FEDERAL SUBSISTENCE BOARD

WORK SESSION MEETING

BP Energy Center
ANCHORAGE, ALASKA

July 17, 2017
9:00 o'clock a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Anthony Christianson, Chairman
Charles Brower, Public Member
Rhonda Pitka, Public Member
Bud Cribley, Bureau of Land Management
Greg Siekaniec, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Bert Frost, National Park Service
Lynn Polacca, Bureau of Indian Affairs
Beth Pendleton, U.S. Forest Service

Ken Lord, Solicitor's Office

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PROCEEDINGS

(Anchorage, Alaska - 7/19/2017)

(On record)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: We'll go ahead
and get this meeting started this morning. I'm going
to call this meeting to order. Welcome everybody.
Thank you for being here. With that maybe we'll just
do a round of introductions real quick before we get
started.

MR. FROST: Bert Frost, Regional
Director for the National Park Service.

MR. SHARP: Good morning. I'm Dan
Sharp. I'm sitting in temporarily for Bud Cribley, who
should be here shortly.

MR. BROWER: Uvlaalluataq, Charles
Brower, public member.

MS. PITKA: Rhonda Pitka, public member
from Beaver.

MR. PELTOLA: Quyana tailuci. Thank
you for coming. Gene Peltola, Jr., Assistant Regional
Director for the Office of Subsistence Management, and
I am not a Board member.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Anthony
Christianson, Board Chair.

MR. LORD: Ken Lord, Office of the
Regional Solicitor.

MS. PENDLETON: Good morning. Beth
Pendleton, Regional Forester, U.S. Forest Service.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Good morning. Greg
Siekaniec, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Regional
Director here in Alaska.

MR. POLACCA: Good morning. Lynn
Polacca, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Acting Regional
Director.

MR. PELTOLA: Mr. Chair, if I may. We
also have the Interagency Staff Committee representatives present at the meeting sitting at the table adjacent to our table up front here.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you. With that we'll move on to number one on the agenda here to review and adopt the agenda.

MR. BROWER: Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yes, Charlie.

MR. BROWER: Move to approve the agenda.

MS. PENDLETON: Seconded.

MS. PITKA: I have one change. I'd like to ask that we.....

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: There's been a motion made and seconded. You want to make an amendment to the agenda?

MS. PITKA: Yeah.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Okay. Rhonda.

MS. PITKA: I'd like to ask that the Fishery Special Action Request go after the executive session. So that would be number nine on the list.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Is there any opposition to that?

MR. SIEKANIEC: Mr. Chairman. I'm just trying to figure out -- because the executive session was for the remainder of the July 17 meeting, was noted as. How would we fit that in as still part of the public process?

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: If we do move that, we can just call for a break and call the meeting back to order after the executive session.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Okay.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: I don't anticipate a long -- I would hope not a long executive
session.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Okay.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Is there concurrence? Everybody fine with moving that?

IN UNISON: Yes.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Okay. Thank you, guys. So noted we will move the executive session to number nine, moving the Fisheries Special Action Request to number 10. No opposition to change the agenda as presented. All in favor of the new agenda as presented say aye.

IN UNISON: Aye.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Motion carries.

At this time we'll open up the floor for information exchange. Usually at a work session we do not take public testimony, but since she's already sitting there I think I want to hear what you have to say. I appreciate you taking the time.....

MS. STICKWAN: Oh, I was told I could come up here and speak.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yeah, yeah, that's what I'm saying. It's a standard that we usually just -- but today I don't think we have a full agenda, so we'd like to hear from the public.

Thank you.

Gloria.

MS. STICKWAN: Okay. I was asked to present this letter. It's asking for delegation of authority for Unit 11 moose and Unit 11 remainder and 13 remainder and 13 remainder for caribou. We know we don't have an MOA of the charter approved yet, but we wanted to present this before so you have a letter to work with because we know delegations of authority are coming up. This letter was emailed Friday. This is just for your consideration, to look at and to work on. Do you have any questions?

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Any questions
CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you, Gloria, for presenting that. I appreciate it. Everybody got a copy? Yeah, this is a letter from the Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission. They're looking to distribute permits.

MR. PELTOLA: Mr. Chair, if I may. OSM had just received this letter and talking with Gloria this morning and confirming with you that it would probably be prudent to have a discussion with Ken Lord, yourself and OSM about this request and then we'll proceed from there.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Okay. Thank you for that. We'll have a discussion here after a bit. Any other additional information exchange. Any other public want to share something.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: All right. We'll move on to action on the Regional Advisory Council annual report replies. Carl Johnson.

MR. JOHNSON: Good morning, Mr. Chair. Members of the Board. For the record, my name is Carl Johnson. I'm the Council Coordination Division Chief with the Office of Subsistence Management. This annual report process is set forth in Section 805 and the Secretaries have delegated the Federal Subsistence Board to respond to the Councils on their annual reports.

Essentially there are four points that 805 lays out for what Councils should consider including in their annual reports. Identification of current and anticipated subsistence uses of fish and wildlife populations within their region, evaluation of current and anticipated subsistence needs for fish and wildlife populations within the region, a recommended strategy for the management of fish and wildlife populations within the region to accommodate such subsistence uses and needs and recommendations concerning policies, standards, guidelines and regulations to implement the strategy.
Typically we encourage the Councils when they're drafting their annual reports to think of things that are outside of the regulatory process to bring to the Board's attention. If there's something that they're concerned about being accomplished through regulation, we encourage them just to submit a regulatory proposal during the appropriate regulatory cycle. So this method of communication is for essentially non-regulatory matters.

This year all 10 of the Regional Advisory Councils did submit an annual report. On some occasions there's one Council sometimes -- almost every year there's one Council that just doesn't submit an annual report. You know, a couple years ago the Northwest Arctic Council didn't submit an annual report because they spent a lot of their time submitting regulatory proposals to deal with -- and Special Action Requests to deal with some of their concerns about Western Arctic Caribou management. So they were busy with that and didn't submit an annual report. That was their way of communicating their concerns about wildlife populations.

Generally speaking most of the subjects that are brought up in the annual reports are concerns about wildlife and fisheries populations. What is being done to manage them, to monitor them, to study them, what funding is being provided to research what's going on with those populations, what are current management efforts. Those are generally the full gamut of most of the issues. Other issues that sometimes come up are concerns over management or regulatory actions taken by other agencies.

As part of the Secretarial review that was initiated in 2009 by Secretary Salazar, the Secretary directed the Board to bring to the Secretary's attention any non-Departmental rulemaking which may affect subsistence. So that is one of the things that sometimes comes up in these annual reports and it's one of the follow-up items that the Board then does after this process that we're doing here today and that is to send a letter to the Secretaries calling to their attention something that has been raised that's outside of the Board's jurisdiction that's also non-Departmental rulemaking that may affect subsistence. We do have one of those issues that two of the Councils brought up in this annual report cycle.
Additionally, sometimes the Regional Advisory Councils have issues of concern related to specifically how the Office of Subsistence Management provides staffing support, conducts outreach, conducts tribal consultation and since the Board's role includes directing the Office of Subsistence Management to do things, so sometimes there are responses from the Board promising increased staff support, promising to take new efforts in outreach and things like that.

So what I'm going to do is I'm just going to go region by region. I will provide just a quick overview of what is raised in the original annual report item and then also kind of a quick highlight of how the Board responds. As we're going through, feel free to interrupt me if there is something you want to add or delete to each region's annual report reply and then my suggestion will be that once I'm done with all 10 regions then the Board can take action on the packet as a whole and with any edits that have been reported in the record along the way. Of course any time as I'm going along if anyone has any questions, feel free to let me know.

I'll proceed first with the Southeast Council. Their first issue or concern relates to poor returns of sockeye salmon. Particularly they're appreciating any information that may be related to the effects of climate change on sockeye salmon returns.

Now as is often common a response the first thing the Board will often say is we're aware of this concern, we share your concern. This is kind of a common sort of starting pattern. So, again, we're aware of this concern, salmon normally fluctuate naturally over time, but some of the -- there are limited tools available. The FRMP can provide some tools, but it's limited in that it can't cover research in marine waters. If there are other issues that may be affecting sockeye salmon returns such as commercial fishing activities, those have to be dealt with through the Board of Fisheries and they can't be handled by the Federal Subsistence Board. That's kind of the very quick snapshot of the response.

Number two. Unguided fishermen, subsistence users versus other users. Now the Southeast Council raises concerns about what they refer to as unguided fishermen and this is related to guided
lodge activities or also some sort of long-term camps that are set up in areas that are permitted and they want to know, you know, how many fish are these guided and unguided fishermen catching and how that might affect subsistence users.

So sort of the quick overview that's provided here, the response is that Petersburg Park Ranger District is unaware of any permits that have been issued for groups camping long term. And Forest Service lands in the Kake area talks about the information that is available through the lodge guide books and how they're submitted, how that information is collected. There's a lot of good information that managers can get from that particular source of information, but there is not currently a good way to estimate the harvest by unguided sport anglers.

One possible solution would be to require a log book style sort of recordkeeping and reporting requirement for those types of fishermen, but that would require some additional action. There was some legislation opposed in 2011 that would have required that, but it failed to pass.

The next issue is kind of an update on the extraterritorial jurisdiction process. The Council just wanted to know what sort of avenues are available to continue addressing that issue. The Board's response, the Board provides an overview of the recent Board of Fish actions that were taken to implement many of the elements of the issues that were at the heart of the extraterritorial jurisdiction process.

But the Board suggests that the Council continue to monitor that issue and if they're not satisfied with whether or not those issues have been addressed by the Board of Fisheries actions, that additional -- the Council should consider possibly additional regulatory proposals that might finish addressing those issues in a way that's satisfactory to the Council, but essentially to kind of keep an ongoing dialogue with Fish and Game staff so they can keep updated on the progress of implementing those different regulatory changes.

The fourth issue relates to a specific request for the Yakutat Forelands to be deemed an outstanding national resource water to receive an
outstanding national resource water designation. That issue essentially is somewhat similar to one of the things I was talking about earlier and that is when the Board forwards an issue of concern on to another agency. Here the Board quotes a draft letter that will be sent to the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture responding to that specific issue. I do not know if that letter has been sent though at this time.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Greg.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Mr. Chairman, thank you. My question was about the letter. The letter has been drafted, but has it been provided to the Board for a review? I'm more inclined to think that we would like to reference a letter having been sent if we can get that in order to put this thing out and have it more timely.

MR. JOHNSON: Through the Chair. As far as I know, the letter has not been sent. I do not know who drafted the letter or what the status is of that letter.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Do we have somebody here who has that information?

MR. PELTOLA: Mr. Chair, if I may. Typically a Board response is drafted by the appropriate Regional Advisory Council coordinator. If it's an annual report reply, then it goes through leadership LT team review at OSM, then it's forwarded on to the Chair for consideration.

This specific letter I know that we have reviewed a few of them, but I do not recall whether actually this has gone through LT review or not.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Mr. Chair. I would recommend if we're going to be quoting segments of this letter, then we should have it go through the review process prior to us sending this out to make sure that we're both legally sufficient as well as it's saying what the Board really wants to be saying.

MR. JOHNSON: I'm making a note.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yeah, make a
note. Is there a way we can get that letter pulled up today?

MR. JOHNSON: Possibly. I can go back after we're done here and check.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yeah. I'm just wondering if we can. Okay. Thanks, Carl.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Thank you, Carl.

MR. JOHNSON: The next issue is concern about overpopulation of bears and increasing aggressive bear activity. In response, the Board cites some specific examples of five bear attacks, none of which have been fatal. All of which, based on the investigation of those attacks, indicated they were related to bears that were stressed due to low food supply.

In further detail, there's a considerable amount of detail provided about unit-specific bear populations, both brown and black bear, and that overall there have been no notable increases in brown bear activity reported since 2014.

Sixth, Central Southeast Game Unit 3 issues with deer population harvest limits. The Council is reporting a problem with Sitka black-tailed deer populations and bag limits in this particular game unit. The Board responds by noticing that the deer populations have historically fluctuated, that limited harvest opportunities have existed for deer since the 1990s.

There are a variety of different factors that have affected the deer population from winter severity to predation by bears and wolves, poor availability of habitat and increasing competition with moose in the same areas. Reports various different authorities that are available to the Petersburg and Wrangell district rangers for handling the management of the deer populations, but that they're fairly limited. And if the Council believes that there are additional changes that need to be made in those delegations of authority, they should submit a proposal.

Number seven, wolf management in Unit
2. They would like to see development of a wolf management plan for that unit and they would like to have the Council involved in it. The response is the wolf management plan is done. Here's what it provides and here's where you can find it. That it's not a decision document, it's merely a guidance for management.

