawik River. Both populations are subject to intensive fisheries throughout the region. A large permafrost thaw slump (slump) located about 40 km upstream from the inconnu spawning area on the Selawik River began emitting large amounts of sediment into the river in 2004. Since then the normally clear Selawik River has flowed extraordinarily turbid during the summer months transporting huge quantities of sediment downstream, potentially destroying the habitat for stream-spawning fish. Similar slumps in the upper Yukon River drainage have been emitting sediment into the Stewart River for over 40 years so we must assume that the Selawik River slump will continue for the foreseeable future. Habitat qualities of the inconnu spawning area in the Selawik River have undoubtedly changed because of the dramatically increased sediment exposure. These changes will probably reduce the proportion of fertilized eggs that develop successfully and produce young. If production is reduced but not eliminated the inconnu population would be expected to decline over time. If production is eliminated the population would be expected to become extinct as existing fish gradually die off, or possibly to become established in another suitable location. The increased sediment in the upper Selawik River is an environmental factor that may have a profound effect on the inconnu population that spawns there.

Objectives:

1. Collect inconnu age structure data from male inconnu from the Selawik and Kobuk River spawning populations in 2014, 2015, and 2016;

2. Identify possible recruitment failures and missing age classes based on Chi-square test of six age class bins;
3. Determine the spawning population abundance of Selawik River inconnu in 2014, 2015, and 2016; and
4. Determine whether age structure and spawning population abundance data support the null hypothesis that sediment deposition from the slump has not affected inconnu recruitment.

Project Design based on FRMP 12-100 preliminary findings: This project will involve three distinct components that together will reveal whether the Selawik River thaw slump is affecting recruitment of the inconnu population in the drainage. The first component will be a series of annual age distribution profiles of spawning male inconnu collected from the Selawik River spawning area. We have chosen to focus on males because they will provide the recruitment data we are seeking without reducing the number of fertilized eggs on the spawning grounds each year. These pre-slump age distribution profiles will serve as baselines for comparison with later profiles. The second component will be a series of annual age distribution profiles of spawning male and female inconnu from the Kobuk River population. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game operates an annual chum salmon *Oncorhynchus keta* test fishery on the Kobuk River near the community of Kiana during July and August. They have agreed to sample the inconnu they capture during that test fishery and provide those biological data and age structures for this project. We initially thought that if recruitment failure was observed in both sample collections, it would indicate an effect in their shared rearing environment and not necessarily in the Selawik River spawning area. And, if recruitment failure is observed only in the Selawik River sample collection it would indicate an effect from the Selawik River spawning area. However, given the age distributions observed for both populations in 2011 and 2012, in which both populations appear to have experienced several years of poor recruitment, we modified our statement to read; if recruitment success is observed in both sample collections it would indicate no negative slump effect on spawning success. And if recruitment success is observed only in the Kobuk River sample it would indicate a negative slump effect on spawning success the Selawik River spawning area. The third component of the project will be a series of annual spawning population abundance estimates for the Selawik River inconnu population. Age distribution data are proportional to abundance so one could see identical profiles from a population at radically different spawner abundance levels. The age distribution profiles from the Kobuk and Selawik rivers show a dominance of older inconnu with fewer younger age recruits. A significant increase in recruitment to the spawning population should eventually be reflected in an increase in abundance. The combination of spawner abundance and age structure data provides a robust means of assessing changes in spawning population dynamics.

Partnerships and Capacity Building: Residents of Selawik will continue to be sought for assistance with local knowledge, collecting otoliths, overseeing inconnu carcass processing, and transportation and logistical support. Specific training to address project specific sampling procedures and protocols will be conducted for individuals prior to initiating sampling. In the 2011 pilot study year and 2012 there were five to seven Selawik residents plus the Selawik IRA that interacted with the project to help make it a success. The FFWFO has worked with Selawik residents or the NVOS organization for about 27 years.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project Number: 14-151

Title: Kotzebue Sound Whitefish Ecology and Seasonal Dynamics.

Geographic Region: Northern Region.

Information Type: Stock status and trends (SST), harvest monitoring (HM), and cultural knowledge and traditional ecological knowledge (CK/TEK) information.

Principle Investigator: Dr. Martin Robards, Wildlife Conservation Society

Co-Investigators: Alex Whiting, Native Village of Kotzebue
 Dr. Mark Wipfli, University of Alaska, Fairbanks
 Dr. James Lawler, National Park Service

Project Cost:

2014	2015	2016	2017	TOTAL
\$200,185	\$178,168	\$177,378	\$194,770	\$750,501

Recommendation: Do Not Fund

Issue: Despite the importance of whitefish for coastal communities in northwest Alaska, managers lack much of the critical data necessary to understand trends in subsistence use, fish habitats, or long-term changes in whitefish health and condition. Increased coastal erosion as a result of climate change may profoundly alter the coastal subsistence fisheries for whitefish, because new dynamics of lagoon breaching will alter overwintering patterns. Furthermore, local fishermen have observed the loss of “countless numbers” of whitefish in Kotzebue Sound, lending credence for the need to better understand the factors driving such perceived declines (Whiting et al., 2001:32). This project will foster a better understanding of the long-term sustainability of the Kotzebue Sound coastal whitefish fisheries and help disentangle the role of climate change impacts, such as from increased coastal erosion, from other potential factors reducing fish catches (e.g., prey availability).

We propose to document seasonal dynamics of whitefish in and around 5 coastal lagoons in the southern Chukchi Sea known to offer habitat for whitefish –Krusenstern, Aqulaaq, Sisualik, Espenberg, and Cowpack, and the fishery catches of 5 communities: Kivalina, Kotzebue, Deering, Shishmaref, and Wales. Irrespective of climate change, this is an increasingly important task, given the rapid escalation in development activities that raise the risks of oil spills or coastal modification; including, maritime transport supporting oil and gas activities in the northern Chukchi Sea, consideration of deep-water ports in the northern Bering Sea, and international shipping along the Northern Sea Route. As Admiral Ostebo (US Coast Guard) emphasized at a recent hearing with Senator Begich, shipping presents some of the greatest risks to the environment in northern Alaska, and the southern Chukchi Sea is at the epicenter of that risk.

Our proposed project responds directly to high priority areas identified for the Northern Alaska Region in the Priority Information Needs for Federal Subsistence Fisheries guidance document (Office of Subsistence Management, USFWS, December, 2012), including the need to a) relate effects of climate change on subsistence fishery resources, and b) the need for baseline and ongoing harvest assessment and monitoring of subsistence fisheries. We will conduct an interdisciplinary project based on a close collaboration between the Wildlife Conservation Society, the Native Village of Kotzebue, University of

Alaska, Fairbanks, and National Park Service. To accomplish our research, we will work with a full-time graduate student or post-doctoral researcher to combine ethnographic data, harvest monitoring, traditional ecological knowledge, and biological/ecological data that will help answer the following overarching research question:

What are the seasonal and spatial dynamics, and health of coastal whitefish fisheries in the Kotzebue Area?

Objectives:

1. Assess seasonal and inter-annual variability of contemporary whitefish use in coastal communities between Wales and Kivalina.
2. Establish seasonal patterns and ecology of coastal lagoon use by whitefish between Wales and Kivalina.
3. Establish indicators of whitefish health and abundance that can be used for long-term monitoring.

Methods:

1. We will synthesize information on whitefish use from current harvest surveys that have been conducted by Kawerak Inc., the Native Village of Kotzebue, and others. Where necessary, we will supplement this information with new interviews that are consistent with existing survey tools, including new research in the villages of Kivalina and Deering.
2. We will collect physical and biological data in June, July, August, September, and March using a calibrated sonde; under-ice deepwater fish habitat with an EM-31; and fish with beach seines (not March), fyke nets (not March), and gillnets. Fish will be subsampled from catches and analyzed for species composition and further analysis (see below)
3. A subsample of up to 30 whitefish of each species will be collected from each lagoon in each sampling period for assessment of a) growth rates, b) diet, and c) proximate composition. Based on these analyses we will establish indicators for long-term changes in growth rate, body composition, and diet for whitefish and indicate the statistical power of detecting change over decadal time scales.

Partnerships and Capacity Building: This project will:

1. Provide information of value to resource managers and subsistence fishermen in Kotzebue concerning stocks of whitefish and forage species in the lagoons of Kotzebue Sound. This information will inform outreach materials identified as important to Kotzebue residents telling the “Story of the Lagoons.” These materials will be developed in such a manner that they can be easily adapted for the Kawerak Inc. region on the Seward Peninsula.
2. Develop a long-term program to describe and monitor the subsistence whitefish fishery that can be used by tribal and federal resource managers, those needing to plan for accident mitigation in the case of oil-spills (USCG), or those seeking to understand and track natural resources on federal lands (NPS). In particular, this effort will promote tribal collaborations in the development of the NPS lagoon vital sign – a multi-decadal monitoring program to assess long-term changes in coastal lagoons in the Arctic Network (ARCN) National Park Service Units. Data from this program will then be able to dovetail with, and expand the capacity of other efforts by tribal fishery managers.

3. Place the ecology of Kotzebue Sound coastal lagoons in the context of other efforts along the northern Chukchi and Beaufort sea coasts (e.g., Boswell and colleagues through their North Pacific Research Board support) to support the most comprehensive assessment of lagoon ecology, including whitefish dynamics throughout the entire northern subsistence fishery region (i.e., including the North Slope). Consequently this project will support tribal capacity building for whitefish fishery management across the North Slope Borough, Northwest Arctic Borough, and the Kawerak Inc. regions.
4. Provide part-time employment for residents in Kotzebue and Shishmaref for help with logistics and expert-consultation with under-ice fishing. Honorariums will be provided for all interviews in Kivalina, Kotzebue, Deering, Shishmaref, and Wales.
5. Develop a report focused on how to implement a local response for potential industrial accidents that best protects lagoon fisheries.

Table 1. Summary of Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program projects completed in Northern Alaska since 2000. Abbreviations used for investigators are: ADFG=Alaska Department of Fish and Game, AJ=Anore Jones, AKP=City of Anaktuvuk Pass, KI=Kawarek Inc., KIC=Kaktovik Inupiat Corp., MQ=Maniilaq, NPS=National Park Service, NVK=Native Village of Kotzebue, NVU=Native Village of Unalakleet, NSB=North Slope Borough, STB=Stebbins IRA, UAF=University Alaska Fairbanks, USFWS=U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and USGS=U.S. Geological Survey.

