MEMBERS PRESENT:

Anthony Christianson, Chairman
Rhonda Pitka, Public Member
Chad Padgett, Bureau of Land Management
Greg Siekaniec, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Donald Striker, National Park Service
Gene Peltola, Bureau of Indian Affairs
David Schmid, U.S. Forest Service

Ken Lord, Solicitor's Office

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PROCEEDINGS

(Teleconference - 7/16/2020)

(On record)

(Operator instructions)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you, Operator. Welcome everybody to this Thursday, July 16th work session for the Federal Subsistence Board, and I thank everybody for taking their time to call in and work on these special actions that we have before us today.

With that, you know, we, prior to the meeting had executive session and just were looking at, you know, just getting a brief overview of some legal issues that -- to brief us and give us a short update because some of us are all new Board members and just to make sure that we're all on the same page as we look at our agenda before us and start to make actions, and so I appreciated that session there.

So with that I'm going to go ahead and open up the floor to review and adopt the agenda.

MS. DETWILER: Mr. Chair, this is Sue. Do you want me to quickly go over what's in the agenda?

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yeah, Sue, if you wouldn't mind, you can go ahead and just review the agenda and then after we do review the agenda there we can entertain a motion to adopt.

MS. DETWILER: Okay, thank you. So today's agenda we have five special actions and the order that they're currently on the agenda, I will go -- just briefly touch on each of those.

The first one is Wildlife Special Action 20-05 pertaining to moose in Unit 18.

Next agenda item is Wildlife Special Action 20-04 pertaining to caribou in Units 9, 17, 18 and 19.

Next is Wildlife Special Action 20-01 pertaining to caribou in Unit 13.
Next is Wildlife Special Action 20-03 pertaining to moose and caribou in Unit 13.

And, finally, Wildlife Special Action 20-02 pertaining to moose and caribou in Unit 12.

Followed by adjournment after those five actions -- after those five items.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you, Sue. Any Board discussion or questions about the agenda we have before us today?

MR. PELTOLA: Mr. Chair, BIA. the floor.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: BIA, you have the floor.

MR. PELTOLA: Move to adopt.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Motion on the floor to adopt.

MR. STRIKER: Second, NPS.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you. A motion's been made and seconded. Any discussion.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Hearing none we'll call for the question.

MR. PELTOLA: Question.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Question's been called. Any opposition to the agenda as presented by the Staff.

(No opposition)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Hearing no opposition motion passes unanimously to adopt the agenda as presented for the July 16th, 2020 Federal Subsistence Board work session.

So we'll go ahead and move on to number 2. And, before we do, just a little brief summary today about, you know, to run through the process here,
and having limited time today, this afternoon. When we
look at each of these specific agenda items and as we
go down the list some have been through the Regional
Advisory Council process and some haven't and some have
some public feedback and some don't and so if you look
at it, I'm hoping to do specific public testimony on
each agenda so I will be allowing some public testimony
but it must be specific and limited in time to 10
minutes. And so on each of these special actions I'm
going to go through the process and open up the floor
for public testimony but, again, the testimony must be
specific to the agenda items that we are speaking to.
And then I'd also like to open up the floor for the
counterparts, you know, the State to, and the office
Staff so that we can have open dialogue and discussion
to help the Board make a decision in our deliberations
today. And so that's how we're going to look at moving
forward with the process of the agenda and so just
wanted to put that out there as we look at getting
started here and moving forward with the agenda.

Just so everyone's aware of the process
today, that's how we look at moving forward.

Thank you.

And so with that I'm going to call on
the Staff to do the analysis and presentation of WSA20-
04 [sic], Unit 18 moose.

MS. MAAS: All right, thank you, Mr.
Chair, members of the Board. For the record my name's
Lisa Maas and I'm a wildlife biologist and acting
policy coordinator in the Office of Subsistence
Management. I'll be presenting a summary of the
analysis for Wildlife Emergency Special Action WSA20-
05.

WSA20-05 was submitted by the Yukon
Delta National Wildlife Refuge and it requests that the
fall moose season in the Kuskokwim hunt area of Unit 18
be extended one week from September 1st to 30th to
September 1st to October 7th for the 2020/21 regulatory
year. The proponent states that the moose harvest
within Zone 2 of the Kuskokwim hunt area has been well
below quota since 2017. They further state that
extending the season in Zone 2 will allow for
additional hunting opportunity for Federally-qualified
subsistence users while also allowing the Federal
manager to assess how much harvest increases during a requested week long extension.

Federal public lands in the Kuskokwim hunt area have been closed to non-Federally-qualified users since 1991. Between 2004 and 2008 the Board and State Board of Game enacted a harvest moratorium to promote growth of the Unit 18 moose population. Since 2009 moose harvest in the Kuskokwim hunt area has been managed by quotas and in 2017 ADF&G and the Yukon Delta Refuge began managing this hunt area in two zones. Zone 1 is primarily non-Federal lands and quotas are set by ADF&G. Users can easily access Zone 1 by boat along the mainstem of the Kuskokwim River and quotas are quickly met. Zone 2 is primarily Federal lands and the Yukon Delta Refuge sets quotas. Zone 2 is much more difficult to access and quotas are not usually met. Of note, the Alaska Board of Game extended the State season in Zone 2 until October 7th at their January 2020 meeting through adoption of Proposal 7 as amended. So, again, the State season in Zone 2 now closes on October 7th.

During the 1990s moose densities in the Kuskokwim River drainage were low and hunting pressure limited growth of the population. The 2004 to 2008 moratorium was effective in establishing a harvestable population and since then the moose population has continued to grow. Currently, ADF&G estimates 2,500 moose in the Kuskokwim hunt area, which exceeds population effectives. Bull/cow ratios are high as are calf/cow ratios which indicate a growing moose population. Since 2009 reported harvest has averaged 159 moose per year although harvest has increased as the moose population and, therefore, harvest quotas have increased. Federally-qualified subsistence users account for 95 percent of the moose harvest and demand far exceeds moose availability. As previously mentioned, ADF&G and the Yukon Delta Refuge cooperatively manage the Kuskokwim hunt area in two zones. Quotas in Zone 1 are quickly met and seasons close early by State emergency order. However, since 2017, average harvest in Zone 2 has only been 74 moose which is well below the quota of 110 moose. Zone 2 consists of tributaries to the Kuskokwim River and requires specialized boats to access as well as longer travel times and more fuel. The unmet quota in Zone 2 is likely a function of difficulties in access rather than lack of need for moose meat.
Approval of WSA20-05 would increase hunting opportunity for Federally-qualified subsistence users in Zone 2 under Federal regulations. Approval of this request would align State and Federal regulations in Zone 2 for the 2020/21 regulatory year.

While Federal users can already hunt until October 7th on State managed lands in Zone 2 under State regulations, approval of this request would allow them to also hunt on Federal managed lands until October 7th since Federal lands are closed to non-Federally-qualified users. No conservation concerns exist as this hunt is managed through quotas, which are not being met, and the seasons would close if quotas are met.

The OSM conclusion is to support Proposal WSA20-05.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd be happy to answer any questions.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you, Lisa. Any questions from the Board for Lisa on this special action request.

MR. PELTOLA: Mr. Chair, BIA.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: You have the floor.

MR. PELTOLA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, Lisa, in the presentation you reported that we have not, we, meaning State and Federal harvest, have not met harvest quota -- I think the quota was 110 within Zone 2, I think you also mentioned that the harvest was at 74 moose, and currently the harvest is limited to Federally-qualified users only on Federal lands in Zone 2; is that correct?

MS. MAAS: Well, Zone 2 is like 82 percent Federal public lands.

MR. PELTOLA: Uh-huh.

MS. MAAS: And so access is difficult so I mean hypothetically someone from Anchorage could go harvest a moose in Zone 2 on that, you know, 18 percent is not Federal land but access is difficult,
and, yeah, Federally-qualified subsistence users account for 95 percent of the moose harvest in this Kuskokwim hunt area. So between the vast majority of Federal public lands in Zone 2 and just the difficulty in access, you know, functionally, it's, you know, local subsistence users that are going to be accessing and hunting in this area.

MR. PELTOLA: Okay, and a followup question if I may, Mr. Chair.

Is the limitation to Federally-qualified users only implemented on Zone 2 of the Kuskokwim area via Board action or delegation of authority to a local in-season manager?

MS. MAAS: No. That closure applies to the whole Kuskokwim River hunt area. So both Zone 1 and Zone 2. And to be, I guess, I was trying to be concise but it's actually limited -- there's actually more of an .804 restriction so it's -- well, actually I'd -- it's limited to residents of several communities, which I'd have to -- sorry, just a moment. Yeah, so it's limited to residents of Tuntutuliak, Eek, Napakiak, Napaskiak, Kasigluk, Nunapitchuk, Atmautluak, Oscarville, Bethel, Kwethluk, Akiakchak, Akiak, Tuluksak, Lower Kalskag and Kalskag. So those are the eligible communities that can currently hunt in this Kuskokwim River hunt area. And the reason is just even though the moose population's doing really well demand far exceeds the availability of moose in this area.

MR. PELTOLA: Okay, appreciate that.

Because I was looking at -- I know that Zone 1 in the mainstem maxes out in regard to quota in three to four days in some years and then Zone 2 is opened up a little longer so I was wondering how the Program got to it.

Thank you much, appreciate it.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you. Any other questions for Lisa from the Board.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Alrighty, thank you.
MR. DOOLITTLE: Hey, I'm going to interject, this is Tom, could somebody make sure people, unless they're talking, mute their phones, it sounds like a submarine on some of our phones.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Okay, thank you. Yeah, please, watch your phones. Thank you.

Okay. Well, hearing no other questions from the Board, so, thank you, Lisa.

I'm going to ask Orville, did you receive any comment from tribes or corporations.

MR. LIND: No comment -- or no concerns that I can see.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Okay, thank you, Orville. Was there any public on line.

OPERATOR: At this time if you have a.....

MS. MAAS: This is Lisa, and I think the next step is for the InterAgency Staff Committee recommendation, since there wasn't a RAC recommendation on this and then public comment is next.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yeah, that's how it goes, sorry, Lisa. I had my written agenda here and.....

MS. MAAS: Yeah, no worries.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yeah, ISC recommendation and then I'll go to Orville and then public next, so thank you.

MS. MAAS: Okay. And just an FYI, this is an emergency special action so with emergency special actions there's not a public hearing requirement and we don't do as much, you know, tribal consultations necessarily with emergency special actions. The rest of the ones are temporary so there are public hearings, but this one -- since it's an emergency there aren't quite as many public testimony requirements.
But the InterAgency Staff Committee recommendation is to approve temporary special action request WSA20-05 to extend the fall moose season in the Kuskokwim hunt area of Unit 18 from September 1st to 30th to September 1st to October 7th for the 2020/21 regulatory year.

The InterAgency Staff Committee concurs with the OSM Staff analysis that there is no conservation concern for this moose population. The population had an annual growth rate of 20 percent between 2011 and 2015. The most recent bull/cow ratios are above State objectives and recent calf/cow ratios and twinning rates indicate a generally stable to increasing moose population within the unit. Approving this request to extend the season by seven days would increase hunting opportunity for Federally-qualified subsistence users and could increase total moose harvest in Zone 2 of this unit where moose are more difficult to access and recent harvest quotas have not been met. The quota for Zone 2 has been 110 moose since 2017, however, on average, only 74 moose have been reported harvested. This conservative season extension will allow the manager to evaluate if the action effectively improves harvest opportunity. Extending the season and opportunity for moose harvest may also serve to reduce food security concerns associated with the Covid19 pandemic.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you, Lisa. Any questions for the ISC.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: All right, hearing none. We'll move on to the State, comment?

MR. MULLIGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. For the record my name is Ben Mulligan, Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

The Department does not oppose WSA20-05, you know, we recognize that the harvest objective in Zone 2 has not been met and that when -- with this extension the proposed regs will align State and Feds.

Thank you.
CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you. Any questions from the Board.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: All right, hearing none we'll move on. I believe, Lisa, we are at the Board discussion.

MS. MAAS: Unless you wanted to open it up for any public testimony on this.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yeah, I did, I asked if there was anyone on line but I didn't hear a response yet.

MS. MAAS: Okay, sorry.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yeah, anybody on line who wanted to testify to this, please, feel free to testify specifically to this agenda item, you are free to do so at this time.

Operator.

OPERATOR: Thank you. At this time if you would like to provide comment, please, press star then 1, you will be prompted to record your first and last name and to withdraw you may press star and then 2. Once, again, to comment, please press star then 1 and record your first and last name at this time.

One moment.

(Pause)

OPERATOR: At this time, Sir, I'm showing no public comment.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you. All right, now we'll open the floor for Board deliberation and discussion.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: All right, hearing none, we'll open up the floor for Board action.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Mr. Chair, Greg
Siekaniec, Fish and Wildlife Service.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: You have the floor, Greg.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Thank you, Mr. Chair and Board members. I'd like to move to approve WSA20-05. If I get a second I will provide my justification to support this motion.

MR. PELTOLA: BIA seconds.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Thank you, Gene. Hearing that there is no conservation concern for moose in Unit 18 as indicated in the OSM analysis, this action will provide Federally-qualified users a longer season in Zone 2 and increase moose harvest opportunity by Federally-qualified users. Harvest is managed by quotas and, therefore, seasons can be closed when quotas are met minimizing the potential for overharvest. Approving this extended season may be especially important if Federally-qualified users have food security concerns due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Additional opportunity is afforded.

Furthermore, this will temporarily align the Federal and State seasons for Zone 2, reducing regulatory confusion and ensuring Federal harvest opportunities are aligned with State opportunities.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you, Greg. Any Board discussion.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Hearing none I'll call for the question.

MR. PELTOLA: Mr. Chair, BIA, I have a quick question if I may.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yes, you have the floor.

MR. PELTOLA: So just for clarification, by this motion, it would extend the
season but if we still run into a scenario where we have approximately 30 percent of the harvest in Zone 2 going unharvested by Federally-qualified users, what would be the process to expand the hunt opportunity to all State residents?

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

(Pause)

MR. PELTOLA: Mr. Chair, I guess that was a question for OSM and policy.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Okay.

MS. MAAS: Yeah, Mr. Chair, this is Lisa. And, Gene, I think I'm understanding that if the quota's not met in Zone 2 via this special action by October 7th, how could the opportunity be opened up for all users and not just.....

MR. PELTOLA: Not necessarily -- yeah, Lisa, thank you, for the clarification question. Not necessarily to an individual season results, up to this date we have gone to 30 percent of the quota not being obtained within Zone 2, this motion, if adopted by the Board, would extend the season from the end of September to the end of the first week of October, and increase opportunity for Federally-qualified users, if that is the case, since we had a C&T limiting the harvest to particular residents that reside within a community, what actions would the Board have to take, if they choose to do so, to open up those opportunities for other State residents involved?

MS. MAAS: Oh, okay. So if we wanted to open it up to all Federally-qualified users versus just the current, you know, communities under, I guess, an .804 restriction, my understanding is that they would have to submit another special action if they wanted to do it for this year and this season, otherwise, in the future it would be through a proposal process to open up that hunt to all Federally-qualified users.

MR. PELTOLA: Yeah, Lisa, Gene again. Not just only Federally-qualified users, but non-Federally-qualified users as well. So if I understand.....
MS. MAAS: Okay.

MR. PELTOLA: ......your presentation, I thought there was a C&T in place so -- as opposed to .804 in place which limited the harvest to residents of those communities on the Kuskokwim and the tundra villages from, you know, Kalskags on down, so if the quota is not being obtained, now, into the future, what process would the Board have to go through if there's still part of the quota in Zone 2 which is not attained.

MS. MAAS: Yeah, either way to open it up to everyone, to completely remove that Federal lands closure, that would either be another special action request for, you know, this season or next year, or it would be a proposal that would be submitted in January that wouldn't become effective until July of 2022.

MR. PELTOLA: So, followup, Mr. Chair. So if I understand, whether it be with regard to this particular season or any subsequent seasons then a special action would have to take place for the Board to act upon, correct?

MS. MAAS: That's my understanding. And I guess I don't -- Ray Born might be on line to maybe speak to his delegated authority on this. I'm sorry I'm not -- I can't remember all the details of his delegation of authority letter because sometimes those delegated authority letters, you know, do allow the manager to close to other users. But that's something I can't answer right now I'd have to do a little more digging on that.

MR. PELTOLA: Mr. Chair, BIA. This may be a point of interest in the future so could I ask for guidance from the Solicitor's office?

MR. LORD: Mr. Chair, this is Ken.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: You've got a question to Ken.