Number eight, eulachon harvest on the Unuk River. Concern about closures affecting the harvest on the Unuk River. They suggest also a test fishery to monitor what's going on with it. The test fishery would have to be instituted by the Board of Fisheries not by the Board and that there has increasingly been a historic trend from California moving north along the Pacific Coast of declines in eulachon populations.

The FRMP has previously funded a four-year study of this particular population and that a proposal has been submitted for continued funding that is under consideration by the TRC. There's a graph here showing the relative abundance of eulachon from the years 2001 through 2016.

Then lastly, not really something that's kind of an issue that requires response by the Board, but just some issues that the Council wanted to bring -- just kind of keep it at the front of the Board's attention that these are issues that the Council wants the Board to be aware of or be considering in its decisions and in its deliberations.

The need for continued funding of the FRMP; continued monitoring of transboundary mining issues; there needs to be baseline water quality testing in the Taku and Stikine River systems; that there are concerns still about how subsistence users are able to use public use cabins particularly in Glacier Bay National Park; that there's an ongoing discussion on how customary and traditional use determinations are made; and the Council, consistent with the Board's previous recommendation, has submitted a proposal related to C&T in the Southeast Region for this wildlife cycle; and terminal area escapement and salmon and halibut interceptions.

So that's it for Southeast. Other than the one comment by Mr. Siekaniec any other questions or
comments about Southeast.

(No comments)

MR. JOHNSON: Okay. Hearing none,

moving on.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: One second,

Carl.

MR. JOHNSON: Yes, sir.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: You mentioned

that, I was looking through here, that it's the Board

of Fish to open and close the eulachon on the Unuk. I

thought we put in a fishery closure.

MR. JOHNSON: That was in relation to

the conduct of a test fishery.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Oh, the test

fishery. Okay. Just wanted to clarify in my mind.

Thank you.

MR. JOHNSON: Uh-huh. So for

Southcentral Council. Number one issue, nonrural

policy implementation. The Council appreciated the

opportunity to be involved in developing that and

provide feedback. They specifically suggested that the

Board should consider the use of Fish and Game

household surveys and data when doing analysis of

future nonrural determination proposals.

The Board values the input and notes

that the anthropology staff do intend to use survey

data from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game when

conducting analyses in the future. There's also a

reference here to the Kenaitze Indian Tribe case about

when the court considered the definition of rural and

how you could not use Fish and Game household surveys

to establish an area as nonrural because it's not

dominated by subsistence hunting and fishing.

Kind of just an aside of, yes, we can

use this data, but there are certain ways in which we

may not use it. It would be improper under previous

case law to use that in an analysis.
Number two. Cook Inlet fishery regulations. This came up and there was a bit of discussion at the Council's winter meeting and how kind of complicated and convoluted the Cook Inlet Federal fisheries regulations are and they recommend the convening of a workgroup to develop kind of a cleaning up of those regulations to make them a lot more user friendly and easier to understand.

So the response is that the Board has directed OSM Staff to initiate a rulemaking process to work on proposed rulemaking that would clean up those fisheries regulations, but that we can't really provide a timeline at this time just due to the kind of slow nature of getting Federal Register notices going again under the current administration. It lays out essentially what the public process would be once that rulemaking is initiated and the Council will be kept informed through that process.

Number three, delegation of authority. The Southcentral Council kind of has a historic concern over delegation of authority letters and how the managers use them. So in here they're specifically wanting there to be clear guidance with very specific instructions given to managers through a delegation of authority.

So in response it notes that they were previously given a full list of all the delegation letters that are provided for wildlife management within their region, then provides information how the scope of the delegation is very unambiguous, very clear. It gives very specific guidelines to the manager on how and when they use that delegated authority. Additionally, the response also provides information on delegation for fisheries management in the Southcentral Region.

Sterling Highway improvement. So this relates to a project to reroute the Sterling Highway through the Cooper Landing area and that's Forest Service lands. So, as is often the case, a lot of times when there is an issue that's within a specific agency's rulemaking authority or their management the Board will often ask that agency to provide a response.

So here the Board says we're aware that
the comment period for that has already closed and
we've forwarded your comments on to the Forest Service
and here's their response. The Forest Service response
is essentially that the Forest Service is a cooperating
agency in this process, that it will not make its own
recommendation for what its preferred alternative is
and provides information that the Council can get
updates on the project through the project website.

Number five, salmon biology and ocean
acidification. Again concerns about how a particular
aspect of the environment is affecting the particular
population. This is a theme you see often. The
Council is encouraging the Board to engage with
National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration and other
entities managing Bering Sea Gulf of Alaska fisheries
to fund research.

The two responses essentially are the
FRMP doesn't fund activities out in marine waters and
the State of Alaska initiated a Chinook Salmon Research
Initiative that received its last appropriation two
years ago and essentially the funding for that has been
exhausted.

Number six, Klutina and Gulkana River
chinook salmon experiencing population declines. In-
season managers should review the management plans for
chinook salmon and assess current and future returns to
take action to protect the chinook salmon.

In response, the Board kind of gives a
quick highlight of the population status of the chinook
salmon in those rivers and then recent management
actions both by the Board of Fisheries and also by the
Federal in-season managers for those fisheries. The
State and Federal managers are going to continue to
monitor the run and adjust harvest opportunities where
appropriate.

If the Council believes that more
action needs to be taken or a different type of action
needs to be taken, that the Councils should submit
regulatory proposals at both the State and Federal
level where appropriate.

Number seven, Unit 13 subsistence
community hunt. It has greatly benefitted the
community, this particular hunt, but that it's
unsustainable if left open to all Alaska residents. It
would be helpful to see data on what communities are
participating in the Unit 13 community hunt.

So one of the things that is provided
is in Table 1 in the response is characteristics of the
community subsistence hunt for Unit 13. Number of
groups, communities, households, individuals and notes
that a majority of the hunters currently participating
in the hunt are non-local residents who live outside of
Unit 13. The highlights in recent actions taken by the
Board of Game on modifying how that hunt is managed and
that the Board would like to wait and see if these
changes that have been made will be effective before
contacting the Board of Game for additional ways to
adjust that harvest opportunity.

That's it for the Southcentral annual
report reply.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Any questions.

Greg.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Thank you, Mr.
Chairman. Carl, on the Sterling Highway improvement
we've forwarded a note to the U.S. Forest Service and
they then replied that they're not the lead agency,
they're a cooperating agency. Should we go ahead and
forward that concern then to the Department of
Transportation because they are the lead agency?
Because that's sort of what the Council was, I think,
getting at, that we make the appropriate contacts.

MR. JOHNSON: Yes. Essentially what
the Council was asking for here was for the Forest
Service as a cooperating agency to include their
concerns in any future discussions as a cooperating
agency. As I'm understanding that's not going to
happen. Yes.

MS. PENDLETON: So as cooperating
agency the Forest Service is responsible to identify
the environmental impacts of each of the alternatives
and that's provided to the lead agencies. What I'm
unclear about is the timing of it. So if this letter
went -- depending on when this letter came in. But if
would concur with Greg that that letter be provided to
the lead agencies in this case Department of
Transportation with the State and Fed Highways for their consideration in this part of their official record.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Greg.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you.

Ken.

MR. LORD: I was going to suggest that along with that letter it wouldn't hurt to have a gentle reminder of the requirements of Section 810 of ANILCA.

MR. JOHNSON: I completely agree. Of course the factors at play here will be where are they at in the next stage of their process. The Draft EIS public comment period ended on December 15, 2016. So a lot of it will be dependent on where are those agencies right now and whether or not they're going to do a preliminary final or just go straight to a final EIS would determine how that comment can be put into the process. But, yes, I will make a note to do both.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you. Any other questions or discussion on this one.

(No comments)

MR. JOHNSON: All right. Moving on to Kodiak/Aleutians. Kodiak/Aleutians is a Council that's very engaged in very specific issues related to refuge management. So quite a few of the responses in their reply come from either refuges or migratory birds because Kodiak/Aleutians Council has a long time engagement in Emperor Goose management. Even though they've been told many times that's not part of Federal Subsistence Management they still keep engaged because they're engaged in subsistence issues in their region.

So, first of all, a couple of kudos from the Council to the Board. First they greatly appreciate the opportunity that was made for them to have a meeting in the community of Unalaska. The very first time that the Council in its history has met in an Aleutian Island community.
As a result of that timing they were also able to participate in the Aleutian Life Forum, so they greatly appreciated that and the response is the Board is pleased, the Council is pleased and kind of remind the Council of what are the steps for any time the Council would like to meet in a non-hub community on how that process works.

Second kudos comes from a specific wish for the Council to formally recognize its Council Coordinator Karen Deatherage. So the response is the Board is pleased that the Council is pleased with Ms. Deatherage's performance, that her diligence and efforts was really what made that meeting in Unalaska happen because she found funding through another program to supplement the funding for the travel for the Council members to go out to Unalaska. It notes that Ms. Deatherage has been recognized for her extraordinary performance.

Third, National Wildlife Refuge System Resource Information Technicians. I don't know if it would be harder to say those out as words or as acronyms together, but that's the way it goes. So one of the things that this Council is obviously very engaged with is with the RITs for their Refuges, particularly the Kodiak Refuge. They are concerned about the loss of a recent long-time RIT person who the Council has interacted with.

The response is the Board is aware that there is currently an effort underway to fill that position through a local hire. Then also we forwarded your concern to the Refuges Program and here's their response.

Fourth, final rule on non-subsistence take of wildlife on Alaska National Wildlife Refuges. The Council was extremely disappointed that the final rule passed. They were against it and they want it to be reversed.

The response is it was nullified by the President on April 13th when he signed House Joint Resolution 69. That's the response from the Board. Then they also forwarded this issue to Refuges, which kind of gives a quick overview of the extensive public outreach that the Refuges Program engaged with in the development of that final rule and a history of when
the different stages of the rule were adopted and that, yes, it's been rescinded through the Congressional Review Act.

Number five, Emperor Geese update. The Council is very pleased that Fish and Wildlife Service and others are moving forward with the planned Emperor Geese hunt the spring of 2017. They request the opportunity perhaps to have that hunt open earlier so it would be more beneficial to their region given the timing of when the Emperor Geese move through there.

The response again forwarded to the Migratory Birds program to have them respond to it on behalf of the Board. So here we are quoting the response from the Migratory Birds program, which kind of gives an overview of how the hunt will operate and then encourages the Council that if they would like to develop -- modify the season dates, that they should submit a proposal.

Number six, nonrural determination. Again this Council was also very appreciative in the Board's efforts to develop this policy that it provides for flexibility; however, they don't believe that there's any guidance on limiting the number of proposals that are submitted to change the status of a community. They want the proposal to only come from somebody in that community and the Council wants deference. They also were concerned that there's a lack of guidance given on demonstrated change.

So a lot of the response here is actually to highlight in the policy where those issues are actually provided. There are limits provided in how many proposals can be submitted. There is guidance on what constitutes a demonstrated change in the policy. Also it does specify, however -- and a lot of the Councils wanted to have deference specified to the Councils in this policy, but it reminds the Council that the final policy says it will rely heavily on the recommendations of the Council, but it explicitly says that it will not provide deference in the same way that deference is provided for takings recommendations under Section 805.

Number seven, funding for cattle and caribou removal on Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge. Basically the Council supports Congress's
decision to withhold funds, to not allow those activities that the Refuge was engaged with to move forward.

The Board responds by saying it's not involved in decisions on what led to removal of those invasive animals, but that the Federal Subsistence Board, like the Fish and Wildlife Service, has laws it has to follow and adhere to in its management recommendations and decisions. Also forwarded to the Refuges Program the response and the Refuge says that they're not currently working on any efforts to remove caribou or cattle from those particular islands.

That's it for the Kodiak/Aleutians annual report and reply. Any questions, comments.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Greg.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just a couple. One of them is that under the RIT discussion says that it will be subject to current hiring restrictions. That has been taken care of. There are no hiring restrictions anymore relative to the Refuge Information Technician Program.

The second comment I would make is under number four, the final rule on non-subsistence take. The response is absolutely accurate. The Refuges' final rule was nullified. I think you can probably end right there. The Refuges provided quite a response of simply justification of why they necessarily did what they did. I think that history is well known. So, to me, you could just eliminate that whole next section.

The Emperor Geese update though I think is very important to retain that because it's a very different process and they needed to make some understanding there.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Any opposition to the suggestion of Greg to strike that.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Okay. Thanks,
MR. JOHNSON: Thank you for that, Mr. Siekaniec. That's definitely one of the areas where we really want to give the Board options and you decide which is the best response.