Project Number	Project Title	Investigators
<u>North Slope</u>		
00-002	Eastern NS Dolly Varden Spawning and Over-wintering Assessment	ADFG, USFWS
01-113	Eastern NS Dolly Varden Genetic Stock ID Stock Assessment	ADFG, USFWS
01-101	Eastern NS (Kaktovik) Subsistence Fish Harvest Assessment	ADFG, KIC
02-050	NS (Anaktuvuk Pass) Subsistence Fish Harvest Assessment	ADFG, NSB, AKP
03-012	SST of Arctic Cisco and Dolly Varden in Kaktovik Lagoons	USFWS
04-103	North Slope Dolly Varden Sonar Feasibility	USFWS
06-108	North Slope Dolly Varden Aerial Monitoring	ADFG
07-105 ^a	North Slope Dolly Varden Genetic Baseline Completion	USFWS
07-107 ^a	Hulahula River Dolly Varden Sonar Enumeration	USFWS
<u>Northwest Arctic</u>		
00-001	Northwestern Dolly Varden and Arctic Char Stock Identification	ADFG, USFWS
00-020	Hotham Inlet Kotzebue Winter Subsistence Sheefish Harvest	ADFG
01-136	Northwestern Alaska Dolly Varden Genetic Diversity	ADFG, USFWS
01-137	Northwestern Alaska Dolly Varden Spawning Stock Assessment	ADFG
02-023	Qaluich Nigingnaquat: Fish That We Eat	AJ
02-040	Kotzebue Sound Whitefish Traditional Knowledge	ADFG, MQ
03-016	Selawik River Harvest ID, Spring and Fall Subsistence Fisheries	USFWS
04-101	Selawik River Inconnu Spawning Abundance	USFWS
04-102 ^a	Selawik Refuge Whitefish Migration and Habitat Use	USFWS
04-109 ^a	Wulik River Dolly Varden Wintering Stocks	USFWS
04-157	Exploring Approaches to Sustainable Fisheries Harvest Assessment	ADFG, MQ
07-151	Northwest Alaska Subsistence Fish Harvest Patterns and Trends	ADFG, MQ
08-103	Kobuk River Sheefish Spawning and Run Timing	ADFG, USFWS
10-100 ^a	Selawik Drainage Sheefish Winter Movement Patterns	UAF, USGS, USFWS, NVK
10-102 ^a	Unalakleet River Chinook Salmon Abundance Estimate	ADFG, NPS, BLM
10-104 ^a	Hotham Inlet Kotzebue Winter Subsistence Sheefish Harvest	USFWS
10-152	Climate Change and Subsistence Fisheries in Northwest Alaska	UAF
<u>Seward Peninsula</u>		
01-224	Nome Sub-district Subsistence Salmon Survey	ADFG, KI
02-020	Pikmiktalik River Salmon Site Surveys and Enumeration	USFWS, NPS, STB, KI
04-105	Pikmiktalik River Chum and Coho Salmon Enumeration	KI
04-151	Customary Trade of Fish in the Seward Peninsula Area	ADFG, KI
05-101	Unalakleet River Coho Salmon Distribution and Abundance	ADFG, NVU
06-101	Pikmiktalik River Chum and Coho Salmon Enumeration	KI
10-151	Local Ecological Knowledge of Non-Salmon Fish in the Bering Strait	KI

^a Final Report in preparation.

Table 2. Summary of ongoing 2014 projects funded under the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program in Northern Alaska. Abbreviations used for investigators are: ADFG=Alaska Department of Fish and Game, MQ=Maniilaq, NPS=National Park Service, SWCA=SWCA Inc., and USFWS=U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, .

Project Number	Project Title	Investigators	Budget (\$1000)	
			2014	2015
	<u>Stock Status and Trends</u>			
12-100	Selawik River Sheefish Spawning Abundance and Age Structure	USFWS	\$90.7	\$0.0
12-103	Kobuk River Sheefish Spawning Frequency, Location, and Run Timing	ADFG, USFWS	\$13.8	\$13.8
12-104	Noatak River Dolly Varden Evaluation of Overwintering Populations	ADFG, NPS	\$142.4	\$76.2
	<u>Harvest Monitoring and Traditional Ecological Knowledge</u>			
12-153	NW Ak Key Subsistence Fisheries Harvest Monitoring Program	ADFG, MQ	\$117.4	\$119.8
12-154	NS Salmon Fishery HIMTEK	ADFG	\$42.3	\$44.8

Table 3. Northern Alaska project costs, by organization (Alaska Native, State, Federal, other), for investigation plans submitted to the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program for funding consideration in 2014.

Project Number	Title	Budget (\$1000s)			
		Alaska Native	State	Federal	Other
	<u>Stock Status and Trends</u>				
14-101	Unalakleet R Chinook Salmon Escapement Assessment	\$38.9	\$76.1		
14-102	NS Climate Change Arctic Fishes and Lake Ecosystems				\$184.1
14-103	Beaufort Sea Dolly Varden Dispersal Patterns			\$0.0	\$156.2
14-104	Selawik R Inconnu Spawning Population Abundance				
	<u>Harvest Monitoring and Traditional Ecological Knowledge</u>				
14-151	Kotzebue Sound Whitefish Ecology and Seasonal Dynamics	\$40.0			\$160.2

Table 4. Northern Alaska local hire and matching funds for investigation plans submitted to the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program for funding consideration in 2014. Abbreviations used are: ADFG=Alaska Department of Fish and Game, UAF=University of Alaska, Fairbanks, USFWS=U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, USU=Utah State University, and WCS=Wildlife Conservation Society.

Project Number	Lead Organization	Title	Funding (\$1000s)	
			Local Hire	Matching
		<u>Stock Status and Trends</u>		
14-101	ADFG	Unalakleet R Chinook Salmon Escapement Assessment	\$36.5	\$61.3
14-102	USU	NS Climate Change Arctic Fishes and Lake Ecosystems	\$0.0	\$24.4
14-103	UAF	Beaufort Sea Dolly Varden Dispersal Patterns	\$2.0	\$0.0
14-104	USFWS	Selawik R Inconnu Spawning Population Abundance	\$0.0	\$10.0
		<u>Harvest Monitoring and Traditional Ecological Knowledge</u>		
14-151	WCS	Kotzebue Sound Whitefish Ecology and Seasonal Dynamics	\$11.0	\$35.0

Table 5. Funding recommendations by the Technical Review Committee (TRC) for Northern Alaska 2014 Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program.

Project Number	Title	TRC	Requested Budget (\$1000)		
			2014	2015	2016
	<u>Stock Status and Trends</u>				
14-101	Unalakleet R Chinook Salmon Escapement Assessment	YES	\$115.0	\$117.3	\$119.7
14-102	NS Climate Change Arctic Fishes and Lake Ecosystems	NO	\$184.1	\$148.9	\$151.6
14-103	Beaufort Sea Dolly Varden Dispersal Patterns	YES	\$156.2	\$158.3	\$83.7
14-104	Selawik R Inconnu Spawning Population Abundance	YES	\$0.0	\$144.7	\$146.1
	<u>Harvest Monitoring and Traditional Ecological Knowledge</u>				
14-151	Kotzebue Sound Whitefish Ecology and Seasonal Dynamics	NO	\$200.2	\$178.2	\$177.4
	Total		\$655.5	\$747.4	\$678.5
	Funding Guideline		\$629.0		
	TRC Recommendation		\$271.2	\$420.3	\$349.5
					\$191.1

BRIEFING ON THE REVIEW OF THE RURAL DETERMINATION PROCESS

Title VIII of the 1980 Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) provides a subsistence priority for rural Alaska residents for harvesting fish and wildlife resources on Federal public lands. Only residents of communities or areas determined to be rural are eligible under Federal subsistence regulations for the subsistence priority. The Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture are responsible for the process by which the rural determinations are made. The Federal Subsistence Board uses the Secretaries' process to make the rural determinations.

On December 17, 2010, the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture directed the Federal Subsistence Board to conduct a review of the rural determination process and develop recommendations to the Secretaries on how to improve the process (Attachment 1).

The Federal Subsistence Board initiated a review of the rural determination process on December 31, 2012 with the publication of a Federal Register Notice (Attachments 2 and 3) requesting comments on the following components of the process: population thresholds, rural characteristics, aggregation of communities, timelines and information sources. All ideas on how to improve the rural determination process that are consistent with ANILCA Title VIII and 9th Circuit Court of Appeals case law associated with the definition of rural will be considered. The deadline to submit comments is November 1, 2013.

In addition to soliciting written public comments, the Federal Subsistence Board is holding hearings in key locations throughout the State to provide opportunities for the public to learn more about the rural determination process and provide testimony. The Federal Subsistence Board has provided Federally recognized Tribes and Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) corporations with the opportunity to consult prior to the start of the Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Council meeting window. During the fall 2013 meetings, the ten Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils are to review the rural determination process and formulate recommendations for the Board. See the Current Schedule of Forums for Public Comments for a list of all meetings and hearings to be held (Attachment 4).

The Federal Subsistence Board will meet April 15–17, 2014 in Anchorage to review all the comments it received during the comment period. The Board will then make recommendations to the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture on possible changes to improve the process. These recommendations will be based in large part on the Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils' recommendations, results of Tribal and ANCSA corporation consultations, and public comments. See the Steps in the Rural Determination Process for the review schedule (Attachment 5)

If the Secretaries decide to make changes to the rural determination process, a proposed rule and another comment period will be published in the Federal Register as required by the Administrative Procedure Act.

Following the completion of the review of the rural determination process, the Federal Subsistence Board will conduct a public review of the current rural determinations.

Secretary Letter on Federal Subsistence Board Implementation



01/07/2011

December 17, 2010

Mr. Tim Towarak
Chair, Federal Subsistence Board
P. O. Box 89
Unalakleet, Alaska 99684

Dear Mr. Towarak:

First, I want to thank you for your service on the Federal Subsistence Board (FSB). I recognize that your work represents a significant commitment of time and energy to a task that is complex and often controversial.

Under the terms of the Title VIII of ANILCA, we have a duty to provide an effective program that serves rural residents of Alaska. In October 2009, at the Alaska Federation of Natives convention, I announced a review of the Federal subsistence program to ensure that the program is best serving rural Alaskans and that the letter and spirit of Title VIII are being met. That review, conducted through my Alaska Affairs office, included meetings with stakeholder groups and individuals throughout Alaska as well as Federal, State, and local officials. Following an analysis of the wide variety of comments, concerns, and suggestions expressed, a number of recommendations for programmatic changes were presented for consideration. On August 31, 2010, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack and I announced our decision to pursue a number of those recommendations to provide a more responsive, more effective subsistence program. A copy of the press release is enclosed for your information.

A number of these proposed actions are best accomplished by the FSB. With concurrence of the Secretary of Agriculture, I respectfully request that the FSB initiate the following actions at the earliest practical time:

1. Develop a proposed regulation to increase the membership on the FSB to include two additional public members representing subsistence users;
2. As a matter of policy, expand deference to appropriate Regional Advisory Council (RAC) recommendations in addition to "takings" decisions of the Board provided for under Section 805(c) of ANILCA, subject to the three exceptions found in that Section;
3. Review, with RAC input, the December 2008 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the State to determine either the need for the MOU or the need for potential changes to clarify federal authorities in regard to the subsistence program;
4. Review, with RAC input, and present recommendations for changes to Federal subsistence procedural and structural regulations (Parts A&B of the CFRs) adopted from

the State in order to ensure Federal authorities are fully reflected and in accord with subsistence priorities provided for in Title VIII;

5. Review, with RAC input, the customary and traditional use determination process and present recommendations for regulatory changes;
6. Review, with RAC input, rural/nonrural determination process and present recommendations for regulatory changes;
7. Review the Board's written policy on executive sessions and minimize the use of executive sessions to those cases specifically prescribed;
8. At the request of the Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service and under Departmental procedures, review and submit recommendations for Departmental consideration of the annual budget for the Federal subsistence program;
9. Ensure the Secretaries are informed when non-Department rule-making entities develop regulations that may adversely affect subsistence users;
10. To the extent practicable, utilize contracting and use of ANILCA Section 809 cooperative agreements with local tribes and other entities in the Board's review and approval of proposals for fulfilling subsistence program elements; and
11. Prepare and submit a status report on these actions to me, with a copy to the Secretary of Agriculture, within a year of this letter.