MR. BORN: Mr. Chair, this is Ray Born.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yes, go ahead, Ray.
MR. BORN: Yeah, the delegation of authority letter is not -- I guess maybe Theo would be a better person to interpret that for us. He has the expertise in that area, and I don't know, is Theo on the line?

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yes.

MR. BORN: Theo, can you answer that question, a technical question that Gene had?

(No comments)

MR. DOOLITTLE: Hey, this is Tom, you guys. I could take a quick look here, we can look up the letter of delegation and see what it says and that's to clarify that. And whether a season extension could continue to try to reach, you know, a goal, other special actions like Lisa has suggested is a route, or essentially a modification of this, you know, to actually take away the .804 determination is another possibility, as a step to open it up to more users because it sounds like the conservation concern issue is defining; is that correct, Ray; this is Tom just interjecting?

MR. BORN: Tom, this is Ray, through the Chair. That is correct. The conservation concern is decreasing as the population is increasing in that area and as was articulated in the analysis, is Zone 2 is extremely difficult to reach. And as I'm looking at the delegation of authority letter, I don't see any authorization to extend anything, as I'm looking at the letter right now, so I don't see any authority to do that. So I guess it would need to come in as a special action request to the Board then.

Thank you.

MS. MAAS: Yeah, Mr. Chair, this is Lisa.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Excuse me, sorry, I got lost there, was that you Lisa?

MS. MAAS: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair. So I was able to, I guess, the benefit of doing this at home is I was able to open that delegation of authority letter up and, yes, I mean the season dates are bound
in regulation so in order to extend the season that
would have to be another special action but the
language in the delegation of authority letter states
that it also permits you to close and reopen Federal
public lands to non-subsistence hunting.

So if, Ray, as the in-season manager,
wanted to open up the hunt to non-subsistence users he
could do that through his delegation of authority but
if he wanted to further extend the season, that would
require another special action.

MR. PELTOLA: Mr. Chair, thank you,
this is BIA. My question has been answered.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you. Any
other questions for Staff.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: So we're in
Board deliberation, the motion's been made and seconded
to support, any other discussion.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Call for the
question.

MR. SCHMID: Question, Forest Service.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Roll call,
please, Sue.

(Pause)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Well, I believe
Sue may have stepped away, Tom, are you on line?

MS. DETWILER: Oh, yes, sorry, this is
Sue, I'm sorry, I had my phone on mute.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Okay.

MS. DETWILER: Sorry. So yes so.....

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Could you do
roll call please.
MS. DETWILER: Yep, okay, so the motion is to support Wildlife Special Action 20-05 to extend the fall moose season in the Kuskokwim hunt area of Unit 18 from September 1 to 30 to September 1 to October 7, for the 2020/21 regulatory year.

So the motion is to support that and we will start out roll call with Greg Siekaniec.

MR. SIEKANIEC: I support as stated, thank you.

MS. DETWILER: Dave Schmid.

MR. SCHMID: I support WSA20-05 with the justification provided by the Fish and Wildlife Service.

MS. DETWILER: Thank you.

BIA, Gene Peltola.

MR. PELTOLA: BIA supports as articulated in the original motion.

MS. DETWILER: Thank you.

Park Service, Don Striker.

MR. STRIKER: NPS supports the motion for the reasons summarized by Director Siekaniec. Thank you, Sue.

MS. DETWILER: Thank you.

BLM, Chad Padgett.

MR. PADGETT: I support.

MS. DETWILER: Thank you.

Public Member Rhonda Pitka.

MS. PITKA: I support the motion as stated by the Park Service [sic].

MS. DETWILER: Thank you, Rhonda.

Did Charlie Brower join us.
(No comments)

MS. DETWILER: No, okay.

Finally, Chairman Anthony Christianson.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: I support.

MS. DETWILER: Great, thank you. The vote is seven zero -- or seven with one not present so motion passes and the proposal is adopted.

Mr. Chair, I think that would bring us to our next agenda item, which is Special Action Request 20- Wildlife Special Action Request 20-04 and that, again, is Lisa.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yep, and we'll call on Lisa at this time to present us with the analysis.

Thank you.

MS. MAAS: All right, thank you, Mr. Chair. Again, for the record this is Lisa Maas and I'll be presenting a summary of the analysis for Temporary Wildlife Special Action WSA20-04.

WSA20-04 was submitted by Togiak National Wildlife Refuge and Yukon Delta Refuge and requests that the Federal in-season manager be delegated authority to open and close seasons, announce harvest limits and set sex restrictions for caribou in all or portions of Units 9A, B and C, 17A, B and C, 18 and 19A and B for the 2020 to 2022 regulatory cycle.

The proponents state that the summer 2019 population estimate for the Mulchatna Caribou Herd was 13,500 caribou which represents a 50 percent decline from the previous five years and is well below the State's minimum population objective of 30,000 caribou. The proponents note that 2019/20 Federal and State seasons were shortened due to conservation concerns and that the herd is not expected to recover within the next year. The proponents state that this request will help conserve and recover the Mulchatna Caribou Herd and provide the flexibility needed to make harvest management decisions in a timely manner.
Between 2006 and 2014 State and Federal regulations for Mulchatna caribou became increasingly more restrictive including shortening seasons, reducing harvest limits, eliminating non-resident seasons and requiring the RC503 registration permit. These restrictions coincide with declines in the Mulchatna Caribou Herd population and low bull/cow ratios.

Beginning in 2015 the Alaska Board of Game and the Federal Subsistence Board began liberalizing Mulchatna caribou regulations in response to improve bull/cow ratios and signs that the herd was stable to increasing. In August 2019 the Alaska Department of Fish and Game decreased the harvest limit of the Mulchatna caribou hunt from two caribou to one caribou by emergency order due to conservation concerns from the low 2019 population estimate. In November 2019 the Board approved WSA19-07 with modification to decrease the Federal harvest limit for Mulchatna caribou to one caribou, close Federal lands in Units 18, 19A and 19B to non-Federally-qualified users and delegate authority to the Togiak Refuge manager to open and close seasons throughout the range of the herd for the 2019/20 regulatory year. The Togiak Refuge manager exercised the delegated authority to close caribou hunting on Federal lands across the range of the herd on December 31st because agency Staff determined no additional harvestable surplus exited that would allow for herd growth and recovery. ADF&G closed the RC503 caribou hunt by emergency order on January 31st, 2020 because of conservation concerns.

A public hearing and tribal consultation were held for WSA20-04. During the public hearing seven people testified in support of the request in conservation of the Mulchatna herd. The Curyung Tribal Council expressed support for the request and the Lake Clark National Park Subsistence Resource Commission submitted a letter of support for WSA20-04. Of note, all three effected Regional Advisory Councils, Bristol Bay, Yukon Kuskokwim Delta, and Western Interior also voted to support WSA20-04 at their spring 2020 meeting.

The population size and distribution of the Mulchatna Caribou Herd has changed dramatically over the past 40 years. The current range of the Mulchatna Herd is depicted on Figure 1 on Page 5 of the analysis. The herd primarily occurs in two distinct
populations, an eastern segment and a western segment. Based on radio collared animals, mixing between these two subpopulations is low. The herd peaked at 200,000 in 1996 declining steadily to 18,000 caribou in 2013. Between 2014 and 2016 the herd stabilized around 28,000 caribou. In the most recent 2019 population estimate indicated the herd declined to 13,500 caribou, which is well below the State's minimum population objective of 30,000 caribou. The western segment's population has declined appreciably since 2012 while the eastern segment's population increased between 2014 and 2016 and then declined back to 2012 levels in 2019. Bull/cow ratios in the Mulchatna Herd have been depressed since 2001. While ratios have improved in recent years they are still below the State management objective of 35 bulls per 100 cows and continue to be a conservation concern. Calf/cow ratios have also been low and below State objectives. While the cause of the decline is unknown, decreased range quality, predation, particularly by brown bears on the calving ground, icing events, deep snows and harvest pressure may all have contributed to the decline. Reported caribou harvest has declined in correlation with the caribou population from almost 4,000 caribou in 2000 to 238 caribou in 2018. Since 2009 local users have accounted for 84 percent of the reported harvest. However, ADF&G suspects actual harvest is substantially higher than reported harvest. Household harvest surveys also indicate actual harvest is much higher than reported harvest, although the magnitude of unreported harvest is unknown. 81 percent of reported harvest has occurred between December and March when local users have easier access to caribou via snowmachines. 54 percent of reported harvest by local users occurs in Unit 18, while 53 percent of non-local harvest occurs in Unit 17B. During the 2019/20 season over 2,000 RC503 permits were issued and 1040 permits had been returned as of March 16th, 2020. From the returned permits 113 caribou were reported harvested, however, information and observation from law enforcement personnel indicated the actual harvest well exceeded reported harvest.

Approving WSA20-04 would delegate authority to the Federal in-season manager to open and close seasons, announce harvest limits and set sex restrictions across the range of the Mulchatna Herd for the 2020/21 and 2021/22 regulatory years. While this change would decrease harvest opportunity for
Federally-qualified subsistence users, it could also help conserve the herd and ensure future harvest opportunities. While the impacts of harvest on the population decline are unclear conservation measures are warranted due to the substantial population decline and poor composition metrics. Delegating authority to an in-season manager provides management flexibility which is critical in responding to changing herd conditions in a timely manner.

The OSM conclusion is to support Special Action Request WSA20-04 with modification to clarify the regulatory language and to delegate authority to the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge manager to open and close seasons, announce harvest limits and set sex restrictions via delegation of authority letter only.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'd be happy to answer any questions.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you, Lisa. Any questions for Lisa pertaining to this proposal.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: All right, hearing none, we'll move on to what the ISC recommendation is.

MS. MAAS: All right, thanks, Mr. Chair. So this special action had Regional Advisory Council recommendations so that means it's just an InterAgency Staff Committee comment so I'm going to read the comment and then you can go to the RAC recommendations.

The InterAgency Staff Committee concurs with the OSM Staff analysis that conservation measures are warranted for the Mulchatna Caribou Herd. The 2019 population estimate of 13,500 caribou is substantially below the State objective of 30,000. The poor population estimate is coupled with cow/calf and bull/cow metrics that are below State objectives. As indicated by the proponent this population will likely not recover in the next year. Changing the regulation to a may be announced season with a harvest limit of two caribou will reduce harvest opportunity in the
short-term, however, conserving the Mulchatna Caribou Herd now will increase harvest opportunity in the future. To offset the loss of caribou, harvest of other resources such as moose may increase in response to this request. There is uncertainty about why the herd has declined and providing this conservative framework to control harvest while also evaluating other factors will likely improve the potential recovery of the herd. This actually allow the manager to coordinate with State actions in response to changing conditions.

The ISC supports the Yukon Kuskokwim Delta, Bristol Bay and Western Interior Regional Advisory Council recommendations in support of this request to take management actions necessary to conserve the Mulchatna Herd.

Approval of this request allows consideration of actions to be taken at the local level which was supported by the State at the public hearing.

The ISC also supports the desire of the Yukon Kuskokwim Delta RAC to develop a Mulchatna working group to discuss Mulchatna caribou issues with the public, tribal and agency representatives. Development of such a working group may improve communication and information sharing among users that ultimately could aid in the herd's recovery.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you, Lisa. Questions from the Board.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Okay, Orville, is there any public comment that you are aware of?

MR. LIND: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Orville Lind, Native Liaison for OSM.

On May 25th we conducted tribal consultations and ANCSA consultations. In the morning session we had Curyung Tribal Council out of Dillingham, Gayla and Courtenay and they supported the concept of the special action.
In the afternoon we had Western Interior RAC Chair stated that he was very concerned because trying to get conservation very -- appre -- very appreciative of the action taken by the Federal Subsistence Board and the in-season manager for conservation of that herd. Moving into the calving season, every one of those cows, he stated, would not have a calf and predator load is really high. His observation of numerous brown bears in the region, seen bears chase caribou calves down and also have caribou -- needed to have caribou large enough population sustain against predation. The caribou he seen is -- usually are having only one calf instead of -- he's never seen caribou calves -- or caribou cows having twins. And so it takes a lot of calves on ground to get beyond predation threshold and need to get herd turned around and once below a certain level harder to build back up. So he was very appreciative of what the State and Feds are doing to close the season and conserve the herd.

And that's all I have, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you, Orville. Any questions for Orville.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: All right, hearing none, call on the State, any comments from the State.

MR. MULLIGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Ben Mulligan, Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

The Department is supportive of the Board giving the authority to the Refuge manager so they can take swift action, if needed in cooperation with our managers for that herd.

So thank you very much, appreciate the opportunity.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you.

Operator, is there any public on line that would like to speak specific to this.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Mr. Chair, this is Greg.
CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yes, Greg.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Could I just ask Ben a question?

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Oh, definitely, yep, the floor is open.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Yeah, thank you.

Thanks, Ben, for that statement. Is there any -- have you guys completed any population work this summer or spring that will become available before too long, do you know?

MR. MULLIGAN: Through the Chair. Board Member Siekaniec. I'd have to ask our local manager. The last time I had asked was when this special action had its public meeting and I hadn't had a chance to follow up with them but I will certainly do so and if they have anything I can send it your way.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Thank you, that would be appreciated. And I do appreciate your encouragement that everybody working together out there to try and, you know, do the right things for conservation of this herd.

Thank you, Ben.

MR. MULLIGAN: Oh, sure thing.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MS. MAAS: Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yes, go ahead, Lisa, you have the floor.

MS. MAAS: Thanks. Yeah, we also still need to hear the Regional Advisory Council recommendations.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yes, correct.

Yes, please, we'll take those now too, Lisa, thank you.

MS. MAAS: Okay, thanks. I'll start off with the Bristol Bay and then we can go to Yukon Kuskokwim Delta and Western Interior.
So the Bristol Bay Regional Advisory Council voted to support WSA20-04. The Bristol Bay Council supported the request with the recognition that research is needed to determine if caribou in the Kokhanok area are part of a separate herd that may need to be managed independently of the Mulchatna Herd. The Council discussed the benefits of having one Federal in-season manager across the range of the herd but recognized the need for input and concurrence from other involved organizations and Federal agencies. The Council hopes Federal and State managers will work together and coordinate their management actions.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And the YK Delta and Western Interior Councils will also have recommendations.

MS. PATTON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is Eva Patton, Council Coordinator for the Yukon Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils.

The YK-Delta RAC supports WSA20-04. The Yukon Kuskokwim Delta Council supported the request because of substantial conservation concerns for the Mulchatna Caribou Herd. The Council supports actions that help rebuild the herd and reduced harvests at this time. The Chair also -- and Council members also asked for a creation of a Mulchatna Caribou Herd working group to discuss the status of the herd and management actions, both between all three affected Regional Advisory Councils, but also with the public and tribal entities and the State and Federal management and biologists. Their hope is to keep communications going, receive updates on the herd's status and also outreach in the region on conservation efforts.

And a Council member had also expressed, due to concern with food security, opportunity for, you know, discussion with the Federal in-season manager, if there's any opportunity for limited harvest for Federally-qualified subsistence users and had suggested the fall season as a little less efficient time, that that might be an opportunity for some limited harvest without risk of overharvest. The Council supports the conservation concerns and supports the Federal in-season manager to help initiate that.
Thank you.

MR. REAKOFF: So this would be Jack Reakoff, Western Interior Regional Council.

The Council met in Fairbanks on March 2 and 3. We reviewed this WSA20-04 Mulchatna Caribou Herd in-season management proposal. The Western Interior was very concerned at our fall meeting in McGrath to find out that the herd was at 13,500. We're very supportive of the request and we stressed that the Mulchatna Herd needs to be protected until the next regulatory cycle. The Council noted that the herd's pregnancy and productivity rates have been high, yet the herd population is substantially declined. The Council is concerned with brown bear predation of calves on the calving grounds and unreported harvest. The Council hopes that the State and Federal managers will continue to work together to protect this herd and recognize the need for a Federal in-season manager. The Council had testimony during our fall meeting in October that there was substantially more unreported harvest, that's why the Council was so concerned, the only real deduction is if the herd is productive yet is declining, that there's too much harvest.

The Council was appreciative to the Federal Subsistence Board with developing the in-season manager and we would like you to continue to do so.

Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you, Jack. Any questions.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: All right, hearing none, any other Regional Advisory Councils to be recognized.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: It looks like we have four total?

MS. MAAS: Mr. Chair, this is Lisa, and yep, those were all three of the Councils that voted on this request.
CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you, Lisa, appreciate that.