Thank you.

Bristol Bay Regional Advisory Council.

Number one, Meshik River salmon. Council supports funding for the Meshik River priority information needs. It's important to develop a monitoring program to keep up on the status of the salmon populations in that area that are very important to the people in the region.

The response notes that that priority information need was listed in the last call for proposals for the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program. However, despite being listed as a priority information, no proposals were received related to that specific issue. So that priority information need can be included in their next notice of funding opportunity for projects for the next time around.

Outreach. Council expressed several different concerns about outreach and community engagement in the Regional Advisory Council process. They note that the reason why they have meetings only in Dillingham and Naknek is that within their community those are basically the two villages that can best support logistically lodging, transportation, etc., to have meetings there.

But they have concerns about outreach efforts that are made. They have some recommendations on improving outreach through email, social media, etc. They also expressed concerns about always meeting during business hours, from 8:30 to 5:30. There might be better public engagement if they had evening or weekend meetings.

So in response it's a pretty detailed recitation of the efforts that the Office of Subsistence Management does take on outreach, including email newsletters out to people who subscribe to the system, Facebook posts, display ads, radio ads, news releases. Also essentially the Chair can work with
their Council Coordinator to come up with a meeting time that's appropriate for the Council. So if the Council wants to meet later, the Chair and the Council Coordinator can work that out together.

That's it for the Bristol Bay Regional Advisory Council. Any questions or comments.

(No comments)

MR. JOHNSON: Okay. Next we'll move on to Yukon/Kuskokwim.
I've been told we need to speed it up a bit. I mean there's a lot of detail in these annual reports. I'm hoping that your Interagency Staff members have discussed them with you and gone over them quite a bit. Obviously folks have been looking at them. I will see if I can kind of highlight some issues that are kind of beyond the normal.

One of the issues that comes up in the Yukon Delta annual report that does come in in other Councils annual report and that is concern about increased shipping traffic as a result of climate change and lesser sea ice and more shipping routes becoming open. They have concerns about how that's going to affect fish populations in that area. So the Council wants the Board to forward these concerns to relevant agencies.

So this is one of those times where you as a Board have responded and said, yes, we will forward your concern to the appropriate agencies.

Anything from Yukon Delta Council.

(No comments)

MR. JOHNSON: Okay. Western Interior.
The Western Interior Council starts with a very lengthy comment, which is essentially a recitation of a written comment that the Chair Jack Reakoff made in his own individual capacity to the BLM during a rulemaking process about their Central Yukon Resource Management Plan.

So that's all that and the response basically is by bringing it to our attention you've brought it to the attention of the director of BLM and
he will make sure your concerns are addressed and that
BLM will be conducting a Section 810 analysis. So they
get a gold star from Ken for recognizing their 810
analysis responsibilities.

Some specific suggestions to Fish and
Game about how they improve their population counts
using digital photography and the response I'm sure the
Council will be happy to hear that they are
transitioning in that direction.

Want a better understanding of the
effect of climate change on subsistence fisheries.
This is one that's worthy of noting. The Council
requests that the Board ask the Secretary to initiate
rulemaking to add additional rural member seats to the
Board. So that will be a specific request to the
Secretaries that the Board, if it's going to be
following up with that, will be asking the Secretaries
to initiate rulemaking.

Also recognition. They recently had a
longtime member of their Council retire, Mr. Robert
Walker. He retired after 15 years of service. He did
receive a certificate of service for his 15 years
recently, but also the Board has sent out a special
recognition of his service in a letter to him.

Anything to raise with the Western
Interior Council.

(No comments)

MR. JOHNSON: Okay. Another concern
about climate change impacts on fisheries populations.
This is the Seward Peninsula Council. They want to see
that MOA process between the Board and the State
continue to move forward, so they'll be looking forward
to updates on that. They'd like to see more Alaska
Department of Fish and Game staff at their meetings.
They really appreciate those interactions.

The response is essentially if you do
have a particular staffing need that you want to talk
to them about, let them know because they look at
what's on the agenda and if they don't see anything on
the agenda that relates to fisheries, they're not going
to send anybody.
Any comments on the Seward Peninsula Council's annual report reply.

(No comments)

MR. JOHNSON: Okay. Northwest Arctic Council. They note their appreciation for the closure in Unit 23 to the hunting of caribou by non-Federally qualified users. Several comments about improvements and the hunting opportunities available to people in that area.

Your response basically talks about recent actions that were taken and also the development of the new interagency user conflict group based on the discussion at your meeting in January with the State about how to deal with some of these user conflict issues and balance the management to allow for more opportunity.

Basically a lot of issues related to how do we manage resources and responsiveness of managers and the rapidly changing Arctic. So this is one of the themes that's showing up a lot in this year's annual report replies and that is impact of climate change. Whether it's warming waters to ocean acidification to opening of shipping traffic on subsistence resources.

The last item is related to the first and that is the need to maintain the closure of Federal public lands in Unit 23 to non-Federally qualified hunters of caribou. This will need to be updated to reflect recent action by the Board. This is referring to the WSA17-03 that's been submitted, but this is before action was taken on that. So we'll need to update all the recent actions on caribou and probably even also mention the actions for Units 26A and B just as an additional aside on what other caribou management decisions the Board has made recently.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Greg.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Mr. Chairman, thank you. Carl, that means that this letter itself would be updated before it actually comes to the Board for signature.

MR. JOHNSON: Yes.
MR. SIEKANIEC: Okay. That was my question.

MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, we would update this response to reflect recent news.

Eastern Interior Council. I'm not going to cover really the first issue very much because you have a presentation later coming from Katya Wessels about this hunter ethics education program. This has been a long-time concern of the Council and she will be able to brief you on that in more detail later.

The second one. This came up during discussion at the meeting the Council had in Fort Yukon, which is use of traditional Gwich'in names in geographic features, whether it's mountains, rivers, whatever, once they have been recognized. We respond that now these have been formally recognized by USGS the OSM will be using those names in analyses in the future when appropriate.

Here this Council is one of four Councils that will regularly bring up predator management as an issue. Here they say that it's a long time subsistence practice and the Board should redefine subsistence to include predator management. The short answer is in many ways the Board has acknowledged customary and traditional practices when regulation proposals are submitted such as particular ways of hunting bear, but when it comes to the definition of subsistence, that's in ANILCA and only Congress can change the definition of subsistence.

More limited subsistence opportunities encourage youth engagement and resource management. They want better notice to subsistence users on changes in the CFR and we tell them about how our proposal process works, but also when we get word of other agency proposals that are submitted, those are often put on the agenda for the Councils.

Opposition of both the Park Service and the Refuges final rule on hunting of predators in Refuge and Park Service lands. So consistent with Mr. Siekaniec's earlier suggestion I will modify the Refuge's response accordingly.

However, the National Park Service
response I would suggest we keep because there seems to be -- because the Park Service came out with two different rules and it seems like the Council is conflating them. So the Park Service response explains in detail how those two rules are different and wanting to clarify which rule the Council had a problem with. So I would suggest that one stays in as is.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Bert.

MR. FROST: So they're talking about both rules?

MR. JOHNSON: Well, the Council talks about one rule. They use the title of one rule, but when they talk about it, it seems like they're talking about the other one. When they provided their annual report again at their winter meeting and asked are you sure this is the one you're talking about, they said yes. Even though the way they talk about it it doesn't seem like they're talking about the collections rule that Park Service passed.

MR. FROST: So we may need some clarification on the Park Service response because there's some late breaking news that just happened last week on the wildlife rule, not the subsistence rule. So we'll need to get that updated before we finalize this letter.

MR. JOHNSON: It would be great if the Park Service could provide us some suggested language for that.

MR. FROST: Clarence and Mary will get that for you.

MR. JOHNSON: Great. Thank you.

MR. FROST: No, you just have to make it up.

(Laughter)

MR. JOHNSON: Okay. Moving on to the next one. This is one of my favorites. The Council wants the Board to get involved in how other agencies regulate listeria monocytogenes, which is regulated by the FDA and ADEC when it comes to commercial food
products. The response is simply the Board is not involved in commercial activities. Customary trade is not a commercial activity and we're not going to get involved essentially.

Any questions, comments on the Eastern Interior's annual report reply.

(No comments)

MR. JOHNSON: Obviously I will cull the enclosures to make it consistent with the responses that have been edited regarding the final rule from Refuges.

Last but not least we have the North Slope Subsistence Regional Advisory Council. Food security, caribou, primary concern. This is the other Council that had the concern about increased shipping traffic, but in this case it's the Chukchi Sea, but still we'll figure out who is the correct agency to forward that response to.

The last remaining issue for this Council is they see a connection between increased Council meetings in non-hub areas, i.e. out of Barrow or Utqiagvik, and into more of the rural communities they see a connection between that and increased applications for the Regional Advisory Council. This Council, probably more among others, has historically had a hard time getting sufficient number of applicants to serve on their Council such that every year they do not have a fully-seated Council. This year we had three applicants for four vacancies.

Granted, one of those vacancies wouldn't have been there if somebody hadn't been elected mayor of the borough, so he had to resign. But still in any normal Council we would like to see at least a 2-1 ratio of applicants for vacancies. So they see a correlation with that.

The response is again the policy on when and how Councils can meet in non-hub communities. I'll just quickly reiterate that for everybody. It will be considered on approximately every two to three years so long as the cost is not too exorbitant and the budget is available for it, but also the Council needs to provide some sort of rationale or explanation as to
why they need to meet in that particular community. In a lot of cases it can be related to particular management issues. Wildlife or fisheries management issues is how the Councils typically will do it. But that's the policy that's set forth and that's what we need to remind them occasionally.

That's it for the North Slope Council. Any comments, questions or additions.

(No comments)

MR. JOHNSON: All right. Thank you, Mr. Chair and members of the Board. I will take whatever action the Board recommends.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you for your report and being diligent in speeding up. I guess we're on a time limit here. We have all day today. Thank you, Carl. A nice thorough report.

MS. PENDLETON: I think we need to take up a motion to approve the reports with the modifications that were identified by various Board members and then move forward with those.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yes. We have a motion by Beth.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Second.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Seconded. Any discussion on the motion to accept the reports with the intended modifications by each of the prospective Board members.

MR. SIEKANIEC: So will they be cleaned up then and sent back again for another review, is that how it would work, Gene? Or is it just now that these -- if the amendments are made, they're just ready to go?

MR. PELTOLA: Yeah. Once we get the transcripts back, we'll go through what the specific direction made by each individual Board member with regard to that particular response, we'll incorporate those and then we'll forward them on to Tony for his consideration and signature.
MR. SIEKANIEC: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you. Any further discussion.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Call for the question.

MR. BROWER: Question.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: All in favor say aye.

IN UNISON: Aye.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: All opposed same sign.

(No opposing votes)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Motion carries unanimously to accept the reports with the amendments. We'll move on to a brief history of the Federal Subsistence -- okay, Gene.

MR. PELTOLA: Mr. Chair, if I may. One thing that -- the reason why we're giving a brief summary of the Federal Subsistence Program funding environment is that with regard to the administration's budget request there's been several inquiries. I had discussions with other concerned individuals how the Federal Subsistence Program budget would be affected.

The reason that is in consideration now is that if Interior follows through with the potential 12-13 percent reduction, if it carries over to the Federal Subsistence Program, how would we address it. Based on historical funding, which makes it to OSM, we're looking at about a $1.3 million reduction if we get the 13 percent reduction to Interior coming down to us.

In discussions with Wayne, every bureau gets some level of funding with regard to subsistence. This presentation with regard to what OSM receives through the Fish and Wildlife Service, not necessarily the Park Service, BLM, Forest Service or BIA, but we
wanted the Board to be exposed to how we have spent our money, how it may affect each and every program we're responsible for if we realize that 13 percent reduction.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thanks, Gene.

With that we'll turn it over to Tom for the presentation. I think a couple of us in the front here have to move. We're waiting, I guess.

MR. DOOLITTLE: Okay. One thing that gets everybody going in the morning and one of the most exciting topics I think that we deal as managers is looking at the histories of our budget. Hopefully this won't put you to sleep, but really see the budget history. Gene and I think it's really important for the Board to understand part and parcel of our process and what's happened in the last decade or so with Federal Subsistence funding.

On Page 2 of your handout you'll see kind of the general trickle-down of how our budgets happen here at OSM. It usually comes down from the President's budget after it's approved through Congress to Fish and Wildlife Service headquarters. At that point there's some funding that is pulled off before we start to see it at the Alaska Region.