Again, thank you for your service. I look forward to further recommendations the FSB may have to strengthen our subsistence management program.

An identical letter is being sent to Ms. Beth Pendelton, Alaska Regional Forester.

Sincerely,

/s/ Ken Salazar

Ken Salazar

Enclosure

<< Previous

Secretary's Memorandum to Fish
and Wildlife Service Director
Implementing Subsistence Review

Next >>

Proposed rule to revise the
regulations concerning the
composition of the Federal
Subsistence Board

location and hours of the reading room). You may also request paper copies of the data standards by calling or writing to the person listed under **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT**.

Done in Washington, DC, this 20th day of December, 2012. .

Kevin Shea,

Acting Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

[FR Doc. 2012-31401 Filed 12-28-12; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-34-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

[FWS-R7-SM-2012-N248;FXFR133
50700640-134-FF07J00000]

Subsistence Management Program for Public Lands in Alaska; Rural Determination Process

AGENCIES: Forest Service, Agriculture; Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

ACTION: Notice; request for comments.

SUMMARY: Federal subsistence regulations require that the rural or nonrural status of communities or areas be reviewed every 10 years. In 2009, the Secretary of the Interior initiated a review of the Federal Subsistence Management Program. An ensuing directive was for the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) to review its process for determining the rural and nonrural status of communities. As a result, the Board has initiated a review of the rural determination process and is requesting comments from the public. These comments will be used by the Board, coordinating with the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture, to assist in making decisions regarding the scope and nature of possible changes to improve the rural determination process.

DATES: *Comments:* Comments on this notice must be received or postmarked by November 1, 2013.

Public meetings: The Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils will hold public meetings to receive comments and make recommendations to the Federal Subsistence Board on this notice on several dates between August 19 and October 30, 2013. See Public Meetings under **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for specific information on dates and locations of the public meetings.

ADDRESSES: *Comments:* Comments on this notice must be received or postmarked by November 1, 2013. You may submit comments by one of the following methods:

- *Electronically:* Comments addressing this notice may be sent to subsistence@fws.gov.

- *By hard copy:* U.S. mail or hand-delivery to: USFWS, Office of Subsistence Management, 1011 East Tudor Road, MS 121, Attn: Theo Matuskowitz, Anchorage, AK 99503-6199, or hand delivery to the Designated Federal Official attending any of the Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Council public meetings.

Comments received will be available for public review during public meetings held by the Board on this issue. This generally means that any personal information you provide us will be available during public review.

Public meetings: See **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION** for specific information on dates and locations of the public meetings. If the Board decides additional meetings are required, public announcements will be made that provide meeting dates and locations.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Chair, Federal Subsistence Board, c/o U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Attention: Peter J. Probasco, Office of Subsistence Management; (907) 786-3888; or subsistence@fws.gov. For questions specific to National Forest System lands, contact Steve Kessler, Regional Subsistence Program Leader, USDA, Forest Service, Alaska Region; (907) 743-9461; or skessler@fs.fed.us.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

Under Title VIII of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) (16 U.S.C. 3111-3126), the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture (Secretaries) jointly implement the Federal Subsistence Management Program. This Program provides a priority for taking of fish and wildlife resources for subsistence uses on Federal public lands and waters in Alaska. The Secretaries published temporary regulations to implement this Program in the **Federal Register** on June 29, 1990 (55 FR 27114), and final regulations in the **Federal Register** on May 29, 1992 (57 FR 22940). The Secretaries have amended these regulations a number of times. Because this Program is a joint effort between Interior and Agriculture, these regulations are located in two titles of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR): Title 36, "Parks, Forests, and

Public Property," and Title 50, "Wildlife and Fisheries," at 36 CFR 242.1-28 and 50 CFR 100.1-28, respectively. The regulations contain the following subparts: Subpart A, General Provisions; Subpart B, Program Structure; Subpart C, Board Determinations; and Subpart D, Subsistence Taking of Fish and Wildlife.

Federal Subsistence Board

Consistent with subpart B of these regulations, the Secretaries established a Federal Subsistence Board to administer the Federal Subsistence Management Program. The Board comprises:

- A Chair, appointed by the Secretary of the Interior with concurrence of the Secretary of Agriculture;
- The Alaska Regional Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service;
- The Alaska Regional Director, U.S. National Park Service;
- The Alaska State Director, U.S. Bureau of Land Management;
- The Alaska Regional Director, U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs;
- The Alaska Regional Forester, U.S. Forest Service; and
- Two public members appointed by the Secretary of the Interior with concurrence of the Secretary of Agriculture.

Through the Board, these agencies and public members participate in the development of regulations for subparts C and D, which, among other things, set forth program eligibility and specific harvest seasons and limits.

In administering the program, the Secretaries divided Alaska into 10 subsistence resource regions, each of which is represented by a Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Council. The Councils provide a forum for rural residents with personal knowledge of local conditions and resource requirements to have a meaningful role in the subsistence management of fish and wildlife on Federal public lands in Alaska. The Council members represent varied geographical, cultural, and user interests within each region.

Public Meetings

The Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils have a substantial role in reviewing subsistence issues and making recommendations to the Board. The Federal Subsistence Board, through the Councils, will hold public meetings to accept comments on this notice during the fall meeting cycle. You may present comments on this notice during those meetings at the following locations in Alaska, on the following dates:

Region 1—Southeast Regional Council	Petersburg	September 24, 2013.
Region 2—Southcentral Regional Council	Copper Center	October 2, 2013.
Region 3—Kodiak/Aleutians Regional Council	Cold Bay	September 24, 2013.
Region 4—Bristol Bay Regional Council	Dillingham	October 29, 2013.
Region 5—Yukon—Kuskokwim Delta Regional Council	St. Marys	September 25, 2013.
Region 6—Western Interior Regional Council	Fairbanks	October 8, 2013.
Region 7—Seward Peninsula Regional Council	Nome	October 8, 2013.
Region 8—Northwest Arctic Regional Council	Kiana	August 21, 2013.
Region 9—Eastern Interior Regional Council	Fairbanks	October 16, 2013.
Region 10—North Slope Regional Council	Barrow	August 19, 2013.

A notice will be published of specific dates, times, and meeting locations in local and statewide newspapers, and on the Web at <http://alaska.fws.gov/asm/index.cfm>, prior to these meetings. Locations and dates may change based on weather or local circumstances.

Tribal Consultation and Comment

As expressed in Executive Order 13175, “Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments,” the Federal officials that have been delegated authority by the Secretaries are committed to honoring the unique government-to-government relationship that exists between the Federal Government and Federally Recognized Indian Tribes (Tribes) as listed in 75 FR 60810 (October 1, 2010). Consultation with Alaska Native corporations is based on Public Law 108–199, div. H, Sec. 161, Jan. 23, 2004, 118 Stat. 452, as amended by Public Law 108–447, div. H, title V, Sec. 518, Dec. 8, 2004, 118 Stat. 3267, which provides that: “The Director of the Office of Management and Budget and all Federal agencies shall hereafter consult with Alaska Native corporations on the same basis as Indian tribes under Executive Order No. 13175.”

The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act, Title VIII (16 U.S.C. 3111–3126), does not provide specific rights to Tribes for the subsistence taking of wildlife, fish, and shellfish. However, because tribal members and Alaska Native corporations are affected by subsistence regulations, the Secretaries, through the Board, will provide Federally recognized Tribes and Alaska Native corporations an opportunity to consult. The Board provides a variety of opportunities for consultation: engaging in dialogue at the Council meetings; engaging in dialogue at the Board’s meetings; and providing input in person, or by mail, email, or phone at any time during the comment period.

The Board will engage in outreach efforts for this notice, including a notification letter, to ensure that Tribes and Alaska Native corporations are advised of the mechanisms by which they can participate. The Board will

commit to efficiently and adequately providing an opportunity to Tribes and Alaska Native corporations prior to the adoption of any changes in policy or regulation concerning the rural determination process.

The Board will consider Tribes’ and Alaska Native corporations’ information, input, and recommendations, and endeavor to address their concerns.

Purpose of This Notice

In accordance with § .10(d)(4)(ii), one of the responsibilities given to the Federal Subsistence Board is to determine which communities or areas of the State are rural or nonrural. Only residents of areas identified as rural are eligible to participate in the Federal Subsistence Management Program on Federal public lands in Alaska.

The Board determines if a community or area is rural in accordance with established guidelines set forth in § .15(a). The Board reviews rural determinations on a 10-year cycle and may review determinations out-of-cycle in special circumstances. The Board conducts rulemaking to determine if the list at § .23(a), which defines the rural/nonrural status of communities and/or areas, needs revision. Residents would have five years to comply with a rural to nonrural change. A change from nonrural to rural would be effective 30 days after publication of the rule.

On May 7, 2007, the Board published a final rule, “Subsistence Management Regulations for Public Lands in Alaska, Subpart C; Nonrural Determinations” (72 FR 25688). This rule revised the list of nonrural areas identified by the Board. The Board changed Adak’s status to rural, added Prudhoe Bay to the list of nonrural areas, and adjusted the boundaries of the following nonrural areas: the Kenai Area; the Wasilla/Palmer Area, including Point McKenzie; the Homer Area, including Fritz Creek East (except Voznesenka) and the North Fork Road area; and the Ketchikan Area, including Saxman and portions of Gravina Island. The effective date was June 6, 2007, with a 5-year compliance date of May 7, 2012.

On October 23, 2009, Secretary of the Interior Salazar announced the initiation of a Departmental review of the Federal Subsistence Management Program in Alaska; Secretary of Agriculture Vilsack later concurred with this course of action. The review focused on how the Program is meeting the purposes and subsistence provisions of Title VIII of ANILCA, and how the Program is serving rural subsistence users as envisioned when it began in the early 1990s.

On August 31, 2010, the Secretaries announced the findings of the review, which included several proposed administrative and regulatory reviews and/or revisions to strengthen the Program and make it more responsive to those who rely on it for their subsistence uses. One proposal called for a review, with Council input, of the rural and nonrural determination process and, if needed, recommendations for regulatory changes.