Okay, I think that brings us to, I believe, Board deliberation.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Discussion.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: All right, hearing none, we'll open the floor for Board action.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Mr. Chair, Greg Siekaniec, Fish and Wildlife Service.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: You have the floor, Greg.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Thank you, Mr. Chair and Board Members. I would like to move that we approve WSA20-04 as modified by OSM. If I get a second I will provide my justification for supporting the motion.

MR. PELTOLA: BIA, second......

MS. PITKA: This is Rhonda, I second that motion.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Thank you for the second. Well, as has been noted previously in our deliberations of some time ago and, again, in this analysis, there's an obvious conservation concern for the Mulchatna Caribou Herd as identified in the OSM analysis and echoed in the public and tribal testimony. Although it is not clear what combination of factors have resulted in this decline, we have heard, certainly, some good analysis by RAC Chair, harvest is something we can directly and immediately control to slow the decline and hopefully expedite the herd's future recovery.

Providing a delegation of authority letter to one Federal manager who can engage cooperatively, local interests, and the State, this delegation will provide the management flexibility
needed to make timely decisions and respond to changing conditions. Clarifying the language as modified by OSM further increases the management flexibility by allowing for a complete closure of the season, if warranted, for conservation.

This action also supports the Yukon Kuskokwim Delta, Bristol Bay, and Western Interior Regional Advisory Council recommendation to take management actions necessary to conserve the Mulchatna Caribou Herd.

I would also encourage Council, tribes and other local users to coordinate and communicate often with Federal and State managers regarding any information they have that could aid in the herd's recovery.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you for that.

Any questions, comments, discussion.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: All right, hearing none, we will call on Sue to do roll call, call for the question.

MR. PELTOLA: Question.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you, Gene.

Roll call, Sue, please.

MS. DETWILER: Okay. This is to do with Wildlife Special Action 20-04, which requests that the Federal in-season manager be delegated authority to open and close seasons, announce harvest limits and set sex restrictions for caribou in all portions of Unit 9A, 9B, 9C, 17A, 17B, 17C, 18, 19A and 19B for the 2020/2022 regulatory cycle. The motion is to approve as modified by the OSM to clarify the regulatory language and to delegate authority to the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge manager to open, close -- open and close seasons, announce harvest limits and set sex
restrictions via delegation of authority letter only.

So moving to the vote, start with Greg
Siekaniec, a yes vote is to support the motion, Greg.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Yes, I support as
stated in my justification.

MS. DETWILER: Thank you. Dave Schmid.

MR. SCHMID: Yeah, I also support the
WSA20-04 with the OSM modification with the
justification provided by Fish and Wildlife Service, as
well as support from the three RACs and the State of
Alaska.

MS. DETWILER: Thank you.

BIA, Gene Peltola.

MR. PELTOLA: BIA votes to support as
presented in addition to with recognition of the
Bristol Bay, Yukon Kuskokwim Delta, and Western
Interior Regional Advisory Council's support of the
Board's administrative action in regard to take.

MS. DETWILER: Thank you.

BLM, Chad Padgett.

MR. PADGETT: I support.

MS. DETWILER: Thank you.

Park Service, Don Striker.

MR. STRIKER: Park Service supports the
motion in deference to the three RACs and for the
reasons so thoroughly articulated by Mr. Siekaniec.

MS. DETWILER: Thank you.

Public Member Rhonda Pitka.

MS. PITKA: I support based on the
support of the three Regional Advisory Councils, Yukon
Kuskokwim Delta, Bristol Bay, and Western Interior
Regional Advisory Council recommendation. And the --
with the understanding that the conservation measures
are warranted for the Mulchatna Caribou Herd.

Thank you.

MS. DETWILER: Thank you.

Has Charlie Brower joined us?

(No comments)

MS. DETWILER: And finally, Chairman Tony Christianson.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yes, I support as stated.

MS. DETWILER: Thank you. So motion passes seven with one absent, so the request is approved as amended.

So that brings us up to, Mr. Chair, Special Action -- let's see, Wildlife Special Action 20-01 pertaining to caribou in Unit 13.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yes, thank you, Sue. We'll call on Lisa to present the analysis.

MS. MAAS: All right, thank you, Mr. Chair. For the record my name is Lisa Maas and I'll be presenting a summary of the analysis for Temporary Wildlife Special Action Request WSA20-01.

WSA20-01 was submitted by William Amberg of Copper Center and requests a continuous caribou season in Unit 13 from August 1st through March 31st and that the caribou harvest limit in Unit 13 remainder be changed to two caribou for the 2020/2022 regulatory cycle.

The proponent notes that the State fall season has been extended in recent years to September 30th which matches the Federal subsistence season. The proponent is concerned with the high number of hunters along the Richardson Highway, which creates a public safety concern and states that this request would help alleviate some of that harvest pressure. The proponent also notes that in three of the past five years Nelchina caribou have migrated through Federal lands during October when the season is closed precluding
subsistence harvest. He also states that this request will help reduce the size of the Nelchina Herd, which is above population objections and is at risk of overgrazing its habitat.

In 2016 the Board approved emergency special action WSA16-05 to delegate authority to the BLM Glennallen Field Office manager to open a 10 day caribou season between October 1st and 20th to increase harvest of the Nelchina Herd and to provide additional hunting opportunity because caribou were inaccessible during the regular season due to delayed migration. In 2019 the Alaska Department of Fish and Game extended the closing dates for all State caribou hunts in Unit 13 by 10 days to September 30th to help reduce the size of the Nelchina Herd population. This closing date corresponds with the closing date of the Federal season.

Temporary Special Action WSA20-03 also concerns Unit 13 caribou and requests closure of moose and caribou hunting in Unit 13 to non-Federally-qualified users for the 2020/21 regulatory year. The Board will consider WSA20-03 next, but may want to keep this special action in mind during its deliberations on 20-01.

The Wrangell-St.Elias National Park Subsistence Resource Commission submitted written comments in support of the change in harvest limit to provide additional subsistence opportunity and opposition to the change in season due to concerns over harvesting rutting bulls when they are unpalatable resulting in wasted meat. The Resident Hunters of Alaska, ADF&G, the Executive Director of the Ahtna InterTribal Resource Commission and four members of the public also opposed the continuous season because of concerns over harvesting rutting bulls, wasting meat and disturbing breeding caribou. The Resident Hunters of Alaska also opposed the change in harvest limit while three testifiers expressed support of the harvest limit change during the public hearing.

Of note, both the Southcentral and Eastern Interior Councils voted to support WSA20-01 with modification to only change the harvest limit in Unit 13 remainder during their spring 2020 meeting. However, the Councils were not presented with the full OSM analysis or OSM's conclusions before they made
their recommendation.

The Nelchina Herd primarily occupies Unit 13 throughout the summer migrating east during the fall to overwinter in Units 12 and 20E. The Nelchina Herd's population has fluctuated over time influenced primarily by harvest. From 2010 to 2017 and in 2019 the herd's population has exceeded the State's management objectives of 35,000 to 40,000 caribou. In October 2019 the herd's population estimate was 46,528 caribou. From 2008 to 2012 low parturition rates of three year old cows suggests nutritional stress raising concerns over the health and long-term stability of the Nelchina Herd.

The Mentasta Caribou Herd primarily ranges within Units 11, 12 and 20E, however, Mentasta caribou may occasionally travel into Unit 13. The Mentasta Herd is a small herd with low recruitment and conservation concerns.

The Nelchina Herd experiences heavy harvest pressure due to its road accessibility. ADF&G manages the herd on a sustained yield basis through adjustments of annual harvest quotas. Over 95 percent of the Nelchina caribou harvest occurs in Unit 13.

Between 2001 and 2018 total Unit 13 caribou harvest averaged 2,744 caribou per year with harvest under Federal regulations accounting for 17 percent of total harvest on average. In 2016, 2018, and 2019 caribou were largely unavailable on Federal public lands during open seasons. In 2019 101 caribou have been reported harvested as of May 2020. While this Federal harvest is lower than in recent years it is likely because caribou migrated through Federal lands during October when the season is closed.

If WSA20-01 is approved, the Unit 13 caribou season would be open continuously from August 1st to March 31st and the harvest limit for Unit 13 remainder would change to two caribou for the 2020/21 and 2021/22 seasons. This request would increase hunting opportunity for Federally-qualified subsistence users.

Caribou have migrated through accessible Federal public lands during October in recent years when the season is closed. Approving this
request may increase harvest success by allowing hunting when caribou are available. An October season may also provide cooler hunting conditions facilitating proper meat care.

While Nelchina caribou rut in October and mature bulls are unpalatable during this time, subsistence users could harvest cows and young bulls instead. No conservation concerns exist for this request as the current management goal is herd reduction. Rather, this request could benefit the Nelchina Herd by helping to reduce its size and prevent the herd from overgrazing its habitat.

Incidental harvest of Mentasta caribou is a possible conservation concern. Monitoring of radio collared Mentasta caribou would help determine whether Mentasta caribou are present in Unit 13 during the hunting season.

The OSM conclusion is to support Temporary Special Action WSA20-01 with modification to delegate authority to the BLM Glennallen Field Office manager to open and close a may be announced October 1 to 20th season for caribou in Unit 13 and to set any needed sex restrictions in Unit 13 remainder for the 2020/21 and 2021/22 regulatory year. Delegating authority to an in-season manager provides the flexibility and safeguards needed to manage this hunt in response to changing herd and environmental conditions. Additionally, the in-season manager will consult with the superintendent of Wrangell-St. Elias National Park before taking any management actions which will help to ensure protection of the Mentasta Herd.

(Teleconference interruption - participants not muted)

MS. MAAS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd be happy to answer any questions.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Excuse me, somebody has their line open, could you please mute it.

(Pause)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Hello.
MS. MAAS: All right, thanks, Mr. Chair, that concludes my presentation and I'd be happy to answer any questions.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you for that, Lisa, I appreciate you working through that. Any questions from the Board for Lisa.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Mr. Chair, this Greg.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Greg, go ahead.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Hey, Lisa, thanks for the analysis.

Would you clarify for me on what you said about the Southcentral and Eastern Interior Regional Advisory Committee recommendations, what, that they did not agree that there should be a continuous season, they wanted to maintain that break in there, but then you said something about that was before -- so they didn't have the analysis?

MS. MAAS: Yeah, thanks for that question, Greg. So, yeah, you'll hear the full Council recommendations shortly but I think it is important to note that when this special action came before the Councils, all they really had was the request. It was early enough in the process that OSM hadn't finalized the analysis or their conclusions, so it's unclear whether or not the Councils would have supported the OSM modification to delegate authority or not.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Okay. Followup question, Mr. Chair.

(Teleconference interruption - participants not muted)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yes, you have the floor.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Thank you. Lisa, could you also help again understand, you had mentioned that there's a potential for the Mentasta Herd to mix with the Nelchina Herd, does that happen to be a window of time during that October 1st through the 21st, do we know?
MS. MAAS: Yeah, the likelihood of the Mentasta caribou being in Unit 13 is really really low especially because the time they mix with the Nelchina Herd is usually in Unit 12 when they're going up to their wintering grounds. They don't generally go into Unit 13 but there is that likelihood and I mean this special action would apply to all Federal public lands in Unit 13 but the reality is most people are hunting in Units 13A and B along the Richardson Highway and the place that the Mentasta caribou are most likely to be is that tiny little piece of Wrangell-St. Elias lands in Unit 13C, and that's not generally where people are harvesting the Nelchina caribou in October, it's that BLM lands along the Richardson Highway in Units 13A and B. So the risk to the Mentasta Caribou Herd is pretty negligible but -- and I mean there is a winter hunt in Unit 12 for the Nelchina Herd that is typically open, and the good news is that they have been able to collar Mentasta caribou, that was an issue in the past, they just didn't have the radio collars on them to really do the monitoring but now they have at least 20 collars out so they're able to monitor where the Mentasta caribou are.

MR. SIEKANIEC: And in monitoring where they are is how they decide whether or not to open a season at any given time, is that what I'm hearing you kind of allude to?

MS. MAAS: Yeah, and, again, I mean the risk in Unit 13 is pretty darn low because they don't -- you know, they usually -- the issue with Unit 12 during the winter season and the rule of thumb is 20 Nelchina caribou per 1 Mentasta caribou and if that ratio goes below that then they would close the hunt because the risk of incidental harvest is too high but in past years that hasn't been an issue. But, again, that's usually Unit 12 winter hunt that's the most concern for incidental harvest of Mentasta caribou.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yep. Any other further discussion or questions for Lisa on the analysis.

(Teleconference interruption - participants not muted)
CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: All right, hearing none, we'll move on to the ISC recommendation.

MS. MAAS: All right, thank you, Mr. Chair. And, again, since the Regional Advisory Council voted on this request, it's just an InterAgency Staff comment.

And the comment were just the standard comments that the ISC found the Staff analysis to be a thorough and accurate evaluation of the proposal and that it provides sufficient basis for the Regional Advisory Council recommendation and Federal Subsistence Board action on the proposal.

So thank you, Mr. Chair, and now we can go to the Southcentral and Eastern Interior Council recommendations.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you. And it sounds like that potentially is Rhonda's phone, could somebody reach out to Rhonda, please.

(Pause)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: We will call on the Regional Advisory Council Chair.

MS. STICKWAN: Are you referring to Southcentral or Eastern Interior?

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: You have the floor.

MS. STICKWAN: Southcentral Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council supports WSA20-01 with modification to change -- only change the harvest limit in Unit 13 remainder to two caribou. The Council concurred with the recommendation of Wrangell-St. Elias Subsistence Resource Commission to change the harvest season -- to change the harvest limit, but not the season. The Council stated that changing the harvest limit would increase opportunity for Federally-qualified subsistence users but was concerned that the addition of an October season would allow for harvest during the rut, which would lead to wanton waste as rutting bulls are inedible during this time period.

Thank you.
CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you. Any questions from the Board.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Appreciate that. Moving on to the next Regional Advisory Council Chair.

MS. WESSELS: Thank you, Mr. Chair, Members of the Board. For the record this is Katya Wessels, the Eastern Interior Council Coordinator.

And the Eastern Interior Council voted to support WSA20-01 with modification to only change the harvest limits in Unit 13 remainder for two bulls to two caribou. The Council agreed with the recommendation from the Wrangell-St. Elias Subsistence Resource Commission to support the change in harvest limit, but not the change in season. The Council stated that changing the harvest limit would provide increased harvest opportunity for Federally-qualified subsistence users and could benefit the Nelchina Herd by helping to reduce its population.

The Council did not support the October season as it would occur during the rut when bulls are inedible. The Council was concerned about potential wanton waste issues from users harvesting rutting bulls.

Thank you.

That concludes my presentation of the Eastern Interior vote.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you, Katya. Any questions for Katya from the Board.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: All right, hearing none we'll move on. Was there one more Regional Advisory Council for this one?

MS. MAAS: Mr. Chair. That was all the Regional Advisory Councils.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you for
that Lisa. We'll now move on to Orville, did you have anything?

MR. LIND: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
Orville Lind, Native Liaison for OSM.

During the consultation session we had no one have any questions or comments.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: All right, thank you for that Orville. State, any comments.

MR. MULLIGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
For the record, Ben Mulligan, Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

There's two parts to this proposal.

On the portion that has to do with hunting during the rut, the Department opposes that aspect of the proposal as has been said before, you know, during the rut often times it could potentially interrupt breeding and the meat at that time tends to be inedible.

For the portion of the proposal that seeks to change the bag limit to two caribou, outside the Federal manager, we don't see a justification to change the manager's discretion but we're not opposed to this portion.

I will urge, as we just discussed in another proposal, and, you know, seemed appreciated, that the Federal in-season managers and our State managers continue to consult with each other on management actions for this herd as well.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you, Ben. Any questions for the State.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Hearing none, is there any public, Operator, any public on line that would like to speak to this.
OPERATOR: Thank you. If you would like to speak please, press star then 1 at this time.
William Amberg, your line is open.

MR. AMBERG: Thank you. I would like to speak to 01. I understand that there is great concern of wanton waste and I would like to bring it to your attention that there are many laws that prevent that. I also would like to bring it to your attention that we just heard that the moose season in 18 has been extended into October 7th and I would be very curious on how that does not include the rut.

My second concern I'd like to bring to you is that subsistence hunters are not interested in the antlers, they're interested in the cows and young bulls. It is sad to say that many of the residents in this area were unable to harvest caribou for a few years only because the caribou crossed early.

So I just wanted to -- I would like to know the answer on the Unit 18 rut issue, why that is not as important as it is here in Unit 13.

And, again, this is about the subsistence users and they don't care about the antlers.

REPORTER: Hi, excuse me, Tony, this is Tina, the court reporter. Could I get the last gentleman's name please.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yeah, I was going to ask him to state his name for the record please. Thank you, Tina, for that.