It comes through two funding pots; one through Fisheries, which you'll see coded as 1335 money, and then through the National Wildlife Refuge System funding pot, which is 1261 funds. When it gets to the Alaska Region before we see a general amount of funding coming to OSM and as I go through this project you'll see most of the discussion is after we receive it at the region. It's split off between common services, which are making sure we can print papers such as what we see in front of us and photocopying costs and other expenses that we would see.

Some of the monies goes to our fishery programs. I made sure that there's two large maps on the wall for people to look at as they mill around between the Yukon Drainage and the Kuskokwim Drainage, but the magnitude of the Yukon Drainage for the Fisheries program through Fish and Wildlife Service, through our Conservation Office, really show the geographic need and the challenges they have that are separate from our office program at OSM.
Then also Refuges has responsibilities directly on the Refuges, whether it's for RIT programs, dealing with subsistence issues at the field level, that is pulled off also as well as law enforcement.

By the end game you see what OSM has retained. This has been a fairly traditional trajectory for many of us that have looked at our budgets in various agencies is that we've seen -- if you ran a regression line through this, you'd see an overall decline. We had some money held back in 2008 for program reduction that was held back by the Refuge System decreasing part of that funding pot over the years. We all remember the 2000 Budget Reform Act relative to sequestration as it was called by slang name. Then you see a bump after 2013 in 2014 and essentially it's been a static budget.

What we've seen at least in the appropriation so far in the President's budget and part of preliminary hearings is that at least the fishery budget has been maintained from the Fish and Wildlife Service and then also we saw in the President's budget from the Forest Service side that their funding had been maintained for subsistence through Agriculture.

One of the aspects that I like to see like on Page 4 is that many times the Subsistence Program we're not a -- we're very different in one way is that we're kind of the Washington Office, Regional Office and Field Office under the umbrella of Fish and Wildlife Service here in Anchorage. One of the advocates for the program has been our senator from Alaska and especially on her role relative to being the chairman of the Senate and Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

If we look on 614, next slide, you will see that again there was an overview of the program, both of ANCSA and ANILCA. There was a plea made essentially at that time to reinstate funding for the Subsistence Program and in 2014 that's what's brought us up to what I call the status level of flatline funding during years of consistent continuing resolutions. So I think that's an important part to see.

Apologies for your handout being in black and white, but if you want to see the color
version the screen will show you that. If we just take
the 2017 line out of our 1335 fishery money to Fish and
Wildlife Service, essentially we see about 9.5 million
that was enacted. As it goes through the assessments
in Washington, about when we go to the far right-hand
side, you'll see that $238,193 was retained out of
Fisheries in 2017, slightly more than 2016.

An interesting little piece of history
here is that you'll see 2008 through 2011 this negative
line. These were called uncontrollables and these were
actual additions to our budget. So for some years we
actually saw additional monies coming from Washington.
That is no longer the case. Now we're seeing a
consistent withdrawal in our programs.

In a similar fashion when we look at
the Washington Office and we look at the 1261 cut from
Refuges, we see about 2.8 million as enacted after the
assessments from Washington come out about 52,000 in
2017 was withheld. Again, a smaller amount, but
proportionately similar to because it's a smaller pot
of money. Also we used to get a lot more in what were
called uncontrollables in those years as you can see
where we see 150, 250, 2,000 that used to be additive.
So again the cost of what funds are retained in
Washington have increased over time.

If we look at the cumulative.....

MR. FROST: Can I stop you there for a
minute. I just want to make sure I'm reading these
tables right. Going back to the Fisheries on 2017, so
the 9.554 that's the Fishery money for the Service
Service-wide.

MR. DOOLITTLE: That's correct.

MR. FROST: Okay. And then this -- I
assume the W is the Washington Office assessment for --
what does FES stand for?

MR. DOOLITTLE: That is for the
Fisheries and Ecological Services part of the Fish and
Wildlife Service.

MR. FROST: So where does that 157 go?

MR. DOOLITTLE: That is retained in
Washington and our belief is that it's paying for
salaries and then into administration of programs
relative to keeping Washington offices going.

MR. FROST: So that gives you the next
number and then another assessment of 81,000. So the
total number is 93. So the total of Washington
withholding was 238,197, is that correct?

MR. DOOLITTLE: That's correct. Out of
the Fisheries money.

MR. FROST: So how does that relate to
how the money gets to OSM?

MR. DOOLITTLE: Okay. What that is is
that's just simply just withheld before we even see it
at OSM. So always look at this as we're moving along
through these tables it's essentially that you will see
that there's these monies that are taken out before we
even get a chance to spend a dime at the regional level
or what we see actually monies that we can spend out of
our field office at OSM.

MR. FROST: So by adding the 9.5 to the
Fisheries and the 2.7 to the refuges that's all the
money at the Washington level for those two programs?

MR. DOOLITTLE: That's correct. Yeah,
so when you look at -- and you'll see another table as
we chronologically go through this you'll start to see
how that all adds up.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Tom. I just want to
make sure, Bert. What you're seeing here, from what I
understand, is you're seeing the amount that becomes
the Subsistence Office funding. Not the entire
Fisheries budget for the Fish and Wildlife Service.....

MR. FROST: Okay.

MR. SIEKANIEC: .....is what I thought
you were asking.

MR. FROST: Right. Because I was going
to say 2.7 isn't very much for your whole refuge
program.

MR. DOOLITTLE: Right. I'm sorry about
not making that clarification. There is a line item in both the Fisheries and Refuge budget that says Alaska Subsistence.

MR. FROST: So this is the pass-through money essentially from these two programs that gets to the OSM office.

MR. DOOLITTLE: Correct.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Correct. Although it is a line item note in the appropriations, so it's not just gleaned out of general appropriations. This is a specific line for subsistence.

MR. FROST: For each of these two offices.

MR. DOOLITTLE: Yes.

MR. FROST: I know we can't fix this.....

MR. DOOLITTLE: Right.

MR. FROST: .....but it would seem to be simpler if there was just a line item for OSM and that would be done with it, right, but that's not the case. All right. Got it.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Yeah, they're two different accounts.

MR. DOOLITTLE: And then we have a small allocation that comes from the Forest Service as well, but we'll talk about that later.

So as we move through we looked at what comes from Washington out of the specific allocation from Fisheries and Refuges. We used to get money back in the day and now we see $346,000 in 2016 and 2017 about $290,000. When we look at 2014 also, when we looked at a press release from Senator Murkowski's office, we saw that there was a push again because Subsistence Program monies for that line item allocation was pulled out of the President's budget as well as the Forest Service's budget. At that time again a push through the Appropriation Committees process reinstated those fundings back to their former
levels. So the message is that there's been a watchful eye on subsistence funding in Washington.

When we look at our overall expenses, again combine what comes through the two allocative budgets from Fisheries and Refuges is about $12 million. Of that we push out to partners about 989,000 and about 4.6 million through our FRMP project process. Both are competitive grant processes. One is on a four-year program schedule, the Partners Program is, and the FRMP program is on a two-year cycle.

Then there is support monies that do go out to Fisheries and Refuges and Law Enforcement and so on. Then what's retained for paying staff and travel and our basic operations, including our space cost, is about $4 million.

MR. FROST: Can I ask a couple questions on this one too. Two questions. So going back to your last slide you said Fish and Wildlife Service gets $12 million....

MR. DOOLITTLE: Uh-huh (affirmative).

MR. FROST: .....but then there's an additional $2.5 million from the Forest Service that comes?

MR. DOOLITTLE: They independently use those funds. They do give, in this last year, about 81,000 to the Federal Subsistence Program to help us out. Most of those are retained for FRMP projects in Southeast and then also for providing for salary monies for their subsistence staff.

MR. FROST: So above the 4.6 for the FRMP there's additional Forest Service money that sort of goes towards the same thing?

MR. DOOLITTLE: It does.

MR. FROST: So my second question is -- I may just not understand this -- is on the support. So going back to your very first slide you have monies coming through the Fisheries, coming through the National Wildlife Refuges. It gets to OSM. You have your common services, fisheries, refuges and law enforcement. I guess my question is what does that
MR. DOOLITTLE: I can help assist with that and I'll go to another slide that I think will start to answer that for you, Bert. Okay. So when we look at that budget that comes down from the Fisheries side, $931,000 are taken from that original pool that came down to the Region. Refuges takes $652,000 and then there are two other parts of that money, $28,000 to Refuges again and then again to Fisheries for about $1 million. So what OSM is left with is about $6.6 million to spend on their staff and travel and general operations.

Now looking at that FES admin target, I always like to relate those expenditures to looking at the Yukon Drainage and one of the biggest watersheds in North America considering all the fisheries. So the fisheries staff in our Fisheries Office for Fish and Wildlife Service has field staff that are in-season managers and they work with cooperative groups in a huge geographic area, so there's parts of that money that come to the Service that are used for subsistence needs and in part through treaty obligations also considering it's a transboundary river.

Refuges again has subsistence staff, has refuge information technicians. A good example you'll hear a lot about the Kuskokwim River. Their staff works a lot through the Refuge system with subsistence issues, so they take that amount of money off that.

Then we have a competitive grant process, both the FRMP and Partners Program, but Federal agencies can compete for those particular funds, but we don't write contracts to ourselves. So essentially when you see the $1 million and $28,000, they're part of the fisheries research management proposal process of those monies that are allocated in a year through those grant processes. So when we take all those monies off the top, that's what left in the consumable budget for OSM.

If we look at the next slide on the 1261 dollars, again for photocopying and paper and those common services that all office environments pay for in an equitable way. Those common services are taken out of our budget as well as some $135,000 a year.
recently for law enforcement activities that would be related to subsistence. Again, leaving the consumable budget of $2.4 million for the Subsistence Program.

MR. PELTOLA: If I may, I'd like to clarify the law enforcement aspect, that $135,000 figure up there. We've given up to $150,000 under that heading. That goes to our Office of Law Enforcement and it helps support one special agent who has been intimately involved in the Yukon/Kuskokwim issues historically and currently. That's the one aspect of the law enforcement budget has so to speak. I mean it's like identified in a line item going to Office of Law Enforcement.

The other thing I'd like to expand upon about the Forest Service money which we receive about $130,000 a year from the Forest Service to help the Southeast Regional Advisory Council with regard to travel, training and operating those two RAC meetings in addition to some other issues that come up with regard to Southeast.

Due to the transference from one department, one agency to another, that's how we come up with between the 80 and $90,000 figure, the administrative process. We do value that relationship with the Forest Service and we do really very much appreciate the funding that we receive from them and help support the Southeast RAC.

MR. FROST: This is not to be too critical, but it probably will be so don't take it too personally, but so it seems -- again, going back to your first slide you've got two funding sources that come into OSM, right?

MR. DOOLITTLE: Uh-huh (affirmative).

MR. FROST: And then you have four things that come out before you get your OSM -- what's left in OSM. You've got your common services, which is what you just explained, your fisheries, your refuges and your law enforcement. So, as I understand it, and I may be incorrect, the OSM budget was made primarily to run the office of OSM to support the Department of Interior and the Department of Agriculture for the Federal Board and everything that goes on.
We have other responsibilities under subsistence that we have to do, but we don't have the luxury of charging an OSM account to cover those charges. So you mentioned in terms of common services. I mean we support a subsistence staff. That's just part of our regional budget that we eat. There is no special account and it seems to me like -- and I may be incorrect, but it seems like the Region is somehow using OSM's budget to help balance their books.

Again, I'm not trying to get into too much of the details, but it seems like it's being diluted for Refuges. I assume there's a whole different Refuge pot of money in the Region that covers Refuges. I assume there's a law enforcement. I mean we have law enforcement responsibilities for subsistence and for other things. We don't have any funding pot that we can charge to that law enforcement regardless of where it is.

So I just wanted to point that out that it seems on the surface that Fish and Wildlife Service may have -- well, from the outside it looks like there's some addition -- there's money being taken out of the OSM budget to support other functions that other agencies don't have the luxury to do off the back of the OSM budget. That's just the way I read it and I may be reading it incorrectly.

MR. DOOLITTLE: I think I can speak to just one example and I think Greg can speak to a similar experience in his career. When I was both the supervisory biologist and deputy refuge manager at Yukon Delta, I would say that 80 percent of what we did in a regulatory way and our actions had something to do with subsistence considering the Yukon Delta population was about 40 percent of the State subsistence users.

So even though at that time I wasn't working for OSM but the National Wildlife Refuge System, I was working on subsistence issues day in and day out and we had somebody writing special actions in a consistent way. When you see the amount of activity coming out of certain geographic areas of the state and how much energy refuges put in -- and it's not to negate how much energy other agencies put in to subsistence either. I think it's a reality of the day-to-day job.
This has been, as you can see, a historic process over decades, not that it was right or wrong, of how monies were used. As long as they seem to pass the test of scrutiny that they're used for subsistence, because obviously there's a watchful eye of making sure these budgets are reinstated at the Washington level. I guess when I look at it from a budgetary standpoint, I look at the scrutiny as long as the service is to rural Alaskans under the intent of ANILCA and that support of the field, must have been made a decision back in the day on that that's purposeful.