On January 20, 2012, the Board met to consider the Secretarial directive, consider the Council’s recommendations, and review all public, Tribal, and Native Corporation comments on the initial review of the rural determinations process. After discussion and careful review, the Board voted unanimously to initiate a review of the rural determination process and the 2010 decennial review. Consequently, based on that action, the Board found that it was in the public’s best interest to extend the compliance date of its 2007 final rule (72 FR 25688; May 7, 2007) on rural and nonrural determinations until after the review of the rural determination process and decennial review are complete or in 5 years, whichever comes first. The Board has already published a final rule (77 FR 12477; March 1, 2012) extending the compliance date.

Request for Input

To comply with the Secretarial directives and the Federal subsistence regulations, the Federal Subsistence Board is proceeding with a review of the rural determination process. As part of the Secretaries’ commitment to open

government and in accordance with Executive Order 13563, the Board requests input from the public on the rural determination process and regulations, and ways to improve them for the benefit of rural Alaskans.

The Board has identified the following components in the process for review: Population thresholds, rural characteristics, aggregation of communities, timelines, and information sources. We describe these components below and include questions for public consideration and comment.

Population thresholds. The Federal Subsistence Board currently uses several guidelines to determine whether a specific area of Alaska is rural. One guideline sets population thresholds. A community or area with a population below 2,500 will be considered rural. A community or area with a population between 2,500 and 7,000 will be considered rural or nonrural, based on community characteristics and criteria used to group communities together. Communities with populations more than 7,000 will be considered nonrural, unless such communities possess significant characteristics of a rural nature. In 2008, the Board recommended to the Secretaries that the upper population threshold be changed to 11,000. The Secretaries have taken no action on this recommendation.

(1) Are these population threshold guidelines useful for determining whether a specific area of Alaska is rural?

(2) If they are not, please provide population size(s) to distinguish between rural and nonrural areas, and the reasons for the population size you believe more accurately reflects rural and nonrural areas in Alaska.

Rural characteristics. The Board recognizes that population alone is not the only indicator of rural or nonrural status. Other characteristics the Board considers include, but are not limited to, the following: Use of fish and wildlife; development and diversity of the economy; community infrastructure; transportation; and educational institutions.

(3) Are these characteristics useful for determining whether a specific area of Alaska is rural?

(4) If they are not, please provide a list of characteristics that better define or enhance rural and nonrural status.

Aggregation of communities. The Board recognizes that communities and areas of Alaska are connected in diverse ways. Communities that are economically, socially, and communally integrated are considered in the aggregate in determining rural and

nonrural status. The aggregation criteria are as follows: Do 30 percent or more of the working people commute from one community to another; do they share a common high school attendance area; and are the communities in proximity and road-accessible to one another?

(5) Are these aggregation criteria useful in determining rural and nonrural status?

(6) If they are not, please provide a list of criteria that better specify how communities may be integrated economically, socially, and communally for the purposes of determining rural and nonrural status.

Timelines. The Board reviews rural determinations on a 10-year cycle, and out of cycle in special circumstances.

(7) Should the Board review rural determinations on a 10-year cycle? If so, why; if not, why not?

Information sources. Current regulations state that population data from the most recent census conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, as updated by the Alaska Department of Labor, shall be utilized in the rural determination process. The information collected and the reports generated during the decennial census vary between each census; as such, data used during the Board's rural determination may vary.

(8) These information sources as stated in regulations will continue to be the foundation of data used for rural determinations. Do you have any additional sources you think would be beneficial to use?

(9) In addition to the preceding questions, do you have any additional comments on how to make the rural determination process more effective?

This notice announces to the public, including rural Alaska residents, Federally recognized Tribes of Alaska, and Alaska Native corporations, the request for comments on the Federal Subsistence Program's rural determination process. These comments will be used by the Board to assist in making decisions regarding the scope and nature of possible changes to improve the rural determination process, which may include, where the Board has authority, proposed regulatory action(s) or in areas where the Secretaries maintain purview, recommended courses of action.

Dated: December 5, 2012.

Peter J. Probasco,

Assistant Regional Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Acting Chair, Federal Subsistence Board.

Dated: December 6, 2012.

Steve Kessler,

Subsistence Program Leader, USDA-Forest Service.

[FR Doc. 2012-31359 Filed 12-28-12; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 3410-11-P ; 4310-55-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Transfer of Land to the Department of Interior

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of Land Transfer.

SUMMARY: Approximately 353.63 acres of National Forest System lands are transferred to the jurisdiction of the Secretary of Interior pursuant to the Hoopa-Yurok Settlement Act (Pub. L. 100-580; 102 Stat. 2924 (1988)). Transfer of Jurisdiction of Certain National Forest System Lands in California to the Department of the Interior for the benefit of the Yurok Tribe.

DATES: This notice becomes effective December 31, 2012.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Louisa Herrera, National Title Program Manager, (202) 205-1255, Lands and Realty Management.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The Hoopa-Yurok Settlement Act (Pub. L. 100-580; 102 Stat. 2924 (1988)), hereafter "Act", provides at section 2(c) that, subject to valid existing rights, certain enumerated National Forest System lands shall be "held in trust by the United States for the benefit of the Yurok Tribe and shall be part of the Yurok Reservation" (102 Stat. 2926). A condition precedent to such lands being held in trust is adoption of a resolution of the Interim Council of the Yurok Tribe as provided in section 2(c)(4) of the Act (102 Stat. 2926).

On March 21, 2007, the Yurok Tribal Council enacted Resolution No. 07-037, waiving certain claims and consenting to uses of tribal funds pursuant to the Act. The Department of the Interior has determined that the resolution meets the requirements of section 2(c)(4) of the Act, and that determination has been accepted by the Department of Agriculture.

Therefore, the conditions of transfer having been met, subject to valid existing rights, administrative jurisdiction over the following Federally



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



Forest Service

Federal Subsistence Board News Release

For Immediate Release:

January 14, 2013

Contact:

Andrea Medeiros
(907) 786-3674 or (800) 478-1456
andrea_medeiros@fws.gov

Federal Subsistence Board Seeks Comments on Rural Determinations Process

The Federal Subsistence Board (Board) is seeking comments on the process used to determine which Alaska communities are rural for purposes of the Federal Subsistence Program. A notice requesting comment by November 1, 2013 was published in the Federal Register (FWS–R7–SM–2012–N248) on December 31, 2012.

The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) mandates that rural Alaskans be given a priority for subsistence uses of fish and wildlife on Federal public lands. The Board conducts a periodic review of rural determinations. Only communities or areas that are found to be rural are eligible for the subsistence priority under ANILCA.

Following a Secretarial review of the Federal Subsistence Management Program, the Secretaries of the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture tasked the Board to review the rural determination process and recommend changes. The Board has identified the following components of the rural determinations process to be a part of this review: population thresholds, rural characteristics, aggregation of communities, timelines, and information sources. Descriptions of these components and associated questions for public consideration and comment are provided below. Comments will be used by the Board to assist in making decisions regarding the scope and nature of possible changes to improve the rural determination process.

Population thresholds. A community or area with a population below 2,500 will be considered rural. A community or area with a population between 2,500 and 7,000 will be considered rural or nonrural, based on community characteristics and criteria used to group communities together. Communities with populations more than 7,000 will be considered nonrural, unless such communities possess significant characteristics of a rural nature.

1. Are these population threshold guidelines useful for determining whether a specific area of Alaska is rural?
2. If they are not, please provide population size(s) to distinguish between rural and nonrural areas, and the reasons for the population size you believe more accurately reflects rural and nonrural areas in Alaska.

Rural characteristics. The Board recognizes that population alone is not the only indicator of rural or nonrural status. Other characteristics the Board considers include, but are not limited to, the following: Use of fish and wildlife; development and diversity of the economy; community infrastructure; transportation; and educational institutions.

3. Are these characteristics useful for determining whether a specific area of Alaska is rural?
4. If they are not, please provide a list of characteristics that better define or enhance rural and nonrural status.

Aggregation of communities. The Board recognizes that communities and areas of Alaska are connected in diverse ways. Communities that are economically, socially, and communally integrated are considered in the aggregate in determining rural and nonrural status. The aggregation criteria are: 1) Do 30 percent or more of the working people commute from one community to another? 2) Do they share a common high school attendance area? and 3) Are the communities in proximity and road-accessible to one another?

5. Are these aggregation criteria useful in determining rural and nonrural status?
6. If they are not, please provide a list of criteria that better specify how communities may be integrated economically, socially, and communally for the purposes of determining rural and nonrural status.

Timelines. The Board reviews rural determinations on a 10-year cycle, and out of cycle in special circumstances.

7. Should the Board review rural determinations on a 10-year cycle? If so, why? If not, why not?

Information sources. Current regulations state that population data from the most recent census conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, as updated by the Alaska Department of Labor, shall be utilized in the rural determination process. The information collected and the reports generated during the decennial census vary between each census; as such, data used during the Board's rural determination may vary. These information sources as stated in regulations will continue to be the foundation of data used for rural determinations.

8. Do you have any additional sources you think would be beneficial to use?
9. In addition to the preceding questions, do you have any additional comments on how to make the rural determination process more effective?

Submit written comments by one of the following methods:

Mail: Federal Subsistence Board
Office of Subsistence Management – Attn: Theo Matuskowitz
1011 East Tudor Road, MS-121
Anchorage, AK 99503

E-mail: subsistence@fws.gov

Hand delivery to Designated Federal Official at any Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Council meeting. See the Meetings and Deadlines page of the Federal

Subsistence Management Program's website, <http://alaska.fws.gov/asm/deadline.cfml>, for dates and locations of Council meetings.

You also may call the Office of Subsistence Management at 800-478-1456 or email subsistence@fws.gov with your questions.

Information on the Federal Subsistence Management Program can be found at <http://alaska.fws.gov/asm/index.cfml>.