REPORTER: Thank you.
MR. AMBERG: William Amberg.
REPORTER: Thank you.
CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: William Amberg, yeah, thank you. Thank you for calling in. Any questions for William.

(No comments)
CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: All right.

Well, I'm glad you took the time to call in and provide your testimony.

MR. AMBERG: All right, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Any other comments.

OPERATOR: The next comment comes from Karen Linnell, your line is open.

MS. LINNELL: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is Karen Linnell with the Ahtna InterTribal Resource Commission.

We actually agree with the ISC's analysis in what they've put forward. I think there's some opportunity here for -- to change that cow only hunt in Unit 13C to two caribou and then on the permits, as they're issued out, they're usually issued out by the BLM and they tell us whether it's bull only or cow only, or if it's any caribou. So -- I'm sorry, it's bull only right now in 13C. But we agree with that portion of that making it the same as the rest of the unit and that can be distinguished by the in-season manager. And I like the fact that they've added language in there that if warranted the in-season manager can open the season.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you, Karen. Any questions from the Board.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Okay. Thank you for taking the time to call in Karen.

Any other public on the line.

OPERATOR: At this time, Sir, I'm showing no further public comment.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you, Operator. Appreciate you guys taking the time to call in.
All right, we'll move to Board deliberation and discussion.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: We'll open up the floor for Board action.

MR. PADGETT: Mr. Chair, Chad Padgett with BLM.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: You have the floor, Chad.

MR. PADGETT: Thank you, Sir. Mr. Chair, I move to approve Temporary Wildlife Special Action WSA20-01 and if I receive a second I'll explain my reasoning for voting to approve this special action with modification to approve the change in harvest limit in Unit 13 remainder from two bulls to two caribou, but not the request for a continuous season.

MR. PELTOLA: BIA seconds.

MR. PADGETT: Thank you, Gene. As described in the OSM analysis, approval of his request increases harvest opportunity for Federally-qualified subsistence users and could benefit the Nelchina Caribou Herd by helping to reduce it within management objectives. However, expanding the existing season to include dates between October 1st and 21st would allow for hunting during the rut. This could result in the harvest of bull caribou during a time when their meat may not be edible and could lead to waste of the caribou resource as well as disruption of the breeding season.

This modification of the request is consistent with recommendations from the Southcentral Alaska and the Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils, the Wrangell-St. Elias Subsistence Resource Commission, ADF&G and with comments received during the public hearing held to discuss this request.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you, Chad. Any questions, discussion.
CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: All right, we'll call for the question.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Question.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Question's been called. Roll call, Sue, please.

MS. DETWILER: Sure. The motion is to approve WSA20-01 with modification to approve the change in caribou harvest limits in Unit 13 remainder from two bulls to two caribou, but not the request for a continuous season.

And we will start the roll call with Chad Padgett, BLM.

MR. PADGETT: I support for the reasons as stated.

MS. DETWILER: Thank you, Chad.

Fish and Wildlife Service, Greg Siekaniec.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Thank you, Sue. I support the motion as modified by the Bureau of Land Management to approve WSA20-01 and as modified by OSM for the reasons outlined in the justifications.

The modified regulation provides the manager the flexibility to respond to the changing conditions in consultation with tribes, Federal agencies and the State. I also support this action in deference to the Southcentral and Eastern Interior Regional Advisory Committee recommendations and the Subsistence Resource Commission regarding the addition of caribou harvest opportunity but not the extended season in the October window of October 1st through the 21.

Thank you.

MS. DETWILER: Thank you, Greg.

Forest Service, Dave Schmid.
MR. SCHMID: Yeah, I also support the WSA20-01 with the justification provided by the BLM that included the OSM modification to not provide a continuous season, and also in deference to the RACs. Thank you.

MS. DETWILER: Thank you.

BIA, Gene Peltola.

MR. PELTOLA: BIA votes to support Temporary Special Action WSA20-01 with modification and recognizing deference to the Regional Advisory Councils involved with regard to take and the change from two bulls to two caribou, in addition to the modification -- the additional justification provided by BLM. Thank you.

MS. DETWILER: Okay, thank you, Gene.

Park Service, Don Striker.

MR. STRIKER: NPS supports WSA20-01 as modified by Director Padgett and in deference to the RACs and the Wrangell-St. Elias SRC. We'd like to also echo the State's concern that we emphasize coordinated approach to in-season management with this herd, too, I just think that's a good practice and thanks for those comments.

MS. DETWILER: Okay, thank you.

Public Member Rhonda Pitka.

MS. PITKA: I support with the OSM modification in deference to the Regional Advisory Councils and with the justification as stated. Thank you.

MS. DETWILER: Okay, thank you.

Has Charlie Brower joined us?

(No comments)
MS. DETWILER: Okay.

Anthony Christianson, Chair.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yes, I support as stated.

MS. DETWILER: Okay. Motion passes seven to zero.

And that will bring us to Wildlife Special Action 20-03 pertaining to moose and caribou in Unit 13 and, again, that's Lisa Maas.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: We'll call on Lisa to provide the analysis, thank you.

MS. MAAS: All right, thank you, Mr. Chair. Again, for the record my name is Lisa Maas and I'll be presenting a summary of the analysis for Temporary Wildlife Special Action WSA20-03.

WSA20-03 was submitted by Kirk Wilson of Glennallen and requests that the Federal Subsistence Board close Federal public lands in Unit 13 to the hunting of moose and caribou by non-Federally-qualified users for the 2020/21 season.

The proponent states that this closures is necessary due to extreme hunting competition from high numbers of non-Federally-qualified users which precludes a rural subsistence priority and results in low harvest success by Federally-qualified subsistence users. Because of this, the proponent states: action is necessary to ensure the continuation of Federal subsistence uses of moose and caribou in Unit 13 and for reasons of public safety because there are too many non-Federally-qualified users to safely hunt and pass on customary and traditional harvest practices.

The proponent further states that this request could serve as an experiment to evaluate the potential of a Federal lands closure as a long-term solution to increasing harvest success rates and providing for the subsistence uses of Federally-qualified subsistence users.

In 2002 the Board rejected Proposal WP02-17 which requested closure of Federal lands in
Units 13A and 13B to moose and caribou hunting by non-
Federally-qualified users. The Board, Southcentral
Regional Advisory Council, InterAgency Staff Committee
and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game all opposed
this closure because it would not result in
conservation benefit due to the limited amount of
Federal public land in Unit 13 because additional
opportunity existed for Federal subsistence users to
hunt on Federal public lands after the State season
closed and because of the more liberal Federal harvest
limit and longer season.

In 2019 the Board rejected Temporary
Wildlife Special Action WSA19-03 which requested
closure of the Federal public land in Unit 13 to
caribou and moose hunting by non-Federally-qualified
users for the 2019/20 season. The Board determined the
requested closure was not warranted for conservation,
continuation of subsistence uses or safety reasons.
Federally-qualified subsistence users annual harvest
rates have remained fairly consistent in comparison to
the annual harvest rates by non-Federally-qualified
users. In addition the closure would not have
alleviated public safety concerns as non-Federally-
qualified users would still have been able to cross
Federal public lands to access State and private lands.

In September of 2019, ADF&G issued an
emergency order to extend the closing date for all
State caribou hunts in Unit 13 by 10 days to September
30th to help reduce the size of the Nelchina Herd.

Resident Hunters of Alaska submitted
written comments in opposition of WSA20-03 stating the
closure is not needed because the Nelchina is above
population objectives, additional harvest is needed and
ample opportunity exists for all hunters. A member of
the public also submitted written comments in
opposition to the request stating that public lands are
for all members of the public, not just some, and
plenty of hunting opportunity already exists. ADF&G
submitted written comments on WSA20-03 stating no
conservation concerns exists for either moose or
caribou in Unit 13 and hunting pressure has not been
shown to displace moose or caribou from traditional
migration corridors. ADF&G further commented that a
closure would not likely affect hunting success of
Federally-qualified users or address public safety
concerns.
During the public hearing for WSA20-03 13 people testified, five in opposition, and seven in support. Opposition to the request included a lack of need because no conservation concerns exist and that public lands should be open to everyone. Several supporters of the request referenced Title VIII of ANILCA calling for a rural subsistence priority. One testifier pointed out that ADF&G has extended the State's fall caribou season in recent years precluding a rural priority from a longer fall season. Other testifiers mentioned that Federal lands in Unit 13 only compromise a small portion of the unit and State hunters have plenty of other areas to hunt while other Federal lands in the area are difficult to access. Another testifier stated that law enforcement was a major reason the Board rejected WSA19-03, however, enforcement is an agency issue and not a reason for the Board to reject or approve a request under ANILCA.

The proponent of this request testified that the influx of caribou hunters during moose season takes away moose hunting opportunity from Federally-qualified subsistence users. He further stated that the area is too crowded to safely hunt as people aim guns at one another and shoot over people's heads.

Several other testifiers echoed these safety and overcrowding concerns. One stated he no longer hunts in the area because of the terrible overcrowding.

The relevant caribou biology was just presented as part of WSA20-01 so I will move on to moose.

Moose populations in Unit 13 have grown since 2001. Since 2008 the Unit 13 moose population has been within State management objectives. In 2019 the unit-wide population estimate was 19,000 moose. However, the Unit 13 moose population dropped below subunit population objectives in 2013 where it has remained. Fall bull/cow ratios have been above State management objectives since 2004, however, the lowest bull/cow ratios have been found in the most accessible portions of each subunit. Calf/cow ratios have been below State management objectives since 2001 only averaging 20 calves per 100 cows, however, despite these low ratios population estimates demonstrate a gradually increasing population trend.
Conflicts between local and non-local hunters has been a longstanding issue in Unit 13.

In 2009 to 2013 household surveys, almost every Unit 13 community noted concern over non-local hunters stating that non-local hunters who have lots of expensive equipment were out competing local hunters and driving game away. Public testimony in support of WSA19-03 included many concerns over intense hunting pressure, unsafe hunting conditions, over crowding, deflection of game and increased difficulty for Federally-qualified subsistence users to harvest both moose and caribou in Unit 13. Testimony in opposition to WSA19-03 also noted safety concerns but included solutions other than closures, such as limiting permit numbers, restricting shooting within a quarter mile of the road, increased law enforcement and public education.

During the Board's deliberation on WSA19-03 five people testified in support of the request and all testimony focused comments on the BLM lands on the Richardson Highway around Paxon describing this area as a combat hunting zone.

Most of the relevant caribou harvest was just shared during WSA20-01 presentation, however, I will also add that between 2001 and 2018 harvest success rates for the Federal caribou hunt showed substantial annual variation but only a very slight decreasing trend. Between 2001 and 2009 success rates averaged 31 percent, while between 2010 and 2018 success rates averaged 28 percent. Federally-qualified subsistence users can also hunt under State regulations. According to ADF&G success rates for Federally-qualified users hunting under State regulations from 2001 to 2016 averaged 38 percent compared with a 58 percent success rate for non-Federally-qualified users during this time period.

Moving on to moose harvest.

Similar to caribou, Unit 13 is a popular place to moose hunt due to its road accessibility. While Federal seasons open August 1st, whereas State seasons open September 1st, most moose are harvested in mid-September when bulls are more susceptible to harvest. Between 2006 and 2018 an average of 930 moose were reported harvested each year.
Over the same time period an average of 4,700 people
hunted under State regulations each year with a 17
percent success rate, while an average of 600 people
hunted under Federal regulations each year with an 11
percent success rate. Most moose harvest on Federal
lands occurs in Unit 13B.

If this request is approved, Federal
public lands in Unit 13 will be closed to moose and
caribou hunting by non-Federally-qualified users for
the 2020/21 regulatory year. While Federal public
lands compromise 12.4 percent of Unit 13, the BLM lands
in Units 13A and 13B, which only comprise 2.7 percent
of the unit are the focus of the immense hunting
competition, overcrowding, user conflict and safety
concerns. Therefore, the effects of this request will
focus on these BLM lands. According to ANILCA, Section
.815(3) Federal public lands may be closed to non-
subsistence uses only when necessary for the
conservation of healthy wildlife populations, to
continue subsistence uses of such population or for
reasons set forth in Section .816, which includes for
reasons of public safety.

Closures for conservation is not
warranted as moose and caribou populations are within
or above management objectives. The effectiveness of
the closure for the continuation of subsistence uses of
caribou is uncertain as caribou harvest is primarily
related to availability and caribou have not been
available on Federal public lands in recent years.
However, as most caribou harvest occurs under State
regulations and caribou in Unit 13 experience extremely
heavy hunting pressure, a closure may reduce
competition and limit disruption to caribou movements
which may increase hunting opportunity and harvest
success by Federally-qualified subsistence users.

Closure for continuation of subsistence
uses of moose may be warranted. Harvest success rates
are lower under Federal regulations than under State
regulations. A closure may reduce competition from
non-Federally-qualified users, increasing hunting
opportunity and harvest success of Federally-qualified
subsistence users.

Closure for reasons of public safety
may be warranted. Safety concerns resulting from
intense hunting pressure, overcrowding, disruption of
hunts, and unsafe shooting practices have been repeatedly stated by all user groups. While these concerns may be better addressed through increased law enforcement or restrictions along road sides, these options have not been implemented and are outside of the Board’s authority. These safety concerns have been an issue for decades and have resulted in displacement of Federally-qualified subsistence users who do not feel safe hunting in the area.

The OSM conclusion is to support Temporary Special Action WSA20-03 with modification to close Federal public lands to moose and caribou hunting by non-Federally-qualified users in Units 13A and 13B only for the 2020/22 regulatory cycle. Extending this request to the 2021/22 regulatory year will reduce the administrative burden associated with processing special action requests. A proposal for this closure could not take effect until July 1st, 2022, and that this has been an issue for decades, no change in the situation are expected between this year and next year.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I’d be happy to answer any questions.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you for the analysis, Lisa. Any questions for Lisa.

MR. PELTOLA: Mr. Chair, BIA.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: You have the floor.

MR. PELTOLA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, Lisa, I was looking back through the analysis for our previous special action that the Board addressed and going to this one and I couldn’t find anything in the analysis for this so I was wondering if you could answer some questions for me.

With regard to caribou harvest in GMU 23, if I look at the State reg books it says we have RC561, RC562, we have a community harvest system CC001 permit that we have a drawing, VC485, could you tell me how many permits have been issued for caribou under those various scenarios?

MS. MAAS: Gene, I don't think I --
hold on, I don't think I have that information offhand, like just by permit, so under Federal -- I mean Federal harvest is by FC1302.

MR. PELTOLA: Correct.

MS. MAAS: And so I can give you numbers for Federal harvest under FC1302 and then I can give you numbers for like total state harvest, but I don't have numbers, you know, offhand for different State hunts.

MR. PELTOLA: So what I was looking at was that so during the analysis you gave the history about -- I'm sorry, you gave the history of GMU13, sorry about that, and then part of that history was the Board addressed a similar proposal 19-03 which was rejected by the Board, so over the years the Board has been exposed to heavy competition, and heavy competition can be reflective of then, because this is a regular -- a permit hunt in different capacities, the competition could be regulated or addressed via permit issuance, if there is a perception of, or realized heavy competition, then a reduction of permits could be utilized to reduce that potential competition. Safety per the terms, the place is flooded, a lot of competition, people aren't hunting there because there's so many people, a safety aspect could be addressed by a reduction in permits. So what I'm trying to get at is there are permits issued for this hunt in GMU13 from the Federal program and the State program, so I was trying to find something with regard to how many permits are issued in the Federal program and the State program to see if there's actually been a reduction in permits, therefore, a potential reduction in the competition or safety concern. And the reason I ask that is in the State's correspondence in the previous, in the May 20th letter from the Department, under Unit 13 caribou hunt structure for regulatory 18 -- RC561 had 4,586 permits, a quota of 500; RC562 had 4,181 permits, a quota of 500, CC01 had 838 permits for a quota of 400, VC45 had 5,000 permits for a quota of 250.

And so I was, you know, quickly adding up, that's eight, nine, 14, 17 -- roughly 17,000 permits issued so I was just trying to see if the trend had been increasing, decreasing, or remaining the same with regard to those permit issuances.
Thank you much.

Mr. Chair.

MS. MAAS: Through the Chair. I can give you numbers of hunters, which is kind of a reflection on numbers of permits and, I mean, you may be aware that the RC permits, I mean they are a registration permit but there's some limitations on there like if you get that permit through the State you can only hunt caribou in Unit 13 and nowhere else in the state, whereas, if you get that draw permit you can hunt caribou in Unit 13 and anywhere else. So it's just, you know, kind of a benefit, you know, if people are able to get that draw permit, it gives them more flexibility and opportunity.