MR. FROST: I get all that, but you make my point exactly because we have many of the same responsibilities. We have superintendents, we have staff, we have to support the Subsistence Resource Councils in addition to the RACs, so we have an additional five extra meetings that we have to support. We don't have any pot to charge that money to. That just comes out of the regional budget.

What you're saying is that because there's so much activity at the Refuge level both for staff and leadership that somewhere down the line it's deemed that this could come out of the OSM budget off the top before it sort of reaches the OSM staff. Again, I don't know if that's true or not, but that's exactly my point, is that none of the other agencies -- BLM has responsibilities, BIA has responsibilities. We don't have any luxury of charging a different account. We have our base account and that's it.

Anyway, enough said. Go ahead, Greg.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Thanks, Bert. I think you're understanding it as well as you probably can without looking into budgets that go beyond this as to how much Refuges receive, how much Fisheries receive and the relationship of how much airplane time is needed for Kusko subsistence management versus regular refuge management and the number of people that are also engaged in subsistence type activities. So I think you're getting a pretty clear picture of it.

Back when subsistence first became an issue that was obviously going to become managed by a Federal Board, the appropriation was decided to put it in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and when those
appropriations first started, it was then looked at as to what should this money actually be used for and the preponderance of it was for Fisheries Resource Management projects and as the funding step-down went.

So what you've seen over the years is just the relationship of how much goes to projects, how much goes to partners, how much goes to support from an administrative standpoint. Use the LE as an example, 135,000. If you looked at the entire LE effort and cost associated with even the Subsistence Program, you'd find out that that's just a fraction of those costs because we've got officers that pay is not coming out of here, you've got travel expenses that are, you've got special initiatives and efforts.

So it's just been a balancing of how do you accomplish the most that you can under the Subsistence Program with the amount of money that's been appropriated and in what balance seems to make that work. The special projects that we're showing up there.

Heck, I can remember being a Refuge Manager that said, oh, my gosh, I've got a huge caribou subsistence issue on the Southern Alaska Peninsula. Hey, Subsistence, can you help me accomplish some extra monitoring from an aerial survey standpoint in order to get the information needs, yes, and that came through a special project fund. So it's got all kinds of things working against it on it.

I appreciate your thinking though. I think that speaks to what my interests are and that is as four Interior and one representative to the Subsistence Board how do we collectively build a budget scenario and/or interest that supports the successful implementation of subsistence in Alaska differently than perhaps it has come down in the past. I guess worthy of a discussion at some point.

MR. FROST: I would agree 100 percent. You know, I get how budgets happen historically and I know it's all mixed up, so it's probably not simplistic. Again, I think you make my point for me. For special projects I get that. I think that's totally appropriate. But again it seems to me that decisions have been made in the past to dip into the OSM Subsistence Federal Board support dollars to help
manage and balance the regional budget, which none of
the other agencies have an opportunity to do.

I mean the law enforcement that maybe
supports one person, right? Well, we could use another
LE person. I'm sure BLM could. I'm sure everybody
could, but we don't have the luxury to do that. We
have to deal with what we have. I don't know if that's
the case, but that's the simplest example. Anyway, you
get my point. Enough said.

MR. DOOLITTLE: Yeah, I do. I think
the only thing I would take exception to perhaps is the
idea of dipping in when really what it is is how do we
best allocate to meet the demands between whether it be
a Regional Advisory Council and the conservation needs
that are associated with the subsistence program.

So it's more of a thought process of
how do we best meet all these demands and where is that
money best put to accomplish that than it is just --
it's not just to dip in to get some money out of there
and not use it for the purposes of subsistence. So
that would be the only difference.

MR. FROST: I get that. I get it for
subsistence. But I guess my point is if the Federal
Board wasn't here and we didn't exist and the State was
still managing subsistence, we would still all have our
subsistence responsibilities in terms of sort of our
day-to-day operations, right? Nobody would have an
opportunity to -- I mean so for all those opportunities
that you just identified you'd have to figure out how
to do that within your regional budget because there
wouldn't be an OSM budget, right?

MR. DOOLITTLE: Right.

MR. FROST: And that's my point. You
have an OSM budget. We don't. I'm not trying to dip
into the OSM budget. I just think it's -- and I
understand how it's done historically, so I'm not going
to be -- I'm being critical, but I -- and I think it's
just good to be transparent so people understand.
Again, these numbers aren't huge, so it's not overly
concerning.

In a perfect world, I would suggest
that all that stuff would somehow get moved back into
the regional budget and you keep the OSM budget just as
clean as possible for Federal Board activities. Again,
I may need more detail, but I sort of get what you're
-- it's a lot more complex than what we can deal with
here.

MR. DOOLITTLE: That might be said.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Correct.

(Laughter)

MR. FROST: I'm done.

MR. DOOLITTLE: Okay. On this
particular slide this was just from the President's
budget is to remember that we've always been in a
tenuous place a bit. This is the Forest Service's
budget. Since 2009 was zeroed out at the beginning and
then again after it went through the Appropriations
Committee was added in and I was glad to see it still
in the Forest Service's budget in 2018.

So despite the political wind, which
might blow one way or the other as we go through the
history of budgets, it's always -- sometimes it's been
a fight regardless of what administration has been in.
Again, for the watchful eye of those that support
subsistence have made sure that we've had consistent
funding even though it's lower.

I think one of the most important
showcases that we have in our program is with our
Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program. When we look at
those allocations, if I take the 2016 numbers, because
we're still allocating out of 2017, essentially the
lion share, about 2.6 million, go to the State of
Alaska, 1.3 million going to Federal as you can see,
and then smaller proportions, 8 percent, to Alaska
Native and rural organizations into the private sector.

Also realize that the State monies are
many times subcontracted out to Alaska rural
organizations. I think many of our weirs are done that
way as many of our Federal projects also are split up
among a variety of different partnerships. We see
great leverage out of these funds, sometimes two to
three times the amount of initial investment. So this
program is definitely a showcase program that is really
key to foundational research and answers questions for management for both in-season and post season developmental models and so forth. So this is a key program.

Next slide. So if we take a look at all that again from our support monies, between law enforcement, the common services, refuges and fisheries, about $10 million is left with OSM out of the $12 million budget. Then we take out our FRMP and our Partners projects and that's what we're left for salaries and space costs.

Next slide, please. Space cost. One of my favorite things and I'm sure Greg's too. When we were in different Federal building in 2008, we started to see excessive costs. We moved into a new building and now as of recent our space costs have increased dramatically. So that's something that we'll look at as an internal review as far as a program to try to reduce our space costs. So that's something that we can do something about at home. Again, on the Washington side of monies that are coming out or how we allocate within Fish and Wildlife Service are bigger than this room, but our space costs are tremendous.

One of the things I'd like to close with again was from last year. As you can see, there's consistent newspaper articles relative to subsistence and supporting this Board and Alaska Native communities and our program coming from Senator Murkowski and her roles on committee. This has been a watchful eye of the expenditures of our subsistence dollars.

With that I'll field any additional questions.

MS. PITKA: So with the $1.3 million cut how would that be absorbed into the program? I didn't see a slide about how that kind of a cut would affect the program. What would you cut? What could you really cut?

MR. DOOLITTLE: I think Gene will answer that.

MR. PELTOLA: Mr. Chair, if I may.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yeah.
MR. PELTOLA: If we do realize a 13 percent reduction with regard to the Federal Subsistence Program, when we first heard the direction the administration wanted to go, I asked staff to be creative and look at every mechanism that we could. With regard to space, we could reduce our footprint more than we do now. We could look at potential for our alternative housing. If we are efficient as we could be with a couple items within the program, I mean it would be simple to say if we have $1.3 million to cut, potentially take out of the FRMP and Partners, but that's not the right approach.

There are numerous projects that come through FRMP, which I truly feel may not be funded otherwise. They are definitely a benefit to the Federal Subsistence Program in addition to not only the Federal bureaus but also the rural natural resource departments out there. We could say we could cut our personnel expenses. If we are charged with reducing personnel, we'll have to do that, but one thing I'd like to say, like a lot of other bureaus, divisions or program that are facing potential cuts, we're in the same boat. We're at saturation as it is now. So we'd have to take a more broad approach such that all of our aspects of our budget would share the burden of reaching that threshold whatever may be.

Part of my discussion with the Forest Service, like I said, this budget presentation addresses the funding which OSM received for the Fish and Wildlife Service. I talked to Wayne and he said the Forest Service has been told they can anticipate an 11 percent reduction next fiscal year. So what we potentially are going to face is not anything that is unique just to OSM. It's across the different bureaus, across the different departments and it could affect all of us, so we have to take a creative approach to where we're going in the future if we realize these potential reductions.

One thing I would like to add is that our Council Coordination Division came up with this idea. A year or two ago we brought all the Regional Advisory Councils into one local, which was Anchorage, and the RACs really appreciated that opportunity to meet together as one. Believe it or not that was due to -- when we executed that meeting cycle, we actually realized a savings as opposed to going to each and
every region within the state.

We have policies out there that stipulate -- you know, we have approved rural hubs in each region. That's where we normally hold our Regional Advisory Council meetings. What we have done with regard to those RAC meetings is that we have conveyed to the Council Coordinators we will meet the requirement to meet every two to five years at a more isolated area outside of pre-approved hubs, but if we can show a savings as opposed to additional expense by going to the more rural locations within a region, we have done that and we'll probably continue to do that.

An example would be Kiana. When we went to Kiana two falls ago, we had office space and bunk facilities provided by the Kiana Traditional Council I believe it was and that was a significant savings within the realm of thousands upon thousands of dollars versus meeting in Kotzebue itself, which is the rural hub for Northwest Alaska.

We will continue to see those, but one option is to have a greater frequency of those combined meetings or one recommendation is whether we take a fall or a winter cycle of the RACs and make them a telephonic meeting of the Regional Advisory Council, which would not necessarily be the most ideal situation for a Regional Advisory Council to meet, but it's also an option.

MR. FROST: So a couple of other questions. On the breakdown between the Partners Program and the FRMP and the other ones, I assume those aren't set in stone. Those numbers could be adjusted?

MR. PELTOLA: Mr. Chair, if I may. Typically with regard to FRMP on new offerings, because we're on a two-year cycle, we're usually between two to two and a half million dollars on the FRMP cycle for new starts because we have continuation. This particular round of FRMPs are unique in the sense that the last time the Board considered an FRMP funding cycle the direction from the Board was to fund until we're broke.

So what we did at the time was -- and the last cycle we had a little bit different structure with regard to how we fund projects. We had the
Technical Review Committee, which first gave a green
and red light. After that we had Regional Advisory
input and Federal Subsistence Board input. So the
instruction of the Board was to fund until you're
broke. I shouldn't say broke. Fund until we run out
of funding for that particular round.

So understanding that some of our FRMP
projects are on a four or greater year life expectancy
so to speak, we end up funding further down the list
than we would have otherwise the last time around,
which put us in the situation where we end up getting
two additional five to six projects, I believe. The
consequence of that is in regard to if we maintain flat
double funding, we may have as little as $1.3 million
for new start projects this coming round, which is a
million to 1.2 million less than we typically may have
in a given round.

The good news is that once we get those
projects from the last funding cycle through the
program and they go through their life expectancy,
we're predicting that in two years out in the next
round we'll be back up to that traditional two to two
and a half million cycle.

Now that's a bit winded, but we do have
guidance with regard to not necessarily how much money
we spend with regard to Partners and FRMP, but we do
have formulas especially with FRMP on how much we will
spend within each region. The example being the two
largest system being the Kusko and the Yukon it's
roughly 12.5 percent per region.

MR. FROST: But these numbers, the 8
percent, 38 percent, 16 percent and 38 percent are not
set in stone.

MR. PELTOLA: No.

MR. FROST: I assume the bottom 38
percent is based on need in terms of actual bodies and
sort of the support you need for the RACs. But those
other things could be -- it's not set in regulation or
something.

MR. PELTOLA: No.

MR. FROST: Does the Board set that or
how do those numbers get established?

MR. PELTOLA: Actually the numbers you see before you in the pie chart that we presented are the way things transpired up to where we are now. Now within the FRMP, and I wasn't around for the creation of the program, but early on in the program there were percentages that targeted for each specific region within the State. Now some years some regions are underrepresented with regard to what is particularly funded or forwarded on for funding.