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Scheduled Forums for Public Comments

**telephonic access will be provided to these events*

Forum	Meeting Date	Location
*Regional Advisory Council Meetings		
North Slope	Aug. 20-21, 2013	Barrow
Northwest Arctic	Aug. 21-22, 2013	Kotzebue
Southeast	Sept. 24-26, 2013	Ketchikan
Kodiak/Aleutians	Sept. 24-25, 2013	Kodiak
Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta	Oct. 2-3, 2013	Bethel
Southcentral	Oct. 2-3, 2013	Copper Center
Western Interior	Oct. 8-9, 2013	Fairbanks
Seward Peninsula	Oct. 8-9, 2013	Nome
Eastern Interior	Oct. 16-17, 2013	Fairbanks
Bristol Bay	Oct. 29-30, 2013	Dillingham
*Hearings (evening)		
North Slope	Aug. 20, 2013	Barrow
Northwest Arctic	Aug. 21, 2013	Kotzebue
Southeast	Sept. 24, 2013	Ketchikan
Kodiak/Aleutians	Sept. 24, 2013	Kodiak
Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta	Oct. 2, 2013	Bethel
Southcentral	Oct. 2, 2013	Copper Center
Western Interior	Oct. 8, 2013	Fairbanks
Seward Peninsula	Oct. 8, 2013	Nome
Eastern Interior	Oct. 16, 2013	Fairbanks
Bristol Bay	Oct. 29, 2013	Dillingham
*Tribal Consultations		
First	Aug. 14, 2013	USFWS Regional Headquarters, Anchorage
Second	Sept. 11, 2013	USFWS Regional Headquarters, Anchorage

Forum	Meeting Date	Location
*ANCSA Corporation Consultations		
First	Aug. 14, 2013	USFWS Regional Headquarters, Anchorage
Second	Sept. 11, 2013	USFWS Regional Headquarters, Anchorage
AFN Youth and Elders	Oct. 2013	Fairbanks
AFN Convention Booth	Oct. 2013	Fairbanks

Steps in the Review of the Rural Determination Process

Step		Start Date	End Date
1	Publish notice requesting comments	Dec. 31, 2012	Nov. 1, 2013
2	Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils formulate recommendations. Tribal and ANCSA corporations are consulted and public hearings are held.	Aug. 20, 2013	Oct. 17, 2013
3	Analysis of comments	Nov. 1, 2013	Mar. 2014
4	Federal Subsistence Board review of comments and staff analysis. Draft recommendations to the Secretaries on possible changes to improve the process.	Apr. 2014	Apr. 2014
5	Proposed rule drafted (based on Secretarial direction)	Apr. 2014	Jun. 2014
6	Publish proposed rule and accept comments	Jul. 2014	Oct. 2014
7	Analysis of comments	Sept. 2014	Nov. 2014
8	Federal Subsistence Board review of comments and staff analysis. Draft recommendations to the Secretaries.	Jan. 2015	Jan. 2015
9	Draft and publish final rule (based on Secretarial direction)	Feb. 2015	Apr. 2015

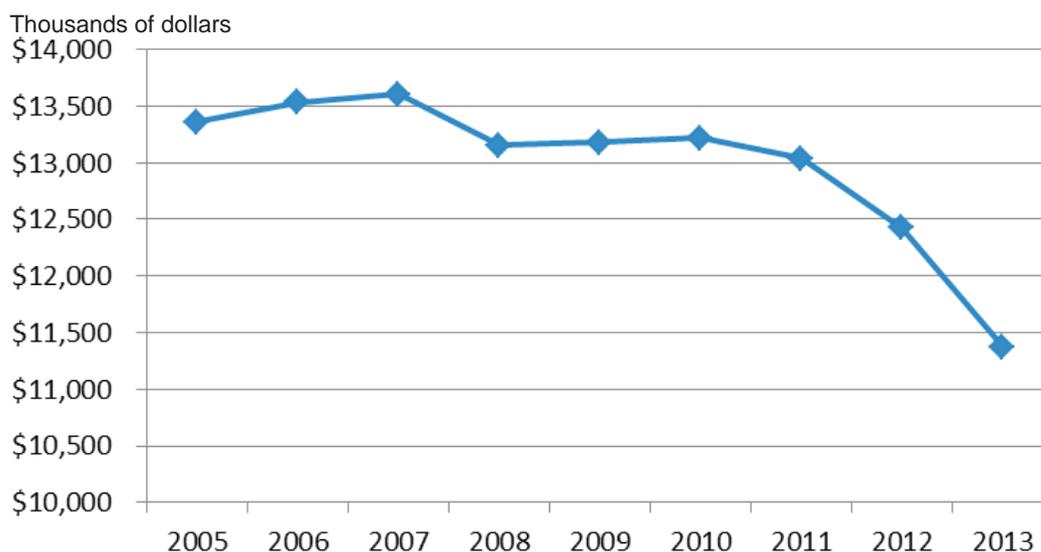
Following the completion of the review of the rural determination process, the Federal Subsistence Board will conduct a public review of the current rural determinations. The Federal Subsistence Board will follow steps that are similar to those used in the review of the rural determination process (See table above). The Federal Subsistence Board's goal is to have a final rule of rural determinations by February 2017.

OFFICE OF SUBSISTENCE MANAGEMENT BRIEFINGS

Budget Update

The Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) has experienced a declining budget and level of staffing (see below). The overall OSM budget is subject to the same 6.7% cut that all Federal agencies are experiencing as a result of sequestration — the automatic spending cuts put in place by Congress and effective January this year. The budget picture for FY2014 is not entirely clear, but we anticipate further reductions. OSM will continue to provide the Regional Advisory Councils with budget briefings to help them develop a better understanding of proposed cuts and how they may affect the Federal Subsistence Management Program. Travel outside of the normal Council meetings will continue to be limited. Also, due to budget cuts and the Federal sequestration, the funding to support the State Liaison Position has been cut.

TOTAL OSM BUDGET BY FISCAL YEAR



Staffing Update

Arrivals

Gene Peltola has been selected to serve as the Assistant Regional Director for OSM. Gene most recently served as the Refuge Manager for the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge in Bethel for 5 years and was the In-Season Manager on the Kuskokwim River. Prior to that, he was the Northern Zone Officer for Refuge Law Enforcement. He has a total of 29 years of service in the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.

Jeff Brooks has been selected to work as a Social Scientist in the Anthropology Division. He previously worked for the National Wildlife Refuge System in Alaska in the Division of Conservation Planning and Policy as a social scientist. Jeff served as the lead planner for the recently published Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Selawik National Wildlife Refuge.

Derek Hildreth has been selected as the new Permit Specialist, replacing Michelle Chivers in that position. He previously worked in the Anchorage Field Office for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service in Fisheries.

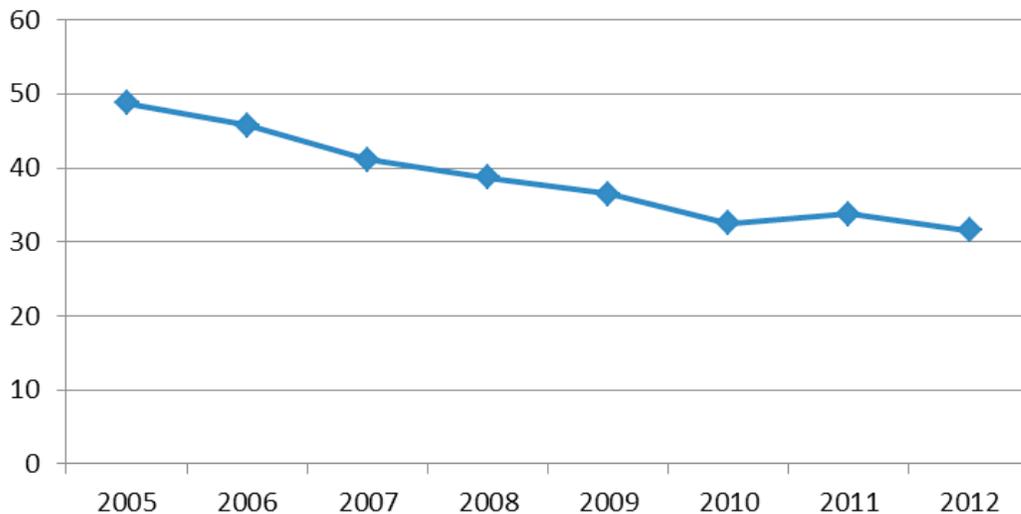
Departures

Helen Armstrong has retired from employment with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Under current budget restrictions, any new hires must be approved before any recruitment can begin. At this time, OSM has not been authorized to recruit for hiring a replacement Anthropology Division Chief. The position is currently vacant and OSM is exploring options for fulfilling these responsibilities.

Stephen Fried retired from employment with the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. OSM has been authorized to seek a replacement Fisheries Division Chief.

Andrea Medeiros, who has been at OSM for over twelve years and is currently the Subsistence Outreach Coordinator, will be leaving OSM to take a position with External Affairs for Region 7 U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. Her position will become vacant and OSM is exploring options for fulfilling these responsibilities.

OSM STAFFING BY FISCAL YEAR



Tribal Consultation Update

The Tribal Consultation Implementation Guidelines are in their final draft form and the Federal Subsistence Board will review them at its work session in August. The Tribal Consultation workgroup consists of a varied group of Federal staff, Tribal members and members from Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) Corporations. Once the implementation guidelines have been accepted by the Board, the workgroup will focus its attention on crafting the ANCSA Consultation Policy and Implementation Guidelines.

Regulatory Cycle Update

At the fall 2012 Regional Advisory Council meetings, the Board asked all 10 Councils for input on regulatory cycle schedules. Eight of ten Councils recommended that the Board meeting to make determinations on wildlife proposals occur in the spring rather than in January. In response, the Board scheduled their next meeting to make determinations on wildlife proposals for April 15-17, 2014. With future wildlife Board meetings occurring in the spring, the fall Council meeting window for wildlife proposal years will be extended into early November. The Board has not yet made a decision concerning dates for their meeting in 2015 to address the next round of fisheries proposals.



**National Park Service Update
Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve
Northwest Arctic Regional Advisory Council Meeting
August 21-22, 2013**

Compiled by Marcy Okada, Program Manager for Subsistence and Ethnography, Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve, (907) 455-0639, marcy_okada@nps.gov

Dall's Sheep

New Approach to Dall's Sheep Monitoring - Josh Schmidt and Kumi Rattenbury with the Arctic Inventory & Monitoring Network have a paper in the current edition of the Journal of Wildlife Management describing new methods for monitoring Dall's sheep. The new methods are providing better information while reducing costs by as much as 80% over existing survey approaches.

The majority of sheep habitat in six national park units was surveyed in 2010-11 using the new technique, and the estimated population for the surveyed park units is currently 26,000-27,000 individuals—similar to the number present in the early 1980s when many of the park units were formed.

The approach uses aerial distance sampling techniques to estimate overall population size as well as the composition (lambs, ewes, full curl rams, and < full-curl rams) of each population. It was first implemented in GAAR in 2009 where park-wide surveys were completed for the first time in nearly 30 years.

This is one of the few ways to get a rigorous estimate of both abundance and composition from the same survey. The higher quality data and lower costs will allow NPS to more consistently monitor populations and improve sheep management over time.

Aerial distance sampling is combined with an analysis that incorporates prior knowledge and information from other surveys to improve estimates. Using prior knowledge allows the scientists to get accurate estimates from areas with small or dispersed sheep populations, such as in Denali National Park and Preserve, as well as in areas with larger populations, such as in Gates of the Arctic.

Schmidt and Rattenbury are hopeful that this approach will help other agencies decrease costs and improve management of this species throughout Alaska. Balancing good science and minimizing costs is a constant challenge in Alaska, and this new approach gives both. Several parks and the I&M program hope this will lead to a formal management plan for Dall's sheep.

To access the papers and to see a video describing the methods.
visit: <http://www.nps.gov/akso/nature/outside/sheep.cfm>.

Weather and Climate

Gates of the Arctic Spring 2013 Weather Summary – Please see handout

Summer 2013 Research Field Studies

** Please see the ARCN Summer Newsletter and ARCN Summer Field Activities Sheet **

Subsistence Updates

The Gates of the Arctic National Park Subsistence Resource Commission (SRC) held a meeting in Ambler on April 9 and 10, 2013. Agenda items included: Park project updates, the Foothills West Transportation Access Project (Road to Umiat), and the Ambler Mining District Access Project.