So for the Federal caribou hunt, hunter numbers has only slightly increased. Between 2001 and 2009, the number of hunters under Federal regulations was 1,322 and between 2010 and 2018 hunter numbers averaged 1,469 hunters. So that was just a slight increase under Federal regulations.

And then, again, I mean State -- yeah, I could probably get you the State hunter numbers but it's going to take me a moment.

MR. PELTOLA: Yeah, Mr. Chair, if I may, BIA again. Under that same letter dated May 20th, 2020, under GMU13, at least regard to regulatory 18, for those hunts I cited a number of permits issued, they also have number of hunted permits and that's kind of reflective of, you know, those that received a permit, did not hunt, so RC561 is 1,7(indiscernible) hunted, RC562 is 2,080 hunted, CC001 was 376 hunted, VC45 was 1,233 and so that comes up with a total just shy of 5,500 hunters.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Any other questions for the Staff.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Mr. Chair, this is Greg.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Greg, go ahead.
MR. SIEKANIEC: Thank you. Lisa, thanks for the analysis and the reminder on kind of this necessary portion of it and unnecessary restrictions on non-subsistence users. So I think, like Gene has been doing, I'm looking for, well, we said in '19, no, we didn't think it was appropriate to close this so -- and I think I heard you say that earlier we had -- the Board had passed an additional window of time, I think September 21 to the 30th, for Federally-qualified users but that has been since matched by the State, probably because of what caribou are doing and probably additional opportunity due to the herd, is that, in your opinion, another option that if we limited to Federally-qualified -- or we closed it to non-Federally-qualified users during September 21 to the 30th, would that provide that additional opportunity that people are looking for in this particular area of 13A and B?

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Lisa.

MS. MAAS: Yes, thanks for that question. Sorry, I'm just finding that spot in the analysis. So, yeah, Member Siekaniec pointed out another alternative considered was to close Federal public lands in Unit 13 to non-Federally-qualified users only from September 21st to 30th, the State caribou season usually ends on September 20th, whereas the Federal caribou season ends September 30th; however in recent years ADF&G has extended the State caribou season until September 30th precluding the Federal subsistence priority from that longer season. Closing Federal public lands during this time period would help preserve a Federal subsistence priority even if the State extends its season, however, this alternative would not address the immense competition and safety concerns occurring earlier in the season for both moose and caribou. So, yeah, I think that would probably help the issue but it wouldn't be a complete solution addressing the local subsistence users concern for that immense competition and safety. And, again, I mean that's only considering the caribou season and the moose season, which also experiences a lot of overcrowding competition ends September 20th, so that alternative would not really address the moose hunt at all, it would just partially address the caribou hunt.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Thank you, Lisa. Other than, you know, the moose season as I think I've been
told by many of our managers is that, you know, the
real key time window, though, a lot of people like to
be hunting moose is about the September 19th through
the end of the month, so I think there is some
consideration that would be significant overlap there
that could take some of the pressure off of this
particular area.

My concern, Lisa, as I'm -- you know,
I'm not hearing anything being recommended different
than what we had dealt with in '19, other than maybe we
reduce size of the units to just A and B.

So, anyway, thank you, Mr. Chair and
Lisa for your comments.

MS. MAAS: Through the Chair, if I
could respond to that.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Go ahead, Lisa.

MS. MAAS: Yeah, thank you, Mr. Chair.
So just a clarification Member Siekaniec. Both the
Federal and State moose seasons in Unit 13 end
September 20th.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Oh, they do, okay,

MR. SIEKANIEC: Mr. Chair, this is Greg
again.

Thank you.

MS. MAAS: yeah, and just in Unit -- in
2019 the OSM recommendation was to close the entire
unit, whereas this year we really honed in to the
problem area and so instead of closing all of Unit 13,
we're recommending closing, you know, only the BLM
lands in Units 13A and 13B where most of the conflicts
occur. So that's one difference between 2019 and 2020.
And during the Board's deliberation in '19 there were
some questions from Board Members about the possibility
of a targeted closure and so that helped, you know,
lead or define the OSM analysis this time around, was
that thought or desire for, you know, a possible
targeted closure when it might not be necessary to
close the entire unit.

Thank you.
CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Go ahead, Greg, you have the floor.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Yeah, Lisa, thanks for that clarification especially on moose.

And while you're doing your analysis, are you also thinking of how you would measure success in this regard? Is there any thought been put into that or is it just you recommend a closure and whatever happens, happens, we don't have any sort of metrics coming out of this?

MS. MAAS: Yeah, through the Chair, I mean that's a good question and I don't know if I can give you, you know, a really solid answer on that. But usually our metrics for things like this, since it's not a conservation concern, of course, you know, then we look at numbers, is, a lot of feedback we get from the local users and, you know, from the Regional Advisory Councils. You know, for example with the Unit 23 caribou closure, we evaluated the effectiveness of that closure in part by a lot of positive feedback we got from the users, you know, from Noatak residents and school children and Council members, that, you know, were saying how much better their hunting experience and hunting successes were because of that closure. And given the amount of public testimony we've received on, you know, local users about the overcrowding concerns, I would expect to hear a lot of feedback from the local users on whether this -- you know if this closure was implemented, whether it helped their hunting experience and just feeling safe hunting in that area or not.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Could I have one more followup, a short one?

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Go ahead, Greg.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Lisa. When you guys were looking at this and we made this decision in '19, did you look at like -- because I think we also heard some testimony that this changes kind of the caribou movements and migrations, do we know when the caribou moved through this area in 2019 or have we looked at it is there a trend that can actually be pointed to that, yes, this is influencing the movement of caribou at the timing of which people are out there expecting to be
able to harvest?

MS. MAAS: From my experience I can't
tell you. I mean for this hunt in general it seems
like caribou are -- have frequently been unavailable on
the Federal public lands during when the season's open,
that's one reason we had that previous special action,
20-01, is that, in the past, you know, three out of the
past five years the caribou have migrated through those
accessible Federal public lands in October when the
season's closed, and the exact -- and, again, I can't
say explicitly for this hunt, but just in general
experience from other caribou hunts, certainly caribou
-- short-term caribou movements are influenced by
hunters, you know, like whether they're going to go
around a lake or cross the road in a certain area is
definitely influenced by -- could be influenced by
people. I mean their long-term migration doesn't seem
to be influenced. A lot of this information came from
my experience of the Unit 23 caribou closure and
they've done studies on this with the caribou migration
through Noatak National Preserve, that they found, yes,
short-term movements are impacted by, you know, human
activity, but, you know, going from Unit 13 to Unit 12
and 20E, you know, that's not going to be too impacted.
So when you talk on the hunt level I would say
certainly, you know, caribou movements could be
influenced by other hunters.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Thank you, Lisa. So
let me make sure I understood that. So localized you
could have a little bit of a change but the caribou are
still going to get to where they want to go from a
migration standpoint?

MS. MAAS: Yes, correct. Thank you,
good summary.

MR. SIEKANIEC: All right, thank you.
Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yep.

MR. PELTOLA: Mr. Chair, BIA.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: BIA, you have
it.

MR. PELTOLA: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
So, Lisa, when I'm going through this, if I understand this correctly, the general request was that the Federal Subsistence Board close Federal public lands in GMU 13 to the hunting of moose and caribou by non-Federally-qualified users for the 20/21 season...and the OSM recommendation is to close Federal public lands to the hunting of caribou and moose, as opposed to the whole unit, if I read that correctly then can you articulate what is the difference with regard to percentile of Federal lands in comparison to the whole GMU?

MS. MAAS: Yeah, thanks Member Peltola. So the BLM lands in Unit -- or sorry, Federal public lands comprise 12.4 percent of Unit 13, although six percent of these are part of Denali National Park so they're already essentially closed to non-Federally-qualified users, so we're talking about 6.4 percent of Unit 13 that would be closed if this special action was approved as submitted. And the OSM modification is talking about closing 2.7 percent of the land so that's a difference of, you know, 3.5 percent, you know, from 6.4 to 3 -- to 2.7 percent.

So we're not closing any lands in Units 13E, 13C, or 13C.

MR. PELTOLA: Okay, thank you. And, Mr. Chair, if I may for a followup.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Go ahead, Gene.

MR. PELTOLA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, Lisa, if -- and I'm saying this just to make sure that I am thinking properly, so if the Board was to act upon this, there'd be roughly three to six percent of the lands within the Game Management Unit, which would not be available to Federally-qualified users, although those are the most accessible lands, and then with that being said, a closure to all but Federally-qualified users would not preclude a non-Federally-qualified user from camping on that land, transitioning to that land, through that land, similar to like Haul Road on the Slope, there's a five mile buffer on each side, there's nothing that precludes you from camping it, transitioning through it, going to non-Federal lands, and in this case with the proposal we're looking at, an individual would have to transition through those lands to get to lands which are open, so there still would be...
some presence, although if my understanding is correct, only the Federally-qualified user could hunt within that corridor, so potentially there would be, if we look at regulatory year '18 numbers, almost 14,000 people which would be precluded -- granted if the permit counts were similar today as they were in '18, there'd be 17,000-plus users who would not be able to hunt on those lands although they could still camp on and transition through it to adjacent lands which would not have that restriction; is that correct?

MS. MAAS: That is correct.

MR. PELTOLA: Thank you, Lisa and thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Okay, thank you. Any other questions for Lisa.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you. I believe that brings us to ISC recommendation.

MS. MAAS: Okay, just a moment, Mr. Chair, let me find my -- okay, so the InterAgency Staff Committee recommendation is to approve Temporary Special Action Request WSA20-03 as modified by OSM to close Federal public lands in Unit 13A and 13B to the hunting of moose and caribou by non-Federally-qualified users for the 2020/2022 regulatory cycle.

The InterAgency Staff Committee concurs with the OSM Staff analysis that the request is not valid for experimental purposes but is justifiable to improve safety and reduce user conflicts while continuing and potentially increasing the opportunity for subsistence uses of moose and caribou in Units 13A and 13B. The scope of this closure, as modified by OSM, is reduced from a full unit closure and, therefore, potentially easier to implement. As described in the analysis, spacial and temporal concentration of hunters along the highway on Federal lands has the potential to lead to serious safety issues and has already led some subsistence users to avoid the area thus reducing opportunity. Of the options within the regulatory authority of the Board this special action may increase safety and allow for the continuation of subsistence uses of the resource.
and provide for a meaningful subsistence priority. Modifying the request to extend the closure for the entire 2020/2022 regulatory cycle will help to reduce the administrative burden associated with repeated requests.

The Board may want to consider adding some criteria that should be measured to determine if the closure is successful. Examples might include harvest success of Federally-qualified users, congestion at parking areas, and along roads, et cetera. Issues related to unsafe shooting practices and other user conflicts may be alleviated by this closure when coupled with law enforcement efforts. However, it is unclear how effective a closure may be in the area. Such a closure would not prevent non-Federally-qualified users from accessing BLM lands in order to travel from the road to State managed lands in order to attempt to harvest moose and caribou. Additionally boundaries between State and Federal lands in Unit 13 are ill-defined, which makes navigating such a closure potentially difficult.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you, Lisa. Any questions for the ISC.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: All right, hearing none, we'll move on. RAC discussions.

MS. MAAS: Yeah, Mr. Chair, there were no Council recommendations for this special action.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you. Orville.

MS. DETWILER: Yeah, Mr. Chair, my understanding is they may not -- the Councils may not have had a chance to comment on these, I could be wrong, but I just didn't want to get past that stage of our review without making sure that they -- even though they didn't have a recommendation, that they have subsequently reviewed it and may have something to say.

MS. STICKWAN: May I say something, Mr. Chair, this is Gloria.
REPORTER: Wait, Tony, hold on a second.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yes, Gloria, go ahead.

MS. STICKWAN: We did not get to review this, so we had no recommendation. It was after our Council meeting so we didn't get a chance to look at this, so we don't have a recommendation because of that reason.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you, Gloria. Tina, did you have something.

REPORTER: Yes, Tony, this is Tina, the court reporter.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yes, Tina.

REPORTER: So the person that spoke just before you -- or before Gloria, was that Sue Detwiler?

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yes, that was Sue Detwiler.

REPORTER: Thank you. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Was there any other Regional Advisory Council Chairs who wanted to add a statement.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: All right, hearing none, Orville did you receive any comments?

MR. LIND: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Orville Lind, Native Liaison for OSM. I did not have any comments -- did not receive any.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you, Orville. Is there any public, Operator, any public on line?

OPERATOR: If you would like to make a
public comment at this time, please press star and then one. One moment.

(Pause)

OPERATOR: Karen Linnell, your line is open.

MS. LINNELL: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. This is Karen Linnell with the Ahtna InterTribal Resource Commission.

While it is not what was asked for by Mr. Kirk Wilson, we're in support of this proposal -- or with the modifications and at this time it's a small step to see if there's a change. Reducing this from the -- even including Unit D -- or GMU13D, making it even a smaller portion, six percent of the land in Unit 13 isn't much. And having the State permittees to have the other 94 percent to hunt on, you know, isn't going to impact them greatly. And to Mr. Siekaniec's question regarding the September 21 to September 30 for the caribou season, the last couple years the State has extended by emergency order the hunt and so the competition was throughout the whole season. But we will support the ISC's recommendation at this point.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you. Any questions for Karen.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you, Karen, for calling in.

OPERATOR: The next comment comes from Jim Simon, your line is open.

MR. SIMON: Thank you very much. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair. My name is Jim Simon. I'm a consultant with the Ahtna InterTribal Resource Commission but today I'm testifying just on behalf of myself. I'm a former Federally-qualified user from Unit 13. My family still has property there. I'm actually getting ready to head there right after this meeting.
I want to testify to my support to this proposal as modified by the Office of Subsistence Management to limit the closure to the two subunits and to put this into place throughout the rest of the regulatory year through 2022. My concern is dealing simply with the public safety issues because I do travel the Richardson Highway through these two subunits regularly because of my family connections and my work in the area. I have had numerous very dangerous situations with road hunting in the area and just the amount of traffic on the highway does present a significant public hazard to me, personally. And I think this would be a good step in the right direction. I recognize that some of that traffic may still continue by non-Federally-qualified residents, you know, accessing other non-Federal lands. Myself, I'm no longer Federally-qualified because of where I now live, but there is -- the vast majority of Unit 13 still remains available to me to hunt moose or caribou if I chose to.

So thank you very much, that concludes my testimony.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you. Thank you, Jim, for taking the time to call in today. Any questions for Jim.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: All right, well, you have a good day and good luck.

Operator, is there anybody else on line that would like to be recognized?

OPERATOR: At this time, Sir, I'm showing no further public comment.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you. State, we'll provide the State with an opportunity.

MR. MULLIGAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. For the record, Ben Mulligan, Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

In reviewing WSA20-03, you know, the actions that you take may not, you know, solve the issue that the proposer has brought out. In looking at
the data, historically we do see trends when there is an increase even in the number of State hunters, we see an increase in the success rate of Federally-qualified hunters also.

And then the safety issue, you know, it may clear out the non-Federally-qualified users from those lands but as was previously stated, people will still be able to transition through there, camp there, they just can't hunt there. They may still see a good level of traffic through those Federal lands also.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you. Any questions.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you for that. All right, I think that concludes our testimony for the day, we'll move on to Board discussion and deliberation.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: The floor is open for Board action.

MR. PADGETT: Mr. Chair, Chad Padgett with BLM.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: The floor is yours Chad.

MR. PADGETT: Thank you. Mr. Chair, I move to approve Temporary Wildlife Special Action WSA20-03, and if I receive a second I'll explain my reasoning for voting against my motion.

MR. PELTOLA: Second, BIA.

MS. PITKA: This is Rhonda, I.....

MR. PADGETT: Thanks, Gene.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: You have the floor Chad.
MR. PADGETT: The proponents primary rationale for submitting this request was for experimental reasons to evaluate if harvest success rates of Federally-qualified subsistence users would improve, which is outside of the scope of this Board's regulatory authority. The closure was not shown to be necessary for the continuation of subsistence uses of moose and caribou populations. Annual harvest rates of Federally-qualified subsistence users have remained fairly consistent and the low Federal harvest in 2019 was more a function of lack of availability of caribou during the harvest period, rather than the interference from non-Federally-qualified users, however, many Federally-qualified subsistence users do feel displaced by the influx of non-local hunters into the area.