In that case we take those -- say Southeast just for example. We kind of address Southeast a little differently. So if we had say 6.5 percent targeted for Southeast, that equates in a given year say roughly $1.5 million but we only had $1.2 million dollars of projects that were going to be funded, we take that $3 million balance, put it in a pool, then we go to the next highest priority project item.

So, with that being said, if we look at where the majority of the concern with regard to the Federal Subsistence Program, that is where we have been spending our money lately.

MR. FROST: One last question. What does the House mark look like for OSM? Did they get down to that level of detail in terms of -- for 18? Does anybody know? I mean they marked it up last week. Going back to Rhonda's question.

MR. DOOLITTLE: I don't have that off the top of my head, but I can find out.

MR. PELTOLA: I had heard discussion that the House Committee targeted at least Bureau-wise a one percent reduction at least during that committee, so we'll see how that plays out.

MR. SIEKANIEC: I had heard similar, Gene, in the Fisheries side from Fish and Wildlife Service that we were fairly stable and then from the Forest Service I presume.

MS. PENDLETON: For subsistence I believe it's flat with what was proposed, but I think overall we're about four percent down.
MR. DOOLITTLE: Okay. Thank you. And one thing, so everybody knows, is that any time we do have savings within our program is that considering we have the agreements out there is that we fund forward as much as we can to try to make up for any projected shortfalls in budget planning in subsequent years.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Gene.

MR. PELTOLA: If I may. I mean OSM, we take advantage of any time we have -- whether it be salary savings or any, quote/unquote extra money on the table, we try to forward fund into those FRMP and Partners projects such as they impact the following year as has been -- will be minimized and we've been very successful.

I know there's been some concern about forward funding, but an example being last year when we had a little salary savings, we look down the priority list and where we're at, then I call and talk to Wayne and reach out to Southeast. There's an additional project we could bring on board with regard to what we had available that given year because we hadn't been able to fill a position, so we had more or less one time money to contribute towards a project, but we're clear on that is one time funding.

We could get that project initiated, but we couldn't make a guarantee about subsequent year funding with regard to that. So, in a sense, the Forest Service had to make a judgment call. We could pick up another project, secure it for one year, but then we can't be concerned about the sustainability of that.

MR. BROWER: Just a question. On the fish monitoring I noticed that 57 percent of it goes to the State. Someone said there's a partnership between them. Is our MOU still on? It has not been signed or anything and we're still working with the State?

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Gene.

MR. DOOLITTLE: I can answer. I mean I believe we're still in the draft form of a new MOU, so we're still operating under the old one. Please remember that the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program is a competitive process that is ranked in an objective
way with a panel. So people, regardless of agency or individual, compete. So when Gene was referencing priorities and checklists, that has been done on a competitive process with an objective ranking process.

What we also look for in that competitive ranking process is how those individuals that are competing are partnering with other individuals and many times many of the State entities that are competing in the grant process are partnering with Alaska Native groups and other rural organizations.

MR. PELTOLA: If you look at that, I mean when we came up with this the one thing I asked Tom to be perfectly clear is that that slide is a bit misleading in the sense that it does show 2.5, $2.6 million going to the State of Alaska every year, but we could take, for example, harvest monitoring on the Kuskokwim or ASL data on the Kuskokwim.

The Department, yes, they're the ones that receive the funding, but also they have cooperative projects with whether it be ONC in Bethel and the Paimiut further up the drainage where some of those funds even though they're labeled for the Department are making it into a difference and separate entity.

One of the criteria for FRMP is that it provide funding for Federal, State and also rural and at times predominantly Native organizations and that's a requirement of the program. We have criteria on each request for proposals.

The one thing I can say is that via my limited exposure to the FRMP process per se, the nuts and bolts of day to day operation of that, is that from the projects I've seen when we stipulate six areas to address in a proposal, the State of Alaska consistently always addresses those six areas that are asked of the program. In addition to they tie it to a conservation needs. Some other Bureaus, Divisions, we may ask for six but only address four or five of the criteria, which puts them at a competitive disadvantage when it comes to a competitive process.

MR. BROWER: Thank you.

MR. DOOLITTLE: And I think that
clarity for our Partners Program is extremely important because also that's building tribal capacities and rural organization capacities in the field. ONC out in Bethel is a great example that's been doing continuous fishery monitoring. There's a good example of that. Again, those monies do get spread out more than just to the specific delegation between the parties that have been successful in the granting process.

MS. PITKA: Yeah, I think those monies are generally leveraged too. Like that wouldn't be the whole cost to the program. That would be like a small part of it.

MR. DOOLITTLE: Thank you.

MR. PELTOLA: Mr. Chair, if I may. One thing that OSM has shied away since I've arrived is that throughout the history of the program we have addressed and have funded direct funding requests outside the competitive process. We have shied away from that in recent history partly because one is that we're down from historical levels especially with regard to sequestration.

We're at flat level since then, so we haven't had very much opportunity to direct fund when requested, but more importantly we have tried to maintain the competitive aspect of it such that no one can say, well, the Federal program or the Fish and Wildlife Service or Native entities or whoever it may be had benefitted from the direct funding opportunity.

Am I saying that has been the case in the past, absolutely not, but we've been guarded from that. So when we do get those requests, we ask them to consider one of the two outsourcing programs we have which are FRMP or Partners.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Any other budget discussion.

(NO comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: It looks not. Thank you, Tom, for that. I think that was a good discussion.
MR. DOOLITTLE: Very well.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: I'm going to call for a five minute break. I seen it in Greg's eyes.

(Off record)

(On record)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: We'll call this meeting back to order. Welcome, Bud. It looks like what we're going to do now is get the status update on a request for reconsideration on RFR15-01.

Jennifer.

MS. HARDIN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. For the record, my name is Jennifer Hardin and I'm the Acting Subsistence Policy Coordinator for the Office of Subsistence Management. What Theo and I are going to do this morning/afternoon is just do a brief status update on request for reconsideration RFR15-01, which is related to the Kenai River Community gillnet fishery. This isn't an action item. It's just an information exchange.

Just as a reminder, during your January 2017 public meeting you took multiple actions in relation to the Kenai River community gillnet fishery. First you adopted Fisheries Proposal 17-10 with modification to adopt items included in your negotiated agreement in principle between the Ninilchik Traditional Council and the Federal Subsistence Board, including the proposed implementation pathway for the agreement.

That implementation pathway had three basic paths. The first was to adopt portions of FP17-10 and add the implementation pathway and the agreement to 17-10.

The second path was initiation of a special action request to address outstanding issues so that the Kenai River community gillnet fishery could go forward in the 2017 season.

The third path was initiation of proposed rulemaking to revise the Cook Inlet area
Federal subsistence regulations to address outstanding
issues associated with the community gillnet fishery
and also to simplify the regulations overall for all
users.

The Board also voted at that meeting to
move forward with the full analysis of three of the
claims that were included in the Request For
Reconsideration 15-01. At that time you directed staff
to include in the analysis of those claims discussion
about whether and how each of them had been addressed
through either adoption of FP17-10 or implementation of
the negotiated agreement in principal.

So, as I stated previously, you took
the action on FP17-10, so that path was completed.
Also you adopted a special action this year that
allowed the Kenai River community gillnet fishery to
move forward for the 2017 fishing season. So that left
to complete the revised regulations for the Cook Inlet
area Federal subsistence regulations. With that I'm
going to turn it over to Theo to update us on that.

MR. MATUSKOWITZ: For the record, Theo
Matuskowitz, subsistence management and regulation
specialist. I had a really nice briefing set up for
you guys and thanks to Washington it all changed on
Friday. Actually that's good news. OMB, which reviews
all of our requests for rulemaking through our
Washington office contacted us and had a series of
questions referencing the proposed rulemaking for the
Cook Inlet regulations.

That's a good thing because there are
various positions in both DOI and I assume Fish and
Wildlife that have not been filled with the new
administration, so things have slowed down. So the
fact that OMB is now asking questions that means it's
being reviewed, so it is moving forward.

We responded to those questions.
Basically it was pretty short and to the point what our
intent was, what the regulatory conflicts were
originally that we would address and what we meant by
revising the organization of the regulations
themselves. So we responded to OMB. We haven't got
any response back. To be honest I don't expect any
response unless they're not happy with it, but that
very seldom has happened with our program.
So the good news is the rulemaking is progressing. We've had various staff meetings within OSM coming up with an outline of how we're going to revise these regulations. Once we get the final okay from OMB we can proceed with a proposed rule. This will be a typical proposed rule like the Board has done on various other actions outside of the normal regulatory process.

We'll have a proposed rule that will be reviewed by the Councils. It will be presented to you and from there it will be published. We'll have a public comment period again presented to the RACs and after another public comment period once again you'll have final say on those regulations. Keep in mind these regulations are under your purview. It will not be going to a Secretarial level, so you'll be the final say on that. Once you approve the draft final rule it will go forward for publication.

Any questions. Yes, sir.

MR. FROST: So you say we get the final say, but it's still got to go through Exec Sec and all that stuff, doesn't it?

MR. MATUSKOWITZ: Well, yes, obviously, for clearance, but in 15 years, other than some very, very minor changes, we've never had them significantly change any of your final rules.

MR. FROST: I hope it stays that way.

MR. MATUSKOWITZ: I agree.

(Laughter)

MR. SIEKANIEC: It would have already gone to Exec Sec on its way to OMB. Now we'd just get the revision back.

MR. FROST: But it still has to go through Exec Sec and things can always -- in my experience things can always change.

MR. MATUSKOWITZ: Actually, depending on the administration, the final clearance process after you send it to Washington is between a dozen and the most we've had was 23 different offices that it had
to be cleared through before actual publication. What it is right now with the new administration I don't know.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Any other questions.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you for your presentation.

MR. MATUSKOWITZ: Thank you.

MR. PAPPAS: Mr. Chair, may I. George Pappas, OSM, Fisheries Division Acting Chief. I was instructed to provide the update you requested on the NTC gillnet in the Kenai for harvest. Thus far as of Friday between July 3rd and July 14th we've caught 315 sockeye of which 11 were caught on Friday, that's with a gillnet, a total of 8 pink salmon thus far in the Kasilof. They fished six days between June 16th and the 7th of July and harvested 42 sockeye salmon thus far with a gillnet.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Any questions for George and his studious report. Go ahead, Bert.

MR. FROST: Any bycatch? I mean anything besides -- I mean that's what we're all worried about, right?

MR. PAPPAS: Just the pink salmon has been provided and the weekly summary will be published here probably at 2-3:00 o'clock this afternoon and that will be the information. I was not informed of anything exciting. The only exciting information was one dipnet salmon out of the Kasilof Federal subsistence fishery so far.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you for your presentation, George. Appreciate it.

Scott.
MR. AYERS: Good morning, Mr. Chair. Members of the Board. So I'm going to be speaking to you about the letters of delegation for fisheries and this is on Page 31 of the supplemental material sections of your books and then also there's the newly revised versions that were just handed out, so I'd refer to those ones instead.

Again, my name is Scott Ayers. I'm a fisheries biologist with the Office of Subsistence Management. My colleague George Pappas and I will be presenting information to you today about updates made to the fisheries delegation of authority letters. Most of these letters were last updated in 2002 and are overdo for review. However, the letters for Southeast Alaska were all updated in 2011, which has created some discrepancy between the letters.

The current review process sought to make administrative changes to ensure that the contents were by and large the same in all the letters and to make changes in line with changes made to the wildlife delegation letters during their 2015 review process.

The administrative changes to all the letters are not an action item, but a process that OSM carries out and the Interagency Staff Committee reviews and comments on. These are then reviewed and approved by you, Mr. Chair.

In addition, there were changes to three of the letters at the request of the Board. This includes two areas with transboundary rivers under Federal jurisdiction, the Stikine and the Yukon River as well as the letter for management of the Kuskokwim River. The transboundary river letter changes are an action item while the Kuskokwim River letter is not.

There's a single addition in the transboundary river letters for your review regarding the authority to open or close in response to treaty obligations. That's under section three, scope of delegation, on Page 2 and it's highlighted on the letters. It's new language.

This was a product of the discussion for special action request earlier this year FSA17-02. It was brought to light that the in-season manager had to request a special action each year to close the
directed chinook salmon subsistence fishery due to low
forecasted or observed chinook salmon numbers based on

The authority to close the subsistence
fishery for this purpose was not clear in the current
degraded letter, so the Board instructed OSM to update
the letter accordingly as part of their actions on the
request. Additionally, the Yukon River letter was
identified as having obligations to this treaty as
well, so the new language was added to it as well.

So on these letters under Section 3,
degraded authority, there's a new line that states in
addition you may open or close Federal public waters on
transboundary rivers to the taking of fish for
subsistence or non-subsistence uses to comply with the
terms of the Pacific Salmon Treaty and this language
has been approved by solicitors for both Agriculture
and Interior.

For the Kuskokwim River letter there
are several additions to this letter made as a result
of Board action and comments on Fisheries Proposal
FP17-05 at your January 2017 meeting. The language has
been added to several sections, but predominantly to
Section 6 guidelines for delegation related to a
collaborative in-season management planning and
decision-making. The draft language was primarily
derived from the OSM conclusion and justification
provided in the analysis of FP17-05 as well as
commentary from the Board during discussion.

Following your review and comments
today, the draft revised letter of delegation authority
for the Kuskokwim will be submitted to the affected
Councils and the Kuskokwim River Intertribal Fish
Commission for review and comment. It will then come
back to you either in January or at a later meeting for
action.

Then the other item to bring forward on
these letters is -- there are some areas that are
highlighted in yellow. These are areas that were
changed from letters in the books based on comments
from ISC review that we had late last week. So the
language has been adjusted as part of the
administrative changes.
Thank you.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you, Scott. Is there any questions or discussion for Scott from the Board.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: All right. Thank you guys for your presentation. There's no questions.

Oh, Greg, did you have some comment?

MR. SIEKANIEC: I think so, but I think it's more of a process question, Mr. Chairman. So these were just handed to us with the most recent changes, so this is the first opportunity we're getting to see them. I think I noted this is an action item in there, which makes it a little complicated to say, yeah, I'm comfortable with the changes that were made just as of this being handed out. So I guess I could use at least a little bit of time to take a look at these before we have an action item.

Jennifer, thank you.

MS. HARDIN: Mr. Chair, through the Chair. Actually the letters that you were just handed out only the portions that are highlighted in yellow is new language different than what was in your Board book. That new language is only administrative language. The one sentence that we're asking the Board to take action on is highlighted I believe in pink.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Purple.

MS. HARDIN: Purple. And it was in your original letter that was put in your Board book. That's the one change that we're asking you to take action on because it's part of the scope of delegation.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: And that was in reference to the transboundary giving the opening and closing to the area biologist, right? Go ahead, Beth.

MS. PENDLETON: I was just going to
make a comment that I believe in at least one of the RAC letters there was a request for consistency in language with these letters. So I see this as an attempt to do that for the letters of delegation. Just to clarify then, it's just the text that's in yellow that's different from the previous version of the letters that we used as well as the new addition to be in compliance with the Pacific Salmon Treaty. That language is the only new language that's being proposed from a previous version on these letters.

MR. AYERS: Through the Chair. What you see in yellow are the changes that have been made since the Thursday ISC meeting compared to what's in your book. There have been substantial other administrative changes made to all the letters for that consistency purpose that aren't highlighted on these copies right now. Again, the item that we're asking for action on today is that specific language, the new language under scope of delegation.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: The purple. Do you need more time, Greg?

MR. SIEKANIEC: No. Thank you, Mr. Chair. No, I'm good with these. Do you need a motion to accept this change in scope of delegation?

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yes.

MR. SIEKANIEC: I would move that we accept the recommended language that the Federal public waters on transboundary rivers to the taking of fish for subsistence or non-subsistence uses to comply with the terms of the Pacific Salmon Treaty be added to these two delegation letters to both the Yukon River Subsistence Fisheries Branch Chief and the Wrangell District Ranger.

MS. PENDLETON: Second that.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: The motion has been made and seconded to accept additional language. Any discussion.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Hearing none. Call for the question.
MS. PENDLETON: Question.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: The question has been called. All in favor signify by saying aye.

IN UNISON: Aye.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: All opposed same sign.

(No opposing votes)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Motion carries unanimously.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Mr. Chairman. A question was asked during the budget briefing that I've got somewhat of an answer to if you'd like me to provide it.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Go ahead.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Bert, you asked as to whether or not the House mark. The House mark was almost flat. It was within $10,000 from what we can tell.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: We're just trying to figure out what we have time for before lunch because it takes time, but if we do do the presentation now, we'll take a lunch break until 1:30. Give us an hour and a half. So if we could just have the presentation for the hunter ethics come up at this time, we'll entertain Katerina Wessels. She anticipates a 30-minute presentation, so we'll give ourselves an hour and a half from the time she's done. That will leave us with two items on the agenda.

MS. WESSELS: Good morning, Mr. Chairman. Members of the Board. For the record, my name is Katerina Wessels. I'm with the Office of Subsistence Management. Today I'm going to give you a proposal about hunter education for the Eastern Interior Region, which was asked by the Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Council.

What the topic of discussion is is a
development of an education outreach strategy that will lay the foundation for the pilot program. The goals of this strategy would be to reduce user conflict between user groups, promote understanding and tolerance for different cultural hunting values and encourage respect in the field.

So what is the issue at stake. The issue was brought up by the Eastern Interior and they outlined several major problems that are going in their region. You probably see that these issues are very common for many other regions in Alaska. Those are issues of waste, which can be accidental or deliberate. Waste of edible meat, organs and bones that are very valued by local communities and this waste causing lots of strife with the rural users.

Then it was also noted that lots of hunters have lack of knowledge of how to take care of meat in both Western and traditional practice. So it's not just applicable to the hunters that come into the region. Sometimes it's the case with local hunters.

That issue was a lack of respect for the values of local people. Not having enough knowledge about those values. Then there's also opportunities to donate the meat and a lot of hunters would like to do it, but unfortunately they don't have sufficient knowledge of how to do it, whom they need to address, which parts they can share and, of course, their ever present issue of land ownership awareness.

So before I will talk about the strategy, the way how we're planning to proceed, I would like to go a little bit into background information of how it all started. Why the Eastern Interior is so concerned. If you look back at the meeting transcripts and the annual report replies for the Eastern Interior, you can see that the issue became very important to the Eastern Interior during the fall 2009 meeting. After this meeting they decided to add this topic to their annual report.

The Council wanted the impacts to be adequately identified and evaluated. They wanted OSM to develop educational materials and methods of outreach to rural and nonrural hunters. If you look at your supplemental material that is accompanying this presentation, you can see that the Board, in its annual
reply to their report, pointed out that the materials
already had been developed by the Alaska Department of
Fish and Game.

    If you notice, one of the materials
mentioned in that reply is field care of big game.
That video still exists. It's still on the ADF&G
website. It's a 53-minute video. When I tried to
watch it, it took me a whole day to download the video.
So I kind of was wondering if anybody would want to
watch a video that takes a whole day to download when
I'm in the regional office trying to download the video
where we have good internet connection.

    If somebody is in the field in a small
community, they probably wouldn't be able to watch this
video. But this is a side note. The instructions in
the video actually, after I watched it, they were very
useful. Unfortunately, because the video was made so
many years ago, the quality was pretty poor.

So the issue continues to be present in
2010. The Council continued the discussion about the
impacts of nonrural to rural users and talked about
public outreach during the fall 2010 meeting. They
questioned OSM if OSM had means for a campaign that
will direct people to the already existing educational
resources. The OSM representative replied that we do
have avenues for disseminating information.

So during the fall 2010 meeting the
Council passed a motion to write a letter to OSM
regarding this issue. You can see that letter as
supplemental 2 to this presentation. In the letter the
Council had identified a need for an educational
program designed to provide cultural sensitivity
education to nonrural users. Unfortunately, I was not
able to locate a reply to this letter in the OSM
archives.

The Council also included the topic of
impact of nonrural users into their 2010 annual report.
That's your supplemental 3. In their reply, the Board
indicated that OSM made its outreach coordinator
available to facilitate an informal discussion.

So then in 2011 early on the OSM
outreach coordinator participated in the Council's
spring meeting. That person informally worked with the
Council on identifying issues and developing goals and messages. During this meeting a notion was formed that the whole issue requires partnering with other agencies and organizations.

During the fall 2011 meeting, the issue of hunter education came up again after testimony of the Yukon Air Service owner. Unfortunately, after doing some work with the Council, the OSM outreach coordinator got another job and left OSM so things did not continue. In 2012 it was a bad year for Yukon salmon, so all Council's attention was directed to that matter and Council did not discuss hunter ethics education that year.

The fall 2013 the issue of hunter ethics education came up again during that meeting. Suggestions were made to add hunter ethics requirements to the State's hunting manual and the Federal regulations handbook. It was suggested that the State should require a certificate on attending hunter ethics course.

A hunter ethics and education outreach to generate better understanding and reduce conflict between users topic was added to the 2013 annual report. You can see it in your supplemental 4. The Council encourages the Federal Subsistence Management Program to work with the State on this issue.

In 2014, during the fall meeting, Council passed a motion to write a letter to OSM. The ADF&G, State of Alaska, Big Game Commercial Service Board and local Native tribal organization to begin a process of forming a committee or a group to look into some of the issues regarding hunter conflict and hunter education in the Eastern Interior Region.

The issue of hunter ethics education was discussed again in 2015 during the joint meeting between the Eastern Interior and Western Interior Councils. A lot of practical suggestions were made during this meeting, including designing a formal program for outreach and education, developing an informational CD for general public on meat care and different process techniques and distributing information through various media outlets throughout the state.
The Council's annual report in 2015 again included the topic hunter ethics and education to reduce user conflict and promoting understanding. In their reply, and you can see it in supplement 5, the Board directed OSM to develop an outreach strategy to reduce user conflict and educate local and visiting hunters and carry out a pilot program in the Eastern Interior region to test the strategy.

So moving on to 2016. During the winter of 2016 all-Council meeting a breakout session, outreach challenges, took place. It was a public discussion of the best and most useful methods of public outreach. One of the Eastern Interior Council members, Andy Bassich, gave a very good presentation on the subject.

The Council discussed the issue again during the fall 2016 meeting and added hunter ethics and education to reduce user conflict and promote understanding topic to 2016 annual report. You can see it in supplement 6. This is the topic that was present in the annual report that you were discussing earlier today.

So during the last meeting that the Council had, that was the winter meeting of 2017, the Council had a lengthy discussion on hunter ethics education. Again they suggested to write a letter to the State of Alaska to work on developing a hunter ethics education program on cultural sensitive aspects of resource use, to work together with the State of Alaska, and then a small work group met informally during the lunch break.

The group consisted of the representatives of OSM, State and Council, so more suggestions were made on how to proceed. The Council felt so serious about this issue that they voted to adopt hunter ethics education as a regular agenda item for all of their future meetings.

So that's the pre-history. Now I just want to give you a very brief overview of the state of hunter education in Alaska. So the State of Alaska is responsible for hunter education. Currently ADF&G offers four types of certification courses; basic hunter education, bow hunter education, crossbow education, muzzle loader education.
What is required for the hunters. So the State requirement is if you were born after January 1st, 1986, you are 16 years old or older, you must have successfully completed a basic hunter education course before you hunt in the Unit 7, 13, 14, 15 and 20. Only one of these units, Unit 20, is in the Eastern Interior Region.

All hunters must successfully complete a basic hunter education course before hunting in Eagle River, Eklutna Lake and Palmer/Wasilla management areas, Unit 14C, and Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge Unit 15C, Mendenhall Wetlands State Game Refuge Unit 1C. None of these units, of course, are in the Eastern Interior Region.

When I took a look at the materials that are provided for basic hunter education online and their study guide, it has a section actually on how to be a responsible and ethical hunter. So it includes these three topics that you see on this slide. Topic 1, why do we have hunting laws. Topic 2, hunter ethics. Topic 3, Alaska's Native people and their hunting culture.

When you look at an actual write-up, the information is very short and limited, so it does not provide the adequate information and it just takes a very small part of the whole course on hunter education.

Now I would like to talk about the proposed plan of action which is proposed by the OSM on how we should proceed to satisfy the request of the Eastern Interior Regional Council. One of the previous slides, this slide, if you look at your supplement 5 you might recall that the Board already fully supported these efforts and looks forward to a successful program.

So this is our plan of action for how we should proceed. We're hoping this year to form a small brainstorming group of collaborators and then through the end of this year and through next year work on planning and developing an outreach strategy. Stage 3 would be to develop a pilot program in late 2018/early 2019 and then test that pilot program and report.
So now I'll talk a little bit more about all the stages. So the first stage is to form a brainstorming group that will have the representatives from OSM, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, BLM, NPS and we would like, of course, State of Alaska to participate in this brainstorming working group, and two representatives from the Eastern Interior RAC, Sue Entsminger, who is the Chair, and Andy Bassich already volunteered to be on this workgroup. We're looking to you, to the Board, committing time from your employees to participate on this workgroup.

The next stage will be planning, developing of the outreach strategy. During this stage we'll identify the target audiences and we will do the scoping. We'll collect the facts and evaluate, analyze them, see which areas we should pay the more direct attention to. We will develop two or three consistent key points and we will determine the appropriate methods to reach target audiences. Then, as a result of it, we'll develop a draft outreach strategy and we'll identify the milestones.

The next step would be to consult and through this process and when we develop the first draft we'd like to consult with as many as possible of the main stakeholders, which list you see on this slide. As you see it includes a lot of Native corporations and organizations as well as hunter organizations and government organizations. I think it would be very important to get their feedback and get their buy-in. Then after that we will be able to finalize the strategy.

The next stage is performing. Based on the strategy after it's finalized we will develop a small pilot program that we can test. We could possibly work with the U.S. military installation and their hunter orientation program in Fairbanks or we can see what other avenues we can use to test out the pilot project. After the project is tested out we will check out the indicators if anything had changed because we don't want to go into a bigger project if the pilot project does not work.

Now let's talk about the resources because the resources are very important for implementation of any projects. What resources do we have now and what are possibly available to us. Of
course the staff time. That's the people who we envision would be in the brainstorming group. I mean I will mostly do all the work but I need other people's ideas and their brain power in order to help me with that.

So the next resource is, of course, we always look into what is there, what kind of potential funding is there. The first stage of the project would require to have the workgroup getting together and possibly we're hoping to get a professional facilitator to help us. So there is this funding source that came up, the Alaska Region's Connecting People With Nature. It's a part of U.S. Fish and Wildlife funding. It's year-end money.

This year they had a theme, breaking new grounds with State and tribal partnerships. So OSM already submitted a proposal, building partnerships through understanding and trust, breaching the cultural gap by promoting responsible and ethical hunting practices in Alaska. We do not know if we'll get funded through this avenue. They didn't make their decision yet if we'll get funded, but basically we're asking for just under $5,000 to help us to facilitate the initial meetings.

So then there is possibilities of other funding. I'm sure there's more sources that are listed here, but this is what we looked at. The Wildlife Restoration Fund, Cabela's Outdoor Fund. Cabela's Outdoor Fund supports education, teaching the next generation of hunters, anglers, campers and recreational shooters. We will look into possibilities of other outside funding. The OSM funding is questionable at this point, but if anything becomes available Gene is fully aware of this program so I'm sure he will make the decision at that time.

So what other sources are there. We are hoping also to utilize and/or adapt the existing resources and there are other sources that have been developed already. Handouts, videos, materials that were developed by the working group for Unit 23. So perhaps we can take some of these materials and adapt them for the needs of the Eastern Interior.

That concludes my presentation, so I would be very eager to hear your questions and
suggestions.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Any questions from the Board. Good presentation.

MS. WESSELS: Thank you.

MS. PITKA: Thank you, Katya. I know in Eastern Interior this topic of conversation has practically been at every single meeting since I was involved and even before I was involved. So I really appreciate actually looking into this. I think maybe Sue said it best when she said there's been a lot of talk about it, but then no actual follow through, so I feel pretty good about this.

Thank you very much.

MS. WESSELS: You're welcome.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Any other questions or comments for Katrina? Yes, Bert.

MR. FROST: So obviously this has been on the minds of the Eastern Interior RAC for a long time. Is this an issue with the other RACs or is this just unique to the Eastern Interior?

MS. WESSELS: I can answer. Mr. Chairman, members of the Board. Yes, it's been an issue for other regions as well. For the Western Interior RAC in particular. During the meeting that they had with Eastern Interior they expressed their desire to participate with any follow-ups on the development of a hunter ethics education program. The issue of wanton waste is a big issue for many RACs.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Greg.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Mr. Chairman, thank you. Thanks for the presentation. I'm trying to understand. So in 2011 and '12 this sort of came up and it hasn't gotten much traction according to Rhonda. You've looked at the State hunter requirements as far as education and those also don't meet what's needed for this particular area?

MS. WESSELS: Yes.
MR. SIEKANIEC: Is the bottom line there's just nothing that's specific enough to have an educational background. So the next step I saw that you had put up there that you need to engage a broader community. How do you anticipate going about doing that?

MS. WESSELS: Well, that's why we're hoping to form a working group to develop the avenues how we can engage the broader community and which specific audiences, which specific user groups we want to target first. That's correct that the State of Alaska's hunter education now has a small component in ethics. That is just not enough to reach broader audiences.

Members of the Eastern Interior Council they were saying perhaps there should be some kind of a campaign, like a radio campaign, right before hunting season that announces various things on the radio or maybe the Federal Subsistence Management Program can include information about hunter ethics into the regulations book. Perhaps there can be a CD made that will be distributed by the State of Alaska together with the hunting permits.

So that's just suggestions that were made, but they need -- at this stage it's still in the state of flux, you know. It's just ideas. Those ideas need to be formed and to be more concrete because we're looking, of course, at the funding, you know. It cannot cost very much money. We want to start with something small and see if it works and look for other funding sources.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Thank you.

MS. WESSELS: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you, Greg.

Any other questions, discussion.

MR. BROWER: Mr. Chair, I have a comment to make. Thank you for the presentation. I think it's a good idea in the process of trying to get some basic hunter ethic hunting education. You referred that Alaska only has classes for how to use
bowhead -- not bowhead, bow hunter.

(Laughter)

MR. BROWER: Crossbow and muzzle loader. It doesn't refer to what kind of ethics the State of Alaska has for basic hunter. You referred to this for nonrural hunters coming in and wasting food. That is culturally important to the local people within Eastern Interior -- or in all Alaska. Every bone is worth eating. I'm just curious how much of this State of Alaska coming in -- I know you're trying to form a working group to get support, but are they willing to come in?

MS. WESSELS: Is your question if the State of Alaska is willing to work with us?

MR. BROWER: Yeah.

MS. WESSELS: Well, what I can say is during the Council meetings they were willing to talk with us about it. We never formally talked with them. Informally there were several like lunchtime meetings through the course of the last 10 years where they participated. They have a big hunter education department. But we never got any formal response from them that they're willing to work and they're willing to dedicate a certain person to work with us on this issue.

MR. BROWER: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you, Charlie.

Any other further questions.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you, Katrina. Very good presentation and I wish you the best in getting the workgroup together and coming out with a product that works for Eastern Interior. Again I know it's something we can build upon for other regions as the hunting in Alaska is going to continue.

Thank you.
MS. WESSELS: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Now we'll call for a lunch break and we'll come back at 1:30. Oh, one second. Gene.

MR. PELTOLA: Mr. Chair, just a reminder. According to the agenda when we first get back from the lunch break we'll have other business, then followed up by the executive session of the Federal Subsistence Board, then after that it will Fisheries Special Action FSA17-05 submitted by Dave Cannon, management of the Kusko.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you.

We'll recess for lunch to 1:30.

(Off record)

(On record)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Welcome back from lunch, everybody. Operator, can you let those know online.

OPERATOR: You are reconnected.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: All right. We're coming out of recess from lunch. Welcome everyone back here this afternoon. Before we begin our business we have a presentation we'd like to make. With that I'll turn it over to Gene.

MR. PELTOLA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. With regard to our Board members, we have one particular Board member which was offered an opportunity to transition professionally to the hub of political -- I'll just leave it at that -- and has expressed his willingness to make the move, so this might be our last opportunity to have Bud Cribley, the State Director for BLM, participate with the Federal Subsistence Board. If that is the case, we have two items for him. One, which I'll ask Tony to give to Bud and then I have a personal gift for him as well.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: I'll dry off the sweaty palms, the humidity.
(Laughter)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you, Bud.

MR. CRIBLEY: Thank you, sir.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you for a few years. That's from the OSM staff.

MR. CRIBLEY: Am I supposed to look at it?

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Well, usually dance around.

(Laughter)

MR. CRIBLEY: Can I show it to everybody in public?

(Laughter)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Yeah.

MR. CRIBLEY: It is a public thing? Okay. I've had those that you're not supposed to show to anybody. Well, thank you very much. Appreciate that. My first one. I've never gotten one. Very few awards in my career.

(Laughter)

MR. CRIBLEY: It took a while, but I got here.

(Applause)

MR. PELTOLA: On behalf of myself and the staff at OSM, I wanted to thank you for your participation in the Federal Subsistence Program process. You've always had very meaningful questions, been inquisitive and at times challenge us for the betterment of the program. So out of my personal collection I want to give you a grass basket to take with you. It's at least 50 if not close to 60 years old.....

MR. CRIBLEY: Excellent.
MR. PELTOLA: .....with the exception of years back the knob broke off, so a little handle was added to it. So thank you on behalf of myself and OSM.

MR. CRIBLEY: Thank you very much.

(Applause)

MR. CRIBLEY: Whatever happens, just to let you know I have not officially been reassigned. We're still having some discussions back and forth, but I don't think Washington is going to back off, so it's just a matter of details right now. Whenever I find out what the final date is I'll let you all know.

But this has been special. Of all the programs I've worked in in the Bureau, this is probably the coolest one just because of what it does. I think what's really important, I know we worked -- the Subsistence Program is focused on rural residents, but obviously the Alaska Natives are the dominant rural residents and just the level of relationship that the Board has with those communities has been very enlightening and enriching to me.

Just those opportunities to learn what subsistence is on Federal lands in Alaska. There's very, very few people have the opportunity to fully understand and appreciate that and the role that we play in there maintaining that ability to have Federal subsistence.

So it's a very -- I feel very privileged to have had the chance to work in the program and all of the people. You know, the thousands of people that are behind the scenes writing stuff and analyzing stuff and then the Board meetings and the Board members and everything has been really cool. I apologize to Ken Lord, the solicitor, for speaking off script every once in a while.....

(Laughter)

MR. CRIBLEY: .....and really messing up the whole routine, but it was fun anyway. So thank you very much. I appreciate it.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: We definitely
appreciate you, Bud.

MR. CRIBLEY: Thanks.

(Applause)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: We'll get this meeting going again. Thank you, Bud, for your service here on the Board. Other business at this time. Was there any other business that any members of the Board would like to present.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: If we don't have any, now is the time to break and go into an executive session. Do we need a motion for that?

MR. PELTOLA: No.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: No, we don't.

At this time we're going to go off record, so we'll ask that the room be cleared except those who know that they're going to be in here. Gene has the list.

MR. PELTOLA: Mr. Chair. Typically we have the ISC and the Board members at executive session. The one thing I asked Tony is also to have Tom Doolittle engaged in the discussion as well. He's been exposed to some aspects of Kuskokwim management that I have not been. So it would be the ISC and the Board.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Again, this is just on nominations for the RAC boards and special action discussion.

(Off record)

(On record)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: We'll come back to order.

MR. PELTOLA: Operator, we're back in session.

OPERATOR: Okay. The line is open.
CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: With that I'll turn it over to Pippa and Frank. One second. Gene wants to make a quick announcement before we get started.

MR. PELTOLA: Sorry, Frank and Pippa. Generally the Federal Subsistence Board addresses special action requests via either electronic email for the Board or a teleconference unless there's situations where the analysis and review has been completed before a regular scheduled meeting. That is the case with the work session here today. In addition to, it has been the policy addressed by the Board not necessary to take written or verbal comments on special actions, although it is at the discretion of the Chair whether he or she do so.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Okay. Then before we do get going -- thank you for that, Gene -- just a general summary of executive session. We went over our candidate nomination forms for the Regional Advisory Council seats and then we discussed basically policy or how to work on delegation of authority and how that looks and the timeliness of that. So just a quick synopsis of what the executive session was.

Frank, Pippa, thank you.

MR. HARRIS: Good afternoon, Mr. Chair. Members of the Board. For the record, my name is Frank Harris and I'm a fisheries biologist at the Office of Subsistence Management. I'm here today to give you an overview of the analysis for Fishery Special Action FSA17-05.

FSA17-05 was submitted by Dave Cannon of Aniak and was received on July 6, 2017. On July 7th, 2017, staff clarified the intent of the special action with the proponent and he revised his request to the following: Number 1, rescind the in-season fisheries management authority of the Refuge Manager for the remainder of 2017 season.

Number 2, immediately close Refuge waters of the Kuskokwim River mainstem and salmon-bearing tributaries to the harvest of chinook salmon as necessary to ensure healthy populations and the
viability of chinook salmon populations in the Kuskokwim River drainage. Federally qualified subsistence users may take fish other than chinook salmon with dipnets, beach seines, fishwheels and rod and reel. The fishwheels are required to have a live box with no less than 45 cubic feet of water and must be checked every six hours. Fishwheels may be equipped