Ambler Mining District Access Project – Marcy Okada, Subsistence Coordinator for Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve traveled to the communities of Kobuk, Shungnak, Bettles, Evansville, Alatna, and Allakaket to share information regarding the Park Service's role in the Ambler Mining District Access Project and to hear concerns from community members as they relate to the upper Kobuk River southern preserve portion of Gates of the Arctic.

**Please see handout for more details.



Arctic Network 2013 Summer Field Activities



Streams and Large Lakes

Jon O'Donnell will be in BELA June 20 - 23 and NOAT June 24 - 30 to characterize stream and lake habitats and to collect water samples for chemical analysis. Later in KOVA, August 18 - 25, he will sample streams along the Kobuk river between Ambler and Kiana. jadonnell@nps.gov/ 907-455-0631

Shallow Lakes

In NOAT, from July 5 - 19, Amy Larsen, Heidi Kristenson and crew will collect information on water quality, shoreline vegetation and permafrost characteristics for 100 lakes in the preserve. amy_larsen@nps.gov/ 907-455-0622

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Linda Hasselbach and crew will be studying hydrology and monitoring water quality at Serpentine Hot Springs in BELA, June 27 - 30. linda_hasselbach@nps.gov/509-996-8031



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Exclosures

From July 21 - 23, Peter Neitlich will revisit 12 grazing exclosures installed in 2012 BELA to monitor grazing impacts on lichen communities. peter_neitlich@nps.gov/ 509-996-3917

Vegetation Nodes

Dave Swanson and crew will be sampling vegetation plots from July 3 - 10 in BELA near



Cowpack Lagoon and Devil Mountain Lake; NOAT near Radio Hill July 27 - August 7; and Lower Noatak Lowlands August 6 - 11; and in CAKR August 2 - 5. dave_swanson@nps.gov/ 907-455-0665



Fire

Jennifer Barnes will be in NOAT, June 24 - 30, monitoring fire plots, mapping fires, and reducing vegetation at the Kelly Ranger Station. jennifer_barnes@nps.gov/ 907-455-0652

Brown Bears

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kumi_rattenbury@nps.gov 907-455-0673

Yellow-billed loons

Melanie Flamme and crew will sample contaminants in forage fish and swab eggs for DNA in

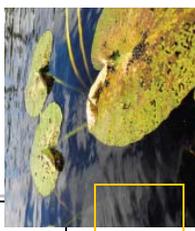
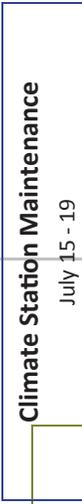


BELA and CAKR June 13 - 16, during which time two high school students (from Anchorage and Shishmaref) will video document the field effort and loon nesting ecology. Aerial surveys for nest occupancy will be conducted, June 18 - 28 in BELA and CAKR. melanie_flamme@nps.gov, 907-455-0627

Shorebirds

Jeremy Mizel and crew will assess shorebird abundance at Ikpek Lagoon in BELA from July 24 - August 30 to better understand lagoon use during fall migration. To complement this effort, Audrey Taylor (UAA) will conduct aerial surveys for shorebirds along BELA and CAKR coasts, July 27 - August 4. jeremy_mizel@nps.gov/907-455-0638.



	BELA	CAKR	NOAT	KOVA	GAAR
May	<p>Brown Bear Aerial Survey May 30- June 10</p> 				<p>Climate Station Maintenance May 27 - 31</p> 
June	<p>Yellow-billed Loon Contaminants, and Youth Videography Project June 13- 16. Aerial Surveys June 18 - 28</p> 	<p>Climate Station Maintenance June 25 -29</p> 	<p>Streams and Large Lakes June 24 - 28</p> 		
	<p>Serpentine Water Quality June 27-30</p> 	<p>Climate Station Maintenance June 24-30</p> 	<p>Tundra Fires June 24-30</p> 		
July	<p>Streams and Large Lakes June 20 -23</p> 		<p>Dall's Sheep Aerial Survey Baird Moun-tains July 1-5</p> 		<p>Dall's Sheep Aerial Survey Itkillik Preserve July 8 - 13</p> 
	<p>Grazing Enclosures July 21-23</p> 	<p>Vegetation July 3 - Aug 13</p> 	<p>Shallow Lakes July 5 - 19</p> 	<p>Climate Station Maintenance July 15 - 19</p> 	
August	<p>Shorebirds July 24 - August 20</p> 			<p>Streams and Large Lakes August 18 - 25</p> 	
	<p>Climate Station Maintenance August 5 - 9</p> 				



Arctic Network Newsletter

Alaska Region Inventory & Monitoring Program

National Park Service



In this issue

Shallow Lakes pg 2

Rivers and Streams pg 4

Coastal Lagoons pg 5

"Wetlands are considered the kidneys of the landscape— they clean the water. Wetlands are important rearing grounds for young of all kinds, whether it's birds or fish or insects."

- Amy Larsen on shallow lakes and wetland areas

"Other studies have shown that winter flow or baseflow has increased, presumably in response to permafrost thaw and increasing groundwater circulation. These hydrologic changes can have profound effects on the water quality of streams and rivers."

- Jon O'Donnell on rivers and streams

"When considering the potential impacts from oil spills, our baseline data allows us to build up an idea of which areas need priority protection. Where would we really want to try to keep oil away from and at what times of the year is that most important for fish, birds, marine mammals, and people?" - Martin Robards, on monitoring coastal lagoons



Arctic Network Inventory and Monitoring Program (ARCN)

Our mission is to collect scientifically sound information through natural resource monitoring to contribute to park management and facilitate park preservation for future generations. We work in Bering Land Bridge National Preserve (BELA), Cape Krusenstern National Monument (CAKR), Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve (GAAR), Kobuk Valley National Park (KOVA), and Noatak National Preserve (NOAT).

Our Network is Alaska's 5 northern National Parks



Arctic Network Staff (area code 907)

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Scott Miller	699-2268		

Contributors to this issue: Jon O'Donnell, Amy Larsen, Martin Robards with Wildlife Conservation Society

Science for the stewardship of Arctic Parklands

To learn more about ARCN and our recent activities visit <http://science.nature.nps.gov/im/units/arcn/>. Check out our monitoring videos on the AlaskaNPS channel <http://www.youtube.com/user/AlaskaNPS>.

Arctic Network Newsletter, June - September 2013

Shallow Lakes

We are working to understand lake ecosystem dynamics and lake change over time across ARCN. Not all lakes will be impacted by climate warming, but many will, and our monitoring efforts will help us understand the various ways in which lakes will change and affect the lives of the people and animals who depend on them.

The mechanisms by which lakes and ponds change over time are surprisingly complex. Each year, water level is affected by snow pack, the rate of spring melt, precipitation and ground water inputs, as well as numerous physical factors such as soil composition, permafrost, ice content, and watershed slope and size. Over the last five years, we observed permafrost melting around many lakes and ponds network-wide. Ice melting near the shoreline can affect lakes in several ways: 1) the lake may expand in size or merge with a nearby lake (pictured above), 2) large quantities of trees and sediment may slump into the lake, and 3) ice wedges near the shoreline can melt and allow more water to run out of the lake causing it to drain.



This lake is expanding as near shore permafrost melts.

Lake drying is a serious concern in the Arctic because the climate is cold and dry. When lakes drain (pictured left)



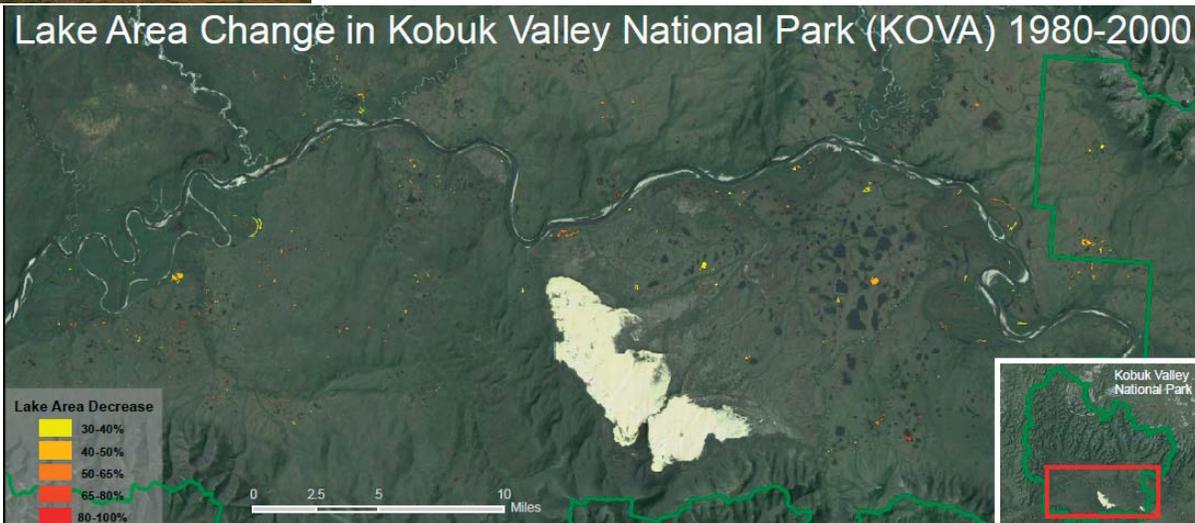
the environment becomes drier and habitat is unavailable for wetland animals like waterfowl, muskrats, mink, beaver and many other species. Usually the entire lake

doesn't disappear, but it can become considerably smaller. In KOVA, 240 lakes have drained (see figure below) by more than 30% over the past 30 years, and the total lake surface area in the park has decreased by about 14%.

Melting permafrost is partially responsible for these changes. Ice melting near the lake outlet allows more water than normal to flow out, and the lake level drops. Depending on the thickness and size of the ice wedge that melts, changes can range from small to catastrophic. Over 15 lakes in KOVA have drained catastrophically—virtually overnight. These drained lake bottoms are very obvious and look like a lunar landscape. Melting permafrost can also affect a lake when large ice wedges melt and cause sediment and trees to slump into the lake. The amount of ice in the frozen ground along the lake shore determines how much a lake may be impacted—the larger the ice wedge, the larger the potential impact to the lake. Thaw slumps can grow over several years and become very large, adding considerable amounts of soil and vegetation to the water column. This material increases the nutrient supply to the lake, often increasing animal production. Thaw slumps have occurred on many lakes in BELA, where there are large areas of Yedoma.



Contact Amy Larsen for more information about shallow lakes amy_larsen@nps.gov.



Arctic Network Newsletter, June - September 2013

Yedoma: a treasure trove of fossil remains

In the summer of 2012, we sampled lakes and ponds located in BELA. Looking at a USGS topographic map would lead one to view the park as a wasteland of lakes on a relatively flat plain. Upon further examination, one finds that the park is a complex mosaic of inactive volcanoes, lava flows, ancient sand dunes, low rolling hills of silt and a vast coastal plain. Amid these varied lakes live a vibrant waterfowl population, large herds of caribou, grizzly bears and muskox. Trees and shrubs are sparse in the region, and it is easy to imagine large mammals ambling across this open landscape. From the air, we often see animals or melting permafrost—perhaps a big exposed ice wedge—but last summer we stumbled across the ancient remains of several large mammoths! Our crews have sampled hundreds of lakes throughout Alaska, and rarely do we discover something so unique and massive. We found these bones exposed on the lake floor shortly after the lakes had drained.



The bones, from a distance, stuck out of the water just enough for an arctic tern to take a short rest. Our biggest find was a humerus and radius, together with some rib bones, vertebrae and several teeth. These objects were dated at 12,500 years old. This was the third youngest mammoth ever to be found in Alaska. This particular lake

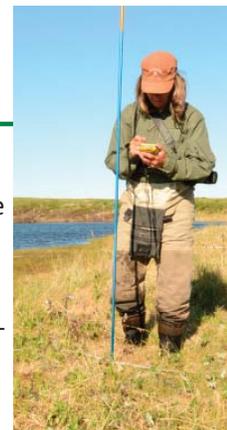


Yedoma is a special type of permafrost that was formed in the Pleistocene, some 12,000 years ago. This type of permafrost is very rich in ice, large ice wedges can often be seen usually in silt, and there are large amounts of ancient plant material and often animal parts preserved in it. This past summer we found several lakes that had drained that contained mammoth and other fossilized bones.



was in a large region of Yedoma, a special type of frozen ground where large ice lenses are hidden within a thick silt deposit. This experience has forever changed the way we look at the land. These discoveries have unleashed the treasure hunter in all of us; from the airplane, we excitedly scan the shorelines of lakes and ponds hoping to discover a bit of tusk, teeth or bone sticking out of the mud.

Contact Amy Larsen for more information about shallow lakes amy_larsen@nps.gov



How we do it: Documenting lake change

We use satellite photographs to measure changes in the size of lakes over time, and we visit a small portion of the lakes to record lake depth, the shape of the lake bottom, and basic soil features such as particle size and type (e.g., sand, silt, or gravel). We also sample the water to measure nutrients available for plants and animals. So far, the network has sampled 100 lakes in KOVA and 114 lakes in BELA. This summer we are planning to sample 100 lakes in NOAT.

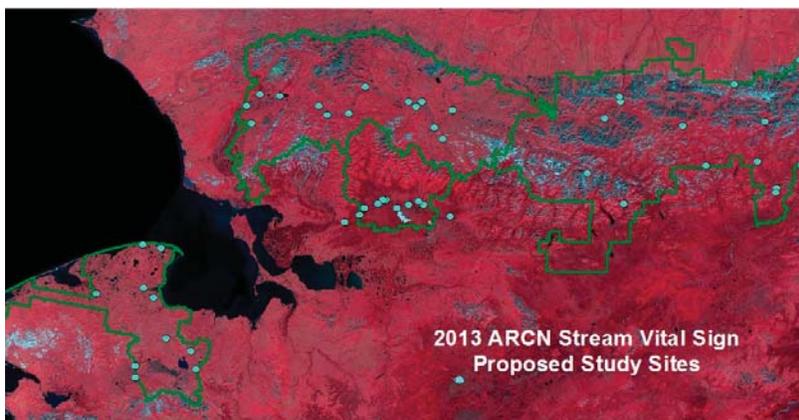


Stream and River Ecosystems

Recent climate change at high-latitudes is altering the hydrology, thermal characteristics, chemical composition, and ecology of streams and rivers. For instance, mean annual discharge in large arctic rivers has increased in recent decades in response to warming air temperatures. Other studies have shown that winter flow or baseflow has increased, presumably in response to permafrost thaw and increasing groundwater circulation. These hydrologic changes can have profound effects on the water quality of streams and rivers.

Still, very little is known about how stream ecosystems will respond to projected climate change in ARCN parks. Large uncertainties exist regarding the magnitude and nature of climate-driven impacts across space and time. To better understand stream and river dynamics in ARCN parks, we are developing protocols to detect changes in water quality over space and time. This summer, we will conduct a synoptic survey to provide a “snapshot” of current conditions. Streamwater samples will be analyzed for dissolved organic carbon (DOC) chemical composition (see sidebar) and a suite of other parameters. These tools will be used to “fingerprint” streams based on source-water type and watershed characteristics. Data from this pilot season will be used to guide and refine future protocol development and site selection for long-term inventory and monitoring efforts.

For more information contact Jon O'Donnell, jaodonnell@nps.gov.



2013 ARCN Stream Vital Sign
Proposed Study Sites

Seven of NPS Wild and Scenic Rivers flow through ARCN parks: Noatak, Alatna, John, Kobuk, Salmon, and Tinayguk. The Noatak is an International Biopreserve.

Arctic Network Newsletter, June - September 2013

Assessing Water Quality

Measures and Techniques

DOC – organic matter in aquatic system that can pass through a 0.45-micron filter. DOC functions as a source of nutrients, regulator of pH, and mediator of microbial reactions.

UV-visible absorbance – provides information on DOC chemical structure and molecular weight.

Fluorescence – provides information on DOC origin (terrestrial vs. aquatic) and presence of different compounds (e.g. proteins, organic acids).

Chemical fractionation – a technique used to separate DOC into function groups (e.g. water-loving vs. water-fearing compounds).

Learning from other watersheds in Alaska

Studies from interior and south-eastern Alaska—where climatic conditions are substantially warmer than in ARCN—may serve as a proxy for what future conditions may hold. For example, in the Yukon River basin, the concentration of DOC has declined with recent warming and thawing of permafrost. Also, the molecular composition of DOC has shifted, reflecting changing permafrost extent and watershed hydrology. In southeast Alaska, shrinking glacial coverage in watersheds is driving higher concentrations of DOC and nitrogen in rivers, but lower phosphorous concentrations. These chemical shifts will likely modify growth rates of aquatic algae and mosses, which ultimately affect other organisms in the aquatic food-web, like fish and birds.



Coastal lagoons are critically important ecosystems for wildlife and subsistence practices in northwestern Alaska, and are vulnerable to both climatic change and industrial development. In order to understand the status of Park resources in a rapidly changing environment and to mitigate threats of climate change and industrial development, we collaborate with the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) to gather baseline information and monitor lagoons in BELA and CAKR. Currently, our focal lagoons are Ikpek and Cowpack in BELA, and Aqulaaq, Krusenstern, and Kotlik in CAKR.

Our efforts will benefit not only NPS land managers but land management agencies elsewhere in Alaska. For example, we have already established that some lagoons (e.g., Krusenstern) are much more productive and of greater importance for subsistence fish.



We are also working with local residents to ensure that the information we collect is presented in a manner that is useful to them. This includes plans to portray "the story of the lagoons" in collaboration with the Native Village of Kotzebue.

We use high-tech digital equipment to monitor water quality, lab analyses to assess phytoplankton, and a range of nets to catch fish. Birds are monitored opportunistically as we travel around lagoons in a 4-person inflatable boat to our different sites. All of this equipment and the provisions for camping for a few days at each lagoon are carried in a Cessna 185. The logistics of visiting multiple coastal lagoons, the distances that must be traveled, and the challenges of collecting quality information in a diverse set of lagoons that change throughout the seasons make monitoring these water bodies very difficult. For more information contact Martin Robards, mrobards@wcs.org



The information we gather continues to inform us about the baseline conditions in lagoons, the most recent sampling being in July of 2012.



Alaska Plaice
(*Pleuronectes quadrituberculatus*)

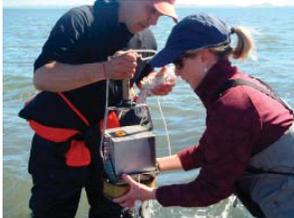


Pacific Herring (*Clupea pallasii*) and Humpback Whitefish (*Coregonus pidschian*)



Northern Sand Shrimp
(*Pandalus borealis*)

Tools of the trade



We use a **ponar grab** to sample invertebrates from the lagoon floor.



We use **beach seine** and **gill nets** to sample the fish community.



This **water quality monitoring meter** measures water salinity, temperature, and turbidity.



courtesy USFWS

Birds are also indicators of lagoon productivity because they feed in these areas to fuel up before and after migrating. Last summer, we observed thousands of Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*, pictured here) preparing for their southward journey at Cowpak lagoon.

This summer, NPS biologists and University of Alaska Anchorage will begin investigating shorebird use of BELA and CAKR lagoons during fall migration. Each summer, breeding shorebirds are monitored at Krusenstern lagoon by the Arctic Shorebird Demographic Network— a community of scientists working together to monitor shorebird populations across the North American Arctic from Nome to Churchill, Canada. Krusenstern lagoon is a sister site to neighboring Chukotka in the Russian Federation where the NPS Shared Heritage Beringia Program is active.



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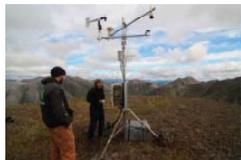
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907-455-0673

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Melanie

Flamme and Stacia Back-



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Arctic Network Newsletter, May - September 2013

COMMUNICATIONS and MEDIA

Reports and Publications

Soil and Carbon Storage: Hugelius G, Tarnocai C, Kuhry P, Harden J, Ping C-L, Schuur EAG, Schirmermeister L, O'Donnell JA, Mishra U, Palmtag J, Grosse G, Camill P, Michaelson G, Strauss J, Eberling B, Jorgenson T, Johnson K, Yu Z, Bockheim JG. 2013 (in press). Spatially distributed estimates of soil organic carbon storage between 1 to 3 m depth in the northern circumpolar permafrost region (an extension of the Northern Circumpolar Soil Carbon Database). Submitted to *Earth System Science Data*.

Caribou: 1) Joly, Kyle. 2012. Sea ice crossing by migrating Caribou, *Rangifer tarandus*, in northwestern Alaska. *Canadian Field-Naturalist* 126(3): 217–220.

2) Joly, K. 2012. Caribou Vital Sign Annual Report for the Arctic Network Inventory and Monitoring Program.

Dall's Sheep: Schmidt and Rattenbury. In press. Reducing effort while improving inference: Estimating Dall's sheep abundance and composition in small areas. *Journal of Wildlife Management*.

Vegetation: Swanson, D. 2012. Vegetation sampling in the Arctic Inventory and Monitoring Network, 2009-2012. <http://science.nature.nps.gov/im/units/arcn/index.cfm?rq=12&vsid=24>

Landscape Change: Swanson, D. 2012. Three decades of landscape change in Alaska's Arctic National Parks: Analysis of aerial photographs, c. 1980-2010. <http://science.nature.nps.gov/im/units/arcn/index.cfm?rq=12&vsid=28>

Weather: Wilson, Ryan R., Annett Bartsch, Kyle Joly, Joel H. Reynolds, Anne Orlando, and Wendy M. Loya. 2013. Frequency, timing, extent, and size of winter thaw-refreeze events in Alaska 2001–2008 detected by remotely sensed microwave backscatter data. *Polar Biology* 36: 419–426.

Outreach and Education

Fly ARCN parks with the new Interactive Web-Feature: Satellite images and aerial photographs are combined with topography to simulate a 3D view from above! Fly to points of interest by selecting them from a menu that also provides a written narrative, and use interactive pan, zoom, and tilt to really investigate the landscape. Anyone with a WebGL-enabled browser, such as Google Chrome or Mozilla Firefox, and a reasonably fast Internet connection can use it. <http://science.nature.nps.gov/im/units/arcn/owg/> For more information Contact: Dave Swanson, dave_swanson@nps.gov

Yellow-billed Loon Youth Videography Project– Connecting Youth with Science through Art

This June, two high school students– Sam Tocktoo from Shishmaref and Maxwell Dan from Anchorage–will join the yellow-billed loon monitoring team to video contaminants sampling and related field activities in BELA.

After filming on location, both students will head to Alaska Teen Media Institute in Anchorage (ATMI) and work together to produce videos about yellow-billed loons, their conservation, and the ongoing monitoring efforts of breeding yellow-billed loons in BELA and CAKR. The videos are part of a larger effort to increase awareness about conservation issues facing the birds in light of the 2014 listing decision (when yellow-billed loons will be considered for federal listing priority under the Endangered Species Act).

This collaboration with the students, ATMI and Alaska Geographic is possible from additional support provided by the



Murie Science and Learning Center, NPS Biological Resource Management Division, and Wildlife Conservation Society. For more information contact: Melanie Flamme, Melanie_flamme@nps.gov or Stacia Backensto, stacia_backensto@nps.gov





We plan to monitor wood frogs in tandem with the Shallow Lake Monitoring Program by recording their vocalizations— all part of a larger collaboration with the Terrestrial Wetland Global Change Research Network (TWGCRN) and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G). TWGCRN developed an innovative technique using digital sound recorders to capture frog calls in lieu of ground surveys. Wood frogs call during a short breeding season, which depends on the timing of spring break up and is often less than two weeks. This makes surveying for frogs very difficult. By using sound recorders, we can collect around-the-clock data collection so we won't miss frogs that might begin calling early in the day or night.

Frogs are a vital part of the wetland food chain and are excellent indicators of environmental health. Frogs eat large quantities of insects, and in turn are eaten by fish,

cranes, and waterfowl. By breathing through their skin, frogs readily absorb chemicals and gasses from the environment, making them highly susceptible to chemicals dissolved in water. Minor changes in temperature or water level directly affect the timing and duration of the breeding season, making frogs excellent indicators of climate change.

Scientists everywhere are concerned about the health of frogs because their populations are declining worldwide. These declines are linked to a variety of causes: habitat fragmentation and loss, chemical contamination, and increased ultraviolet radiation. Despite the fact that much of Alaska is remote and relatively pristine, frog populations in Alaska are at risk. ADF&G and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service have observed unusually high numbers of deformed frogs throughout Alaska. What is causing the deformities is unknown. Environmental contaminants, genetic defects, infections and predation are all potential causes.

If you have observed wood frogs in your area, please let us know by contacting Amy Larsen, amy_larsen@nps.gov, 907-455-0662 or visit <http://aknhp.uaa.alaska.edu/zoology/citizen-science/alaska-wood-frog-monitoring/>.

Arctic Network
National Park Service
4175 Geist Road
Fairbanks, Alaska 99709
<http://science.nature.nps.gov/im/units/arcn/>



Science for the stewardship of Arctic Parklands
Arctic Network Newsletter, June - September 2013



Check us out on youtube, facebook, and twitter



Winter 2014 Regional Advisory Council Meeting Calendar

February–March 2014 current as of 07/11/13

Meeting dates and locations are subject to change.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<i>Feb. 9</i>	<i>Feb. 10</i> <i>Window Opens</i>	<i>Feb. 11</i>	<i>Feb. 12</i> NS—Barrow	<i>Feb. 13</i>	<i>Feb. 14</i>	<i>Feb. 15</i>
		BB—Naknek				
<i>Feb. 16</i>	<i>Feb. 17</i> HOLIDAY	<i>Feb. 18</i> NWA—Kotzebue	<i>Feb. 19</i>	<i>Feb. 20</i>	<i>Feb. 21</i>	<i>Feb. 22</i>
<i>Feb. 23</i>	<i>Feb. 24</i>	<i>Feb. 25</i> WI—TBD	<i>Feb. 26</i> EI—Fairbanks	<i>Feb. 27</i>	<i>Feb. 28</i>	<i>Mar. 1</i>
<i>Mar. 2</i>	<i>Mar. 3</i>	<i>Mar. 4</i>	<i>Mar. 5</i> YKD—Bethel	<i>Mar. 6</i>	<i>Mar. 7</i>	<i>Mar. 8</i>
<i>Mar. 9</i>	<i>Mar. 10</i>	SE & SC Joint Meeting—Anchorage			<i>Mar. 14</i>	<i>Mar. 15</i>
<i>Mar. 16</i>	<i>Mar. 17</i>	<i>Mar. 18</i> SP—Nome	<i>Mar. 19</i>	<i>Mar. 20</i> K/A—Kodiak	<i>Mar. 21</i> <i>Window Closes</i>	<i>Mar. 22</i>



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR SEAN PARNELL

Department of Fish and Game

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RECEIVED

MAY 23 2013

May 20, 2013

Tim Towarak, Chair
Federal Subsistence Board
1011 East Tudor Road
Anchorage, AK 99503-6119

Dear Tim, 

Few places in the world retain a stronger connection to hunting, gathering, and eating well from the land than Alaska. Indeed, the need for meaningful wildlife harvest opportunities here cannot be overstated, which is why I'm sharing my concerns over a National Park Service (NPS) management approach that has great potential to reduce these opportunities on park and preserve units statewide.

In 2010, NPS began preempting Alaska state hunting regulations on national preserve lands during its annual compendium review process. It has continued these preemptions in its 2013 compendia. While all users are affected, these closures are especially likely to affect Alaskans who depend on hunting for sustenance. Each year, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game has provided written comments opposing the proposed closures as biologically unnecessary. In essence, our concerns are based upon inadequate justification provided by NPS, including the lack of clear, identifiable criteria used to demonstrate a cause-and-effect relationship between preempted state regulations and an actual impact to park resources or values. Additionally, conservation concerns have not been shown to exist in instances where state regulations have been preempted.

This year, the department developed a series of questions aimed at clarification and increased understanding of how closures proposed and extended by NPS fit into the wildlife management framework created by Congress, including in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA). The NPS response was disappointing as the majority of our most pressing inquiries were referred to as previously "asked and answered," without explanation. For example:

The State commented that the relationship between the Organic Act, Redwoods Amendments, ANILCA, and NPS Management Policies are not clear. The Service believes this has been adequately explained on multiple occasions, including the determinations of need, written correspondence, in-person meetings, and other publicly available documents (including NPS Management Policies).

The NPS has yet to directly respond to the department regarding these questions. Additionally, NPS policy statements regarding wildlife harvest included:

Whether labeled predator control, intensive management, abundance-based management or another term, the practical effects of manipulating one population to affect another are contrary to the NPS legal and policy framework as discussed in the determinations of need. (Emphasis added.)

Increasingly, State authorizations seek to manipulate [wildlife] populations in the interest of reallocating prey from predators to humans, a practice which is outside the legal and policy framework applicable to NPS areas. (Emphasis added.)

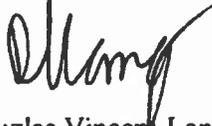
It is outside of NPS legal and policy framework to reallocate prey species from predators to humans; nor is the NPS charged with managing to "support a high level of human harvest." (Emphasis added.)

The department is continuing to try to resolve these issues with the NPS national office, and I am optimistic we can reach a mutually satisfactory understanding in the near future. In the meantime, the department will continue to do our best to provide meaningful wildlife harvest opportunities across Alaska and it is our hope that the NPS will assist us to ensure Alaskans can fish, hunt, trap, and subsist as they have since long before passage of ANILCA.

Tim, please share these concerns with the Federal Subsistence Board (Board). Additionally, I encourage you to review the department's comments and the full response provided by NPS to better understand this issue and our concerns. These are available on the department's webpage at <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=ongoingissues.npscompendium>. Alternatively, please contact Andrew Levi at (907) 267-2242 to receive a paper copy by mail.

In closing, thank you, and all members of the Board for your continued service. Your steadfast commitment to Alaska's wildlife resources and those who depend on them does not go unnoticed.

Sincerely,



Douglas Vincent-Lang
Director

Distribution: Alaska Board of Game
Federal Subsistence Board
Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils
Fish and Game Advisory Committees
Subsistence Resource Commissions

**Department of the Interior
U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service**

Northwest Arctic Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

Charter

1. **Committee's Official Designation.** The Council's official designation is the Northwest Arctic Subsistence Regional Advisory (Council).
2. **Authority.** The Council is reestablished by virtue of the authority set out in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (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 established in accordance with the provisions of 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.** The Council possesses the authority to perform the following duties:
 - a. Recommend the initiation of, review, and evaluate 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.
 - (4) Recommendations concerning policies, standards, guidelines and regulations to implement the strategy.
 - e. Appoint three members to each of the Cape Krusenstern National Monument and the Kobuk Valley National Park Subsistence Resource Commissions and one member to the Gates of the Arctic National Park Subsistence Resource Commission in accordance with Section 808 of 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 \$140,000, including all direct and indirect expenses and .75 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 7, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The DFO is a full-time Federal employee appointed in accordance with Agency procedures. The DFO will:
 - Approve or call all of the advisory committee's and subcommittees' meetings,
 - Prepare and approve all meeting agendas,
 - Attend all committee and subcommittee meetings,
 - Adjourn any meeting when the DFO determines adjournment to be in the public interest, and
 - 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 terminate 2 years from the date the Charter is filed, unless, prior to that date, it is renewed in accordance with the 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:

Ten 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 seven of the members (70 percent) represent subsistence interests within the region and three 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. A vacancy on the Council will be filled in the same manner in which the original appointment was made. Members serve at the discretion of the Secretary.

Council members will elect a Chair, a Vice-Chair, and a 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 may participate in any specific party matter in which the member has a direct financial interest in a lease, license, permit, contract, claim, agreement, or related litigation with the Department.

14. **Subcommittees.** Subject to the DFO's approval, subcommittees may be formed for the purposes 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. The Council Chair, with the approval of the DFO, will appoint subcommittee members. Subcommittees will meet as necessary to accomplish their assignments, subject to the approval of the DFO and the availability of resources.
15. **Recordkeeping.** 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 26, Item 2, or other approved Agency records disposition schedule. These records shall be available for public inspection and copying, subject to the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. 552.

//Signed//

Secretary of the Interior

DEC - 2 2011

Date Signed

DEC 03 2011

Date Filed