The closure is also not necessary for reasons of public safety. Such a closure would only serve to shift where non-local hunters would go to harvest animals. The OSM analysis indicates that such a shift may, in fact, serve to further disrupt hunting by Federally-qualified subsistence users and such a closure would not prevent non-Federally-qualified users from accessing BLM lands in order to travel from the road to State-managed lands. It could also concentrate non-local hunters along road accessible, State-managed lands, which may increase safety concerns in those areas. This, coupled with the complex and ill-defined boundaries between State and Federal lands in Unit 13 make navigating such a closure difficult at best.

Additionally, issues related to unsafe shooting practices and other user conflicts are best addressed by law enforcement.

As indicated in the OSM analysis, this closure is also not necessary for the conservation of healthy populations of moose or caribou in Unit 13 as population estimates for both species meet State management objectives. While bull, cow and calf/cow ratios for caribou have fluctuated over time, long-term averages for both indicate that the Nelchina Caribou Herd is healthy and can sustain the current level of harvest. In addition, both caribou and moose populations are routinely monitored and the data gathered is used to inform management plans and establish sustainable harvest guidelines.

Last year this Board opposed a similar
special action request, no new data have been brought forth in the OSM analysis to indicate that anything has changed since that time.

With that, I will conclude my motion.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: All right, thank you, Chad, for your motion, appreciate that.

MR. STRIKER: Mr. Chair, Park Service.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yep, you have the floor, Park Service.

MR. STRIKER: Yeah, Chad, I just wanted to clarify that your motion was to approve it as written, not as modified?

MR. PADGETT: Sorry. It was to approve it as modified and then voting -- and then why I was voting against my motion.

MR. STRIKER: Got it.

MR. PADGETT: Sorry about that.

MR. STRIKER: It would have put me in a difficult position because I would have had to agree to not support it if it weren't modified.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Any other questions.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Discussion.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: All right, we'll call for the question.

MR. STRIKER: Question.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Roll call,
MS. DETWILER: Okay. So the motion is to approve WSA20-03 as modified so a yes vote is to support. And we'll start, again, with Mr. Padgett, BLM.

MR. PADGETT: I do not support as stated in my justification. Thank you.

MS. DETWILER: Okay.

Greg Siekaniec.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Thank you, Sue. I'm going to support this motion made by the Bureau of Land Management for WSA20-03 as modified by OSM.

I do agree that there's limited information -- new information has been brought before, however, we have reduced the units to 13A and B. And I also am somewhat concerned that we could have taken an intermediate step that would have opened the September window from the 21st to the 30th by excluding non-Federally-qualified users during that window of time. But I would expect that we would work hard to get some measurable information out of this and that it's a temporary action in nature so we will be revisiting this again.

Thank you.

MS. DETWILER: Thank you, Greg.

Dave Schmid, Forest Service.

MR. SCHMID: The Forest Service is also going to support this motion as well for much of the reasons that the Fish and Wildlife Service just stated.

We've got to try something, this is temporary here at this point in time. Having visited the area last fall and met with folks on site, I think we're talking about a postage stamp of land area and I think it's time that we try to take some action here and, again, measure and evaluate and see if we can make a bit of a difference there.

Thank you.
MS. DETWILER: Thank you.

BIA, Gene Peltola.

MR. PELTOLA: Bureau of Indian Affairs votes to support WSA20-03 with modification to close Federal public lands to moose and caribou hunting by non-Federally-qualified users as we feel it is necessary to provide for the continued subsistence use of those two species, in addition to within Federal lands which are under the purview of the Federal Subsistence Board, the reduction in density of hunters which would be majority on Federal lands could lead towards addressing the safety concerns as well.

Thank you.

MS. DETWILER: Thank you.

Park Service, Don Striker.

MR. STRIKER: Thanks Sue. The Park Service is going to support as modified. I think that we'd like the record to show that we believe that this action is both targeted to problem areas and it is merited for the continuation of subsistence uses. I think there's a little bit of new information in the success rates that we have most recently and it's troubling to us that the Federally-qualified subsistence user success rate is significantly lower than non-Federally-qualified users. That doesn't seem to be the direction we're supposed to be headed in.

I also think it's pretty clear that there's a compelling basis with respect to safety. I'm particularly troubled after having been in many Park areas across the country where right outside the Park is a dangerous wild sort of west scenario for hunters. I'm troubled by the notion that we've had serious safety concerns that have remained unaddressed for decades potentially. While it's true that other actions could be taken, that's outside of the Board's purview, it doesn't seem like anybody's been addressing those actions and so I say let's do what we can to get folks to the table and try to corral this issue.

Thank you.

MS. DETWILER: Thank you.
Next, Rhonda Pitka.

MS. PITKA: I vote to support as modified.....

MS. DETWILER: Okay, thank you.

Did Charlie.....

MS. PITKA: .....and agree with the justification by.....

MS. DETWILER: .....Brower join.....

MS. PITKA: .....(indiscernible) and public safety concern.

Thank you.

MS. DETWILER: Yes, thank you, Rhonda, sorry about that.

Charlie Brower, any chance you've joined us.

(No comments)

MS. DETWILER: Okay.

Mr. Chair, Anthony Christianson.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yes, I support as modified.

MS. DETWILER: Great. Okay, so the motion passes six yes, one no, and so Special Action Request WSA20-03 as modified by OSM is approved.

And with that I believe that brings us to our last special action today, which is Wildlife Special Action 20-02 pertaining to moose and caribou in Unit 12 and, again, that's Lisa Maas.

MS. MAAS: All right, thank you, Mr. Chair. And, again, for the record my name is Lisa Maas and I'll be presenting a summary of the analysis for Temporary Wildlife Special Action WSA20-02.

Temporary Special Action Request WSA20-
02 was submitted by the Ahtna InterTribal Resource Commission, or AITRC, and requests the development of an AITRC administered community harvest system for moose and caribou in Units 11, 12 and 13 for the eight Ahtna tribal communities for the 2020/21 regulatory year. The eight Ahtna tribal communities are Cantwell, Chistochina, Chitina, Copper Center, Gakona, Gulkana, Mentasta Lake and Tazlina.

The proponent states that the intent of this request is to increase harvest success rates of Federally-qualified subsistence users; to provide a meaningful rural preference and to ensure the transfer of customary and traditional harvest practices to the next generation. The proponent also states this request will provide necessary administrative information such as the number of participants, harvest success rates and numbers of harvested animals that will inform the development of a regulatory proposal, which would include community hunt quotas, seasons and harvest limits. However, the current request is not asking for any quotas or changes to existing seasons or harvest limits.

The proponent stipulates that all Federally-qualified subsistence users of moose and caribou residing in the eight Ahtna tribal communities will be eligible to participate in the AITRC administered community hunt.

The proponent also requests that designated hunting be allowed as part of the community hunt.

While not explicit in the request, the proponent clarified that AITRC only intends to administer hunts in the portion of Unit 12 that overlaps with the Ahtna traditional use territory, which includes the Nabesna Road and Tok cutoff to the Tok River.

During the 2018/20 regulatory cycle AITRC submitted Proposals WP18-17, 18-18 and 18-19. These proposals requested changes to moose and caribou seasons in Units 11 and 13, as well as authorization for AITRC to issue Federal permits to Ahtna tribal members only. During analysis of these proposals legal concerns arose due to the tribal only eligibility requirement. At their fall 2017 meeting, the
Southcentral Council adopted these proposals with modification to establish a community harvest system for moose and caribou in Units 11 and 13 that would be administered by AITRC and open to all Federally-qualified subsistence users living within the Ahtna traditional use territory. In an effort to consolidate the three proposals, the community harvest system for moose and caribou in Units 11 and 13 were lumped into WP18-19. During their April 2018 meeting the Board voted to defer WP18-19 pending development of a framework for a community harvest system. This framework were developed and presented to the Board at its April 2020 meeting, the Board adopted to defer Proposal 18-19 with modification. The modification was to name individual communities within the Ahtna traditional use territory authorized to harvest caribou and moose in Unit 13 and moose in Unit 11 as part of a community harvest system subject to a framework established by the Board. The special action request was submitted prior to the Board's April 2020 meeting, therefore, at the request for Units 11 and 13 were resolved by Board action on deferred Proposal 18-19, the OSM analysis only considered the request regarding moose and caribou in Unit 12.

Four written comments were received on this request. Resident Hunters of Alaska opposed the request stating that the current State community system hunt already gives preference to rural residents and ample opportunity already exists. A member of the public wrote that he opposed the request if it would allow the same rules as the current State community harvest in Unit 13. ADF&G wrote that they do not take positions on administrative procedures for Federal hunts. The Native Village of Tetlin opposed the request due to lack of information on impacts to village residents and tribal members. Tetlin requested that WSA20-02 is not approved until consultation occurs and more information is provided to them. They compared the request to the State's community hunt identifying several concerns. During a public hearing of WSA20-02 four people testified. The Native Village of Tetlin and Northway opposed the request. And the Executive Director of AITRC and a member of the public supported the request.

If WSA20-02 is approved, an AITRC administered community harvest system for moose and caribou in Unit 12 would be established for the 2020/21
regulatory year. As no changes to harvest limits or seasons are requested, no effects on moose or caribou populations are expected. While this request is for the eight Ahtna tribal communities, customary and traditional use determinations would still apply. For example, Cantwell does not have a customary and traditional use determination for either moose or caribou in Unit 12 so Cantwell residents would not be able to participate in any community hunts in Unit 12.

While details of the community harvest system will be developed between Federal managers, OSM and AITRC, the intent is for AITRC to provide a single permit to participants that would be good for all moose and caribou hunts within the Ahtna traditional use territory within the limitations of customary and traditional use determination. AITRC would register all interested and eligible participants in the community hunt and collect confidential harvest reports for submission to local Federal managers. While AITRC only intends to administer community hunts in the portions of Unit 12 that overlap with the Ahtna traditional use territory, this distinction is not necessary from a regulatory standpoint. This distinction could also substantially complicate regulations since portions of those hunt areas in Unit 12 are both within and outside of the Ahtna territory.

If WSA20-02 is approved, AITRC could decide which Unit 12 hunts it would like to administer as community hunts in cooperation with OSM and Federal managers.

AITRC requested that designated hunters be allowed under this community harvest system. However, according to 50 CFR 100.25(e) you may designate another Federally-qualified subsistence user to take moose or caribou on your behalf unless you are a member of a community operating under a community harvest system or unless unit-specific regulations preclude or modify the use of the designated hunter system. Therefore, the Board would need to specifically allow designated hunting under a community harvest system as existing regulations prohibit it.

The OSM conclusion is to support Temporary Special Action WSA20-02 with modification to name individual communities authorized to participate in the community harvest system in Unit 12 by species.
and by customary and traditional use area and remove
the broader definition of Ahtna traditional use
territory.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'd be happy to answer questions.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you,
Lisa. Appreciate the analysis. Any questions from the
Board for Lisa.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: All right,
hearing no questions we'll move on to ISC
recommendation.

MS. MAAS: All right, thank you, Mr.
Chair. And this is a pretty long recommendation so
bear with me here.

The ISC supports the Staff
recommendation with the following clarifications to be
considered by the Board.

To establish participant eligibility
within the individual communities authorized in the
community harvest system. The Board may wish to define
the geographic boundaries of these communities. If the
request is adopted as modified by OSM, eight
communities in the region will be eligible to
participate in the community harvest system and it is
therefore important to clearly define or identify the
boundaries between the eight Ahtna villages and other
communities, such as Kenny Lake, Glennallen and Slana.
For example, where does Tazlina stop and Glennallen
start, or where does Glennallen stop and Gulkana start.
Many Copper basin communities are adjacent to one
another along the road system and lack clearly
identifiable boundaries. The ISC suggests that the
Board consider use of the most recent census designated
place boundaries established by the United States
Census Bureau.

The Board may also wish to consider
authorizing issuance of a single permit to AITRC for
the community harvest system because Federal
registration and designated hunter permits may only be
issued by Federal Staff. This will limit the burden on both AITRC and Federal land managers in coordinating in-season permit issuance.

For law enforcement purposes, the Board may consider asking AITRC to issue an identification document to be carried by community harvest system participants while hunting. This would allow law enforcement to distinguish those hunting under the community harvest system from those hunting under the general Federal hunt structure.

It is important to reiterate that participants in the community harvest system are still bound to the existing customary and traditional use determinations for the species to be harvested so eligibility for a hunt within the community harvest system requires that the participant be a Federally-qualified user, or resident of a community authorized by the Board to participate in the community harvest system and that they live in a community or area with an existing customary and traditional use determination for the species to be harvested.

It should be clarified that individuals option to participate in the community harvest system may not also participate in the general Federal hunt structure during the same season for the same species. To track eligibility for the general Federal hunt and harvest success within the community harvest system, AITRC should provide Federal land managers in the affected units with a weekly in-season list of users opting to participate and cumulative harvest amounts for each species authorized in the system. This will allow Federal land managers to issue Federal registration permits to only those individuals opting not to participate in the community harvest system. It will also allow in-season management strategies to be developed using the best available harvest data.

Designated hunters are not currently allowed for community harvest systems under existing regulations and the ISC recommends authorizing these for all three units, 11, 12 and 13, to align with traditional hunting practices as requested by the proponent. These practices frequently include harvest primarily by the most skilled hunters within a community and subsequent sharing of the harvest among the community's members. Authorizing designated
hunters would allow for aggregation of harvest limits within the pool of participating community members. Additionally regardless of this authorization for participants in a community harvest system the Board may also wish to clarify that residents of the eight Ahtna villages who choose not to participate in the community harvest system may still identify a designated hunter under the general Federal hunt structure. Applicable regulations include 100.25(A), designated hunter or fisherman means a Federally-qualified hunter or fisherman, who may take all of a portion of another Federally-qualified hunter's or fisherman's harvest limit only under situations approved by the Board. 100.25(e), hunting by designated harvest permit, if you are a Federally-qualified subsistence user, you may designate another Federally-qualified subsistence user to take deer or moose and caribou and in Units 1 through 5, does, on your behalf unless you are a member of a community operating under a community harvest system or unless unit-specific regulations in Section 100.26 preclude or modify the use of a designated hunter system or allow the harvest of additional species by a designated hunter. The designated hunter must obtain a designated hunter permit and must return a completed harvest report. The designated hunter may hunt for any number of recipients but may have no more than two harvest limits in his or her possession at any one time except for goats where designated hunters may have no more than one harvest limit in possession at any one time, and unless other specified in unit-specific regulations in Section 100.26.

The ISC recognizes that the 2020/2021 season will be a trial run of the newly implemented community harvest system established by the Board's previous decision on Wildlife Proposal WP18-19. If Wildlife Special Action WSA20-02 is also adopted, the community harvest system will be expanded to include moose and caribou in Unit 12. We recommend that the Board's action on WSA20-02 include Unit 11 and Unit 13 even though the community harvest system was addressed in WP18-19 to ensure that the system is in place prior to the 2020/2021 season. This will allow implementation of the community harvest system prior to publication of the final rule and includes the regulatory language for the Board's decision on WP18-19. Furthermore, regulatory language clarifying geographic boundaries and authorizing designated
hunters to be included for all three units as described in the modified regulatory language offered below.

The ISC respectfully requests that the Board direct OSM and the ISC to jointly develop community harvest system framework guidelines to assist land managers in implementing future requests for community harvest systems. It seems prudent for land managers that are expected to implement community harvest systems to know the basic elements that make up a community harvest framework and the parameters that they must operate within. Such guidance would provide some level of continuity in approaching these systems in other areas of the state. We understand that there needs to be flexibility in relation to local conditions, but also that sidebars will allow for improved coordination and implementation.

The ISC hopes that this first season will provide additional insight on successes and challenges that can be addressed in the subsequently anticipated regulatory proposals for continuation of this system in future regulatory years, for better meeting the needs of all parties and for working towards greater implementation of the Department of Interior's Memorandum of Agreement with AITRC.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you, Lisa. Any questions for Lisa on that analysis -- ISC recommendation, sorry.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: All right, hearing none, was there any RAC feedback on this proposal.

MS. MAAS: Yeah, Mr. Chair, similar to the previous request, this special action did not come before any of the Councils because it was submitted after their meetings.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you.

MS. STICKWAN: This is Gloria.....

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Okay, Orville
was there any tribal comments received by you?

   MR. LIND: I think Gloria had a
   question for you.

   MS. STICKWAN: I just wanted to say
   that.....

   CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Who did?

   MS. STICKWAN: I just want to put on
   record that we did not discuss this at our meeting on
   March 4th and 5th, it came after the meeting so
   therefore we have no recommendations on WSA20-02.

   CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Okay, thank
   you, Gloria. Thank you, Orville, for recognizing that.

   MR. LIND: And for tribal and ANCSA
   consultations, Chair, we did not have any questions or
   concerns during the consultation.

   Thank you.

   CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you.

   Call on any public on line.

   OPERATOR: Once again if you would like
   to have public comment, please press star then one at
   this time. One moment.

   (Pause)

   OPERATOR: We do have public comment
   from Karen Linnell, your line is open.

   MS. LINNELL: Thank you. Thank you,
   Mr. Chair and Members of the Board. My name is Karen
   Linnell. I'm the Executive Director for the Ahtna
   InterTribal Resource Commission.

   The Commission is comprised of eight
   Federally-recognized tribes and two ANCSA corporations.
   We have been working toward a cooperative management
   since the signing of the MOA with the Department of
   Interior in 2016 building capacity and looking to fill
   information gaps. To that end, we wish to share our
   thoughts on the special action request before you.
First, I'd like to say that it's extraordinary and welcome that we should have agreement with the InterAgency Staff Committee, Office of Subsistence and AITRC on this important special action request. This is a result of a lot of hard work by a lot of truly committed public servants and compromise and acceptance by AITRC and others. Agency Staff have evaluated what is possible within the existing regulatory and policy frameworks and what is practical given the administrative realities of the Federal subsistence in the Ahtna traditional territory.

The compromise we have reached is what is best at this moment to take the process forward.

AITRC looks forward to continuing to work with the professionals in each of their supporting Federal agencies and appreciates their hard work.

In this spirit, AITRC also looks forward to continuing to work directly with the Federal Subsistence Board. At the last Board meeting, the National Park Service indicated that it would work to codify the Ahtna traditional territory boundaries in regulation. This is incredibly important work and sends an equally important signal of the willingness of the National Park Service and the FSB to more broadly meet the needs of subsistence users.

As the Board knows, AITRC disagrees that reliance on geographic boundaries is legally required, but to the degree it is required or simplifies administration, the use of the boundaries developed through the study of patterns and community use, tradition and culture should be preferred over arbitrary political or economic lines.

In its comments on WSA20-02, the ISC states that it hopes that this is the first season -- or hopes that this first season will provide additional insight on successes and challenges that could be addressed in the subsequently anticipated regulatory proposals for continuation of the system in future regulatory years for better meeting the needs of all parties and for working towards greater implementation of the DOI's Memorandum of Agreement with AITRC. AITRC could not be in firmer agreement with the ISC in recognition of the importance of these goals.
Teleconference interference - participants not muted

MS. LINNELL: ....in continuity of a healthy system that continuously improves and works toward greater implementation of AITRC's MOA with the Federal government, we look forward to continuing to build in this direction and are grateful to the InterAgency Staff Committee, the Office of Subsistence Management and the Federal Subsistence Board for its support on WSA20-02 in accordance with Staff recommendations, AITRC urges the FSB to adopt these actions.

I do want to stress, while they want to remove the Ahtna traditional territory for this, I recognize that it was the eight communities that were accepted in the regulatory action in the April meeting, but we still look forward to having the traditional territory codified, put in regulation.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you. Any questions for Karen.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: All right, thank you for that. Any other people on line that wish to testify.

OPERATOR: At this time I'm showing no further public comment.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: And I really appreciate your call and recognition of all the hard work, Karen, so thank you for that. I know it's been a long process and every step seems like it might be one step closer to getting to the end goal so just keep -- be diligent. Okay, call on Board deliberation I believe at this time.

MS. DETWILER: Mr. Chair. Do we want to -- I'm not sure that the State has had a chance to speak.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Oh, State, sorry, yeah, the State -- I recognize the State at this
MR. MULLIGAN: For the record, Ben Mulligan, Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

As Lisa stated, the State does not take a position on how the Feds administrate their hunt.

I will make one note, just because our area and regional folks brought it up, is the Chisana Herd and its status, we haven't had a State hunt on the books since 1992 on it. I'm not making any illusions to how they're going to manage it, but it's just a real concern of ours and I just wanted to make comment of it because of how our Staff relayed that to us.

So, thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yeah, thank you, State, and thank you for reminding me of the agenda there. All right, any questions for the State.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: All right, hearing none, we'll go ahead and open up the floor for Board discussion and deliberation.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Mr. Chair, this is Greg.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yes, Greg, go ahead.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So, you know, in looking at all of this there's -- obviously there's a lot of moving parts so one of my questions is simply is there confidence -- and maybe this is directed to the Park Service, Regional Director Striker, do you have confidence that this framework is going to be able to be put in place. I believe we have, what, a month and a week or so before this would need to be in place before the season would be open. That's certainly one. And does this represent the framework that you believe the Board was kind of referencing when we left this -- when we approved this the last time, which I believe we do need to have movement on, and I guess this is good work, so I don't know, Don, do you have any thoughts on that?
MR. STRIKER: Yes, thanks for the question. Being generally optimistic and knowing how important this is, I'm confident that this is a good starting point. I'll be proposing a few modifications that I think make sense for technical reasons that we can talk about after I outline them, if that makes sense to you.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Okay. Yeah.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Any other Board discussion.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: All right, we'll open up the floor for Board action.

MR. STRIKER: Mr. Chair, Don Striker, Park Service.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: You have the floor Don.

MR. STRIKER: Thank you. I'm moving to adopt Temporary Wildlife Special Action WSA20-02 with the following modifications.

1. To name individual communities authorized to participate in the community harvest system on Federal public lands in Units 11, 12 and 13. Specifically the eight Ahtna traditional communities of Cantwell, Chistochina, Chitina, Copper Center, Gakona, Gulkana, Mentasta Lake and Tazlina.

2. To define the geographic boundaries of eligible communities as the most recent census designated places established by the United States Census Bureau including the Silver Springs CDP as part of Copper Center.

3. To extend this action through the end of the wildlife regulatory cycle June 30th, 2022.

4. To specify that harvest reporting will take the form of reports collected from hunters by AITRC and submitted directly to the land managers and to the Office of Subsistence Management, rather than through the Federal registration permits joint
State/Federal registration permits or State harvest tickets.

5. To set the harvest quota for the species and units authorized in the community harvest system as the sum of the individual harvest limits for those opting to participate in this system.

The regulatory language for this modification is reflected, hopefully, on the screen, or will be.

In any event, if I get a second, I will ask for your permission, Mr. Chair, to have Joshua Ream provide the very complex reasons that I will be supporting this motion.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Okay, Don's requesting a second.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Second.

MR. PELTOLA: BIA seconds.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: All right, you have the floor Don -- Joshua.

MR. STRIKER: Okay, Josh, you got the floor.

MS. MAAS: Yeah, Mr. Chair, I think the Operator is opening Josh's line right now.

MR. STRIKER: Well, I was going to say, he just pulled a trick out of my book and his battery went dead.

(Laughter)

MS. MAAS: All right, his line's open now.

MR. REAM: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Can everyone hear me okay?

MR. STRIKER: Yes.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Go ahead, Josh.
MR. REAM: For the record this is Joshua Ream. I'm the Subsistence Program Manager for the National Park Service.

And so the justification for this motion is as follows:

Community harvest systems provide a means for communities to administer their own hunt, engage closely with rural stakeholders and integrate local and traditional practices into the harvest structure. We are excited to support a community harvest system to be implemented by the Ahtna InterTribal Resource Commission, AITRC, through the Board's decision on Wildlife Proposal WP18-19, and, now, to expand and further define that system through this temporary special action request.

The upcoming first season for this harvest system will serve as a trial run and we fully anticipate that there will be successes and challenges. We encourage the Federal agencies and AITRC personnel to be as flexible and understanding as possible within the parameters of existing law in this initial implementation of the community harvest system in Units 11, 12 and 13.

We are including all three units in the motion, consistent with the special action request, because the Federal Register Notice formalizing the Board's decision on WP18-19 has not yet been published. This will allow the community hunt to move forward this season, even if that notice is not published before the hunting season starts.

Many components of the community harvest system's framework are being developed by Federal Staff in coordination with AITRC. Still, we believe the Board should weigh in on some of these components now, especially as it applies to the eligibility of hunt participants and the spacial extent of this action.

Concerning eligibility, it is important to note that hunt participants must be Federally-qualified subsistence users and have an existing customary and traditional use determination for the species and area in which they intend to hunt. This is no different from the eligibility for participation in
the regular Federal subsistence hunt structure. However, individuals opting to participate in this community harvest system must also be residents of communities authorized by the Board to participate. This necessitates that the geographic boundaries of those communities be defined. Census designated places are defined by the U.S. Census Bureau and provide a system of established geographic boundaries, these boundaries are used in determining eligibility for the Ninilchik community harvest system for salmon on the Kenai River. They are also the boundary system used by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Subsistence in conducting research in communities on the harvest and use of wild resources. In some cases, one or more CDP's may be used to define a community's geographic boundaries. While there may be other options available for future consideration by the Board, we believe that the CDP boundaries are an appropriate starting point for the initial implementation of this community harvest system.

The National Park Service invites AITRC to review the use of these boundaries throughout the hunting season and to subsequently offer recommendations to the Board regarding changes that may better align with stakeholder needs.

Extending the spacial extent of our former action on WP18-19 to include Federal public lands in Unit 12 is reasonable given existing customary and traditional use determination and overlap with the Ahtna traditional territory. We, however, recognize, that portions of Unit 12 are outside the boundaries of Ahtna's traditional use territory. Representatives of both Native Village of Tetlin and Northway Village Council expressed concern about this at the public hearing on this special action. The Native Village of Tetlin, additionally, supplied a letter in opposition to the request. We are encouraged that AITRC has indicated that they have no intention of implementing this hunt within the traditional territories of others and we encourage AITRC to work closely with these communities moving forward.

The National Park Service also recommends that Federal Staff explore this topic further for future consideration by the Board.

The harvest quota for the species in
units authorize for the community harvest system shall be the sum of the individual harvest limits of those opting to participate in the system. This is a dynamic quota that will change as individuals opt into the system throughout the season. Importantly, individuals may not participate in both the community harvest system and the regular Federal hunt structure for a given species and hunts. And, such, the harvest for one's self may not be additive between both systems. This first system of the community harvest system will give us an idea of the level of expected participation which will be valuable to evaluate the subsequent proposals for modified harvest quotas are received.

The National Park Service recognizes that the request by AITRC included provisions for allowing the use of designated hunters. This will need to occur through a change in regulation including the normal public process to address the language in 50 CFR 100.25(e). By its very nature though, a community harvest system allows for participants to pool harvests, to share, and to utilize the most skilled hunters in a community.

As with Wildlife Proposal WP18-19, we also feel that it is important to reiterate that all Federally-qualified subsistence users residing within the authorized communities are eligible to participate in this community harvest system. Title VIII of ANILCA clearly provides a rural priority, not a priority for a subset of this group. That being said, we do hope that these actions allow AITRC to engage in more traditional hunting practices with its own stakeholders, and that it provides additional opportunity to manage hunting opportunities within its traditional territory.

With that long-winded justification on the record, I'll conclude by saying, that the Park Service is both excited and encouraged by these discussions and we look forward to hearing about the successes and challenges experienced during the upcoming harvest season.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

(Pause)

MR. STRIKER: To rouse you from slumber.
MR. STRIKER: Now you see why I had
Josh do the complicated part, uh.

MR. PELTOLA: Mr. Chair, BIA.

MR. STRIKER: I think maybe we lost
him.

MR. PELTOLA: We may have lost him.

MR. DOOLITTLE: Hey, do we have
everybody on line, this is Tom, excuse my interjection.
Just there was a big, you know, drop off.....

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: I'm back on.

MR. STRIKER: Tony, where did we lose
you, we can have Josh restart it.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yeah, I lost
you somewhere in there, just as soon as Josh started I
got dropped so no big deal.

MR. STRIKER: Okay.

MR. SCHMID: Process, Mr. Chair.

MR. SIEKANIEC: That would be cruel and
unusual.

MR. PELTOLA: Mr. Chair, BIA. I have a
couple clarifying questions for Josh on behalf of Don.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Go ahead.
MR. PELTOLA: Did I put that appropriately Don.

MR. STRIKER: Yes, you did, thank you, for the recognition.

(Laughter)

MR. STRIKER: Josh will be happy to answer your questions.

(Laughter)

MR. PELTOLA: Okay, thank you, Mr. Chair and Don.

So earlier on we heard AITRC testify that they're in lock and step in concurrence with the ISC and the Park Service, so with regard to your modifications, one, have you run those by AITRC?

2. And granted my exposure to the census designated place, or CDPs is limited, and the question being that with regard to those, I understand that Silver Springs is a totally separate -- is separate in regard to census area? And then if you're going to include Silver Springs, why did we not, via your recommendation, consider say a place like Copperville, or Tazlina and such, and could you elaborate on that for my benefit and potentially others.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. REAM: Mr. Chair, this is Josh.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yes, Josh, you have the floor.

MR. REAM: Through the Chair, thank you for those questions, Gene. Some components of this motion and justification have been shared with AITRC and discussed with them, and several others have not and I can tell you that the reason for that is that up until very close to this meeting we have been engaged in discussions with the Solicitor's Office about what can happen and what can't happen for this season, and so largely our motion reflects the results of those discussions, particularly as it relates to the
designated hunter question.

In terms of Silver Springs, we had
Staff and others that were involved in these
discussions that had indicated that Silver Springs is a
subdivision of Copper Center. That they recently had a
school close, I guess, in Copper Center, that was
located in Silver Springs, and that many consider it,
for all intents and purposes to be a part of Copper
Center. Other communities weren't considered just
because they were not on our radar and that's what we
had to work with.

I hope that answers some of your
questions and I can elaborate further if needed.

Thank you.

MR. PELTOLA: Thank you, Josh. I'm
trying to absorb that at the moment.

Thank you.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Mr. Chair, Chad Padgett
with BLM.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: You got the
floor, Chad.

MR. PADGETT: Thank you. So as I
understand it then, AITRC has not had an opportunity to
really digest the fact that we do not have a clear
Solicitor's opinion in reference to designated
Federally-qualified subsistence users, right, and how
they will be viewed, participate in the harvest system;
is that correct?

MR. REAM: Through the Chair, thank you
for that question, Chad.

So the designated hunter question is a
very complicated one. 100.25(e) -- 50 CFR 100.25(e)
refers to members of a community, and the way it was
interpreted by the Solicitor's Office is that member
does indicate a residence of that community, regardless
of whether they opt in or out of the system, and
there's no language in regulation though that speaks to
opting in or out of the system. But as written,
someone that is living in a community and opting out of
the community harvest system could still serve as a
designated hunter for someone living outside of those
communities eligible, they just can't designate someone
-- they can't designate another household from outside
of the system, or even within the system unless they're
participating. So that does create a little bit of a
regulatory challenge that we're hoping to be able to
work out in a subsequent proposal. There was the
Solicitor's Office guidance that this should be done
through the regular proposal process with, you know,
the normal public participation.

And so within the community harvest
system, though, it is the very nature of a community
harvest system, you know, we don't use the regulatory
language, designated hunter, but everyone can sort of
assist in a pooling of the harvest limit, and the
sharing of wild food harvest.

MR. PADGETT: Thank you, Mr. Chair,
Chad again.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yeah, Chad, you
have the floor.

MR. PADGETT: So as a secondary
followup to that, so as I read this, if I'm a member in
-- if I'm living in a community, however, I'm not a
tribal member, am I eligible to participate in the
community harvest?

MR. REAM: Through the Chair, thank
you, Chad. Yes, so eligibility would be defined on
this geographic basis for the communities authorized by
the Board so all Federally-qualified users residing
permanently within those boundaries qualify to
participate but would need to opt in, it's not
automatic.

MR. PADGETT: Okay, which still brings
us back to that same question. So what you're asking
us to do is to go ahead with this action, but not have
clarity in how that would comply with the regulation;
am I clear on that?

MR. REAM: Through the Chair. I think
that the regulation is clear, according to, you know,
the Solicitor, in the interpretation that I relayed,
but in order to provide for a resident living in an
authorized community to be able to designate a
household from outside of the community, we will have
to tweak the regulatory language through a future
proposal.

MR. STRIKER: So we're doing as much as
we can with what we have right now, understanding that
we'll want to adjust it down the road.

MR. PADGETT: Okay. But we are going
to make distinction between rural communities, correct?

MR. REAM: Through the Chair.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yes, go ahead,
Josh.

MR. REAM: So, yes, the community
harvest system eligibility would only be for those
communities in which we authorize and those are the
ones that were included in the Board's action on WP18-19 as well.

MR. PADGETT: Okay. So just so I'm
clear on that piece of it, I would not -- if I, for
instance, live in Glennallen, I could not participate
in any of these, correct?

MR. REAM: Through the Chair. That is
correct.

MR. PADGETT: Okay.

MR. REAM: If you are not a member of
an authorized community, you cannot participate in the
community harvest system, you know, the Board can
consider proposals in the future to include or exclude
additional communities but as it stands, it would be
the same communities that were authorized in WP18-19.

MR. PADGETT: Okay. But we'd be making
a distinction on what -- what I'm getting at is,
wouldn't we be, in that case, making a distinction on
what a rural community is? So I'm confused on how we
can exclude a rural preference by community, that
confuses me?

MR. REAM: Through the Chair. The
harvest limits and the seasons will be the same and so
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at this point in the development of the community
harvest system, the opportunities are the same whether
you choose to participate in the community harvest
system or just the regular Federal hunt structure.

MR. PADGETT: Okay. But, again, if I
can't participate in one hunt, we are making a
distinction, correct?

MS. MAAS: Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Go ahead, Lisa.

MS. MAAS: Yeah, thanks. Just in
response to Chad's question, we're just responding to
the request and so this request only includes those
eight communities, but there's nothing to stop someone
in Glennallen for submitting another proposal or
request to establish a community hunt in that
community. So we're just -- I mean, every community in
the state theoretically could submit a proposal or a
request to have a community hunt, but we're just
responding to the request as submitted by the
proponent.

MR. PADGETT: Okay.

MR. STRIKER: And all qualified users
still have their opportunity, just may not have the
opportunity as part of the community hunt.

MR. PADGETT: Right. So it's an
exclusive hunt.

MS. MAAS: Well, you have to be a
member of that community, or a resident of that
community to participate in the community hunt.

MR. STRIKER: It's exclusive or it's
inclusive, it's inclusive of the eight communities.

MR. PADGETT: Okay, thank you for the
clarification.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Mr. Chair, this is
floor, Greg.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: You have the
MR. SIEKANIEC: Thank you. Now, I think I'm a little bit confused, so the question that Chad was asking about a person living in Glennallen, they would not be able to hunt under the community hunt structure, but they would be able to hunt, would they be able to hunt in the same area as designated by the census designated place?

MR. REAM: Mr. Chair, this is Josh.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Go ahead, Josh.

MR. REAM: So in the case of the regular Federal hunt structure, it doesn't necessarily matter what census designated place you live in, it's more appropriate to consider the customary and traditional use determination.....

MR. SIEKANIEC: Right.

MR. REAM: .....for that community and that will still continue to apply for any hunters participating in the community harvest system.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Okay, that helps me a bunch. And then a followup question, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Go ahead, Greg.

MR. SIEKANIEC: You heard from Northway and Tok that they're very concerned, and I think I heard in the justification that you had an assurance from AITRC that they would not extend the community hunt into their traditional areas, I think was the way you may have described it, or close, but wouldn't the census designated place effectively keep hunters from going into those areas that Tok and Northway are concerned of, or are they large enough that they do extend in there?

MR. REAM: Mr. Chair, this is Josh and I can try to respond to Greg.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Go ahead, Josh.

MR. REAM: Thank you for the question. So the census designated place is only being used to describe the geographic boundaries of the communities eligible.....
MR. SIEKANIEC: Okay.

MR. REAM: ....but it doesn't in any way affect the sort of the normal hunt structure, or the existing customary and traditional use determination. So just because an area and hunt is outside of a census designated place really doesn't necessarily relate to the CDP in that sense.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Okay. Okay, thank you. Hence, why I find this confusing in many ways. And, Don, where I kind of started was, are you comfortable with this framework represents, you know, the best we can do to move forward with this and are you confident you can get this put in place, you know, within the next five, six weeks?

MR. STRIKER: This is as much as we thought we could get accomplished this year with all of these complicated restrictions.

MR. SIEKANIEC: And do you have the resources and the personnel needed to be able to continue to push this forward?

MR. STRIKER: Yeah, and Josh has been getting a ton of support.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Okay. So you're getting the help you need from whether it be OSM, or the ISC, and folks?

MR. STRIKER: Yes and yes.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Okay, all right, thank you, Mr. Chair.

MR. PELTOLA: Mr. Chair, BIA.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Go ahead, Gene.

MR. PELTOLA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So I am still a little dumbfounded between the communities, the census designated places inclusion of Silver Springs as part of Copper Center and such, and it's not based on Josh's explanation of it, I think it's just my lack of absorbing it because I am not as familiar with the Copper River Valley as other areas of the state, so would it be appropriate at this time to
ask for a little clarification input from AITRC and
Karen Linnell who is, you know, very familiar with the
area? Thank you, Mr. Chair, for the consideration.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Karen, do you
mind answering Gene's question.

MS. LINNELL: Hello, can you hear me?

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yes, Karen, go
ahead.

MS. LINNELL: Thank you. Thank you,
Mr. Chair. Years ago the Silver Springs area and the
Copper Center were all one, anything pretty much
between the Loop Roads were included in one census
area, and the Silver Springs folks decided to file a
separation because of political differences and that's
why they have their own census designated area so that
they could get community revenue sharing money and so
they are a separate community. They're separate from
Copper Center.

And the same with Copperville and
Tazlina, if you include Silver Springs, you're
connecting Copper Center and Tazlina into one big long
community and you're cutting out just a little bit of
Copperville. So there's -- and what's going to stop it
from spreading to, well, all the kids go to Glennallen
school, from Chistochina all the way down to Chitina,
are we going to say that that's why they are the same,
my -- we lived in Kenny Lake, we went to Kenny Lake,
but so did Chitina students. I lived in Chistochina,
personally, and had to ride the bus for an hour and a
half to get to Glennallen school, does that make
Glennallen, you know, part of Chistochina, no. It's a
very different community and that's why they have their
own census area. They asked for that. They asked for
that separation.

So if we're going to start melding
these things, then we could have drawn our own
designated areas. And in light of -- and our community
did, which was our -- our Board did, which is a little
more inclusive but because of timing and trying to get
this hunt on the books for this year, I'm not in favor
of expanding to include Silver Springs as part of
Copper Center, and just to say there are Park Staff
that live there and maybe that's why they wanted to
include Silver Springs in there.

MR. STRIKER: Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Go ahead, Don, you have the floor.

MR. STRIKER: Yeah, I just wanted to say, these are some of the details that are incredibly complicated to work out. I don't have any particular ego in the motion or in the inclusion of Silver Springs, I was just trying to come up with what I thought was sort of the path of least resistance to actually getting something in place that was legally solid this year. I'm fine if people think it's important to modify this to remove Silver Springs if that's what we want to do.

I just -- as a point of order, I'm not sure what the process is to go by to sort of make this -- outside of the motion that's on the table.

And I'm more ignorant than most of you about this area, which is why I'm deferring to people who know it.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Mr. Chair, this is Greg.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Go ahead, Greg.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Thanks. Obviously I find this one, again, as I said, quite confusing, but I think that, one, we need to consider that the Board agreed to these eight communities, and now we're looking at a way to sort of define those, so I think we need to be a little bit careful of straying outside of that right now. But what I'm really -- another little thing I'm trying to figure out, is after the discussion with Josh, and maybe you could help clear this up for me, is so what is the advantage for someone to engage in the community harvest versus someone living in Glennallen given that the customary and traditional use area is still there and available? Is there an easy way to frame that for me?

MS. LINNELL: I might be able to answer that, Mr. Chair.
CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Go ahead,

MS. LINNELL: So right now somebody
from Chistochina, if they would like to hunt in the
Nabesna Road has to get a permit from the National Park
Service, one from Bureau of Land Management, or
anywhere -- the Bureau of Land Management, we have to
go to the National Park Service, there's two separate
ones for the Park, one for Unit 12 and one for Unit 11,
there's also a State permit that is kind of blended in
with the Federal permit, it's -- now the number's
skipping my mind, but there's that permit. If we're
hunting in Unit 11 we have to go to the National Park
Service, if we're hunting in Unit 13 we have to go to
the Bureau of Land Management, so we're kind of cutting
back down to getting one permit to cover all of those
areas.

And in regards to the Chisana Herd, we
had talked about that and not to confuse things, and
while -- while we're trying to get things going here,
on our permit, or our registration or whatever you
folks want to call it to fit your language, the permit
is issued to AITRC for a community harvest permit, we
will, in turn, register folks and give them a tag or
license or an identification document that says
Nelchina caribou on it, not -- so that we're not
looking at the Mentasta or the Chisana at this point.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Mr. Chair, this is
Greg.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yes, Greg, go
ahead.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Karen, thank you very
much for providing that perspective. You know leave it
to the Park Service to make it really complicated.

(Laughter)

MR. SIEKANIEC: Thank you very much for
clarifying that.

(Laughter)

MS. LINNELL: We can share the love on
those.
MR. SIEKANIEC: I'm sure you can, thank you.

(Laughter)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Okay, the floor's still open for discussion, anybody else have any questions of clarification.

MR. PADGETT: Just one more clarification, this is Chad, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Go ahead, Chad.

(Pause)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: You have the floor, Chad.

MR. PADGETT: Okay, thank you. I just one -- I want to make sure that I ask this question in the right context, so, earlier I had asked if I needed to be a tribal member to participate, can a non-Native participate in one of these community hunts if I live in the community?

MS. LINNELL: Yes.

MR. STRIKER: Yes.

MR. PADGETT: Okay. I just thought there might be a legal distinction there so thank you.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Okay. Any other questions or discussion.

MR. STRIKER: Well, there's still an open question in my mind if somebody wants to make a motion to amend the motion.

(Laughter)

MR. STRIKER: Make it either more simple or more.....

(Laughter)

MR. SIEKANIEC: I wouldn't touch that one Don.
MR. STRIKER: Yeah, I don't think anybody's jumping up and down for joy.

MR. SCHMID: You're on your own man.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: I mean I think we needed a bathroom break.

MR. PELTOLA: Or, Don, we could recommend that with concurrence of your second you could do it on your own, a removal.


CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: So the floor is open.

(Pause)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: If not, we can vote on the original motion.

(Pause)

MR. DOOLITTLE: Just a housekeeping note, Mr. Chair, this is Tom.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yes, Tom.

MR. DOOLITTLE: Yeah, just -- so Don can, you know, ask the Board, the second, to remove the motion then you guys agree to do it and then you start all over with a new motion that sounds like maybe the possibility is to remove Silver Springs from that, you know, and then you just create a new motion; is that correct?

MR. STRIKER: If that's important -- if it's important to cut Silver Springs out then they would make that motion, right, and I'd just second it and then we'd go back.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yep, that would be the process, so if somebody wants to just make the motion to amend the original motion Don made, to just drop from that motion Silver Springs, then we would vote on that and then we would go back on the main motion to vote.
MR. STRIKER: Just strike item 2 from the comma through Copper Center, so moved, so I will second, so let me restate -- yeah, I'm just mumbling.....

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Somebody needs to make a motion.

MR. STRIKER: Somebody needs to make the amendment.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Mr. Chair, this is Greg.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Greg, go ahead.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Mr. Chair, I'd like to make an amendment to the motion, that we strike from the comma on, including the Sliver Springs CDP as part of the Copper Center, because that will help us retain to what I think the original Board action was on 18-19.

MR. STRIKER: And I second.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Okay, we got a motion and we got a second, we're going to call for the question on this motion.....

MR. STRIKER: And everybody can see it on the screen now.....

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: .....for a......

MR. STRIKER: .....right, so it's clear.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Yes, I can see it on the screen now.

MR. PELTOLA: Mr. Chair, BIA, call for question on the amendment.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yep, question's been called, so is there any opposition by anybody on the amendment to the original motion.

(No opposition)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Hearing no opposition to the amendment to the original motion, to
strike the language you see there on the board, motion
carries unanimously. Now we'll go back to the original
motion, which will read as it shows with the amendment,
and call for the question on the original motion with
the amendment.

MR. PELTOLA: BIA, question.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Question's been
called. You'll do roll call, Sue, please.

MS. DETWILER: Okay. So the motion is
to approve with modification as originally specified by
Park Service when they originally introduced the motion
and as subsequently amended as shown on the screen to
delete the section involving Silver Springs CDP.

And I'll go through the roll call, so
start with Don Striker.

MR. STRIKER: National Park Service
will support our motion for the reasons so well laid
out by Josh, thank you for that Josh. And with just
the additional comment that this has already been sort
of a slow process and I'm just really excited to be
moving it forward, so thank you.

MS. DETWILER: Okay, thank you.

BLM, Chad Padgett.

MR. PADGETT: Thank you, Sue. I will
not be voting to approve Temporary Special Action
WSA20-02. I'm concerned that this request as well as
Proposal WP18-19 are not consistent with the intent of
Title VIII of ANILCA, and that it seeks to exclude some
rural communities who should be eligible to participate
in the community harvest system in the area of
interest.

Section .801 of ANILCA states that
continuation of the opportunity for subsistence uses of
rural residents of Alaska, both Native and non-Native,
and that such uses are essential to the physical,
economic and traditional existence of all rural
residents.

Some communities clearly identified as
being within the Ahtna traditional territory are
excluded from participating in the community hunts the Board has been considering, while still other rural communities with a customary and traditional use determination for caribou and moose under Federal regulation are also excluded from this community hunt.

For this reason I cannot support the request.

Thank you.

MS. DETWILER: Thank you.

Fish and Wildlife Service, Greg Siekaniec.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Thank you, Sue. Yeah, I support the motion to adopt WSA20-02, Temporary Special Action request as modified and amended by the National Park Service for the reasons outlined by both Mr. Striker and Joshua in their justification.

I think adopting the regulatory language and framework proposed by the National Park Service will help ensure Unit 11, 12 and 13 moose and caribou State community harvest systems are implemented with a similar framework, to track participation and harvest.

I also agree that there is opportunity for this potentially to be expanded through a community harvest, in addition, to include other communities within the area but I also have heard that other hunters in the area have their customary and traditional area and hunt opportunities as well, and that there is no exclusivity to this.

The modified regulation supports AITRC’s desire to administer a community harvest program for users within the Ahtna traditional territory and we've been having these discussions and dialogues for the four years that I've been here and familiar with and I'm glad, Don, that you've picked this up for the Park Service and moved this forward.

Thank you.

MS. DETWILER: Yeah, thank you.
Forest Service, Dave Schmid.

MR. SCHMID: Yeah, thank you, Sue. I’m going to support WSA20-02. While there are still some challenges and hurdles, I do believe, and appreciate the Park Service trying to move this off center and forward.

Thank you.

MS. DETWILER: Okay, thank you, Dave.

BIA, Gene Peltola.

MR. PELTOLA: The Bureau of Indian Affairs supports to adopt this regulation. And I’d like to provide comment that community harvest systems have been integral to the Federal Subsistence Program since the Federal Subsistence Program has addressed Federal harvest. And it’s also included in 50 CFR 100.6, 110, .110.25 and .26, so it is very well established within the program and utilized historically.

Thank you.

MS. DETWILER: Thank you, Gene.

Public Member Rhonda Pitka.

MS. PITKA: Hello, can you hear me now?

MS. DETWILER: Yes.

MS. PITKA: Okay. I support. Thank you.

MS. DETWILER: Okay, thank you.

Charlie Brower.

(No comments)

MS. DETWILER: Na, not present.

Finally, Chair Anthony Christianson.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: I support.
MS. DETWILER: Thank you. So that leaves us with six yes votes to support and one no vote, so the motion as amended passes -- Special Action Request as amended is adopted. So I believe that is the last action item on the agenda other than adjournment.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: All right, I'd like to thank all the Board members, thank you to the Staff in providing all of the analysis and a good thorough discussion today, I appreciate all your time.

Anybody else who wants to make any closing statements I'll open up the floor, but if not, the floor is open for adjournment.

MR. PELTOLA: So moved.

MR. SIEKANIEC: So moved.

MR. PELTOLA: Second.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Motion's been made and seconded. Any opposition.

(No opposition)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Hearing none, you guys have a good day and happy harvesting.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Thanks everyone for all the hard work.

MR. SCHMID: Thank you.

MR. STRIKER: Great hearing from you all.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Adjourned.

(Off record)

(END OF PROCEEDINGS)
CERTIFICATE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA )
STATE OF ALASKA )ss.

I, Salena A. Hile, Notary Public in and for the state of Alaska and reporter for Computer Matrix Court Reporters, LLC, do hereby certify:

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THAT the transcript is a true and correct transcript requested to be transcribed and thereafter transcribed by under my direction and reduced to print to the best of our knowledge and ability;

THAT I am not an employee, attorney, or party interested in any way in this action.

DATED at Anchorage, Alaska, this 19th day of July 2020.

Salena A. Hile
Notary Public, State of Alaska
My Commission Expires: 09/16/22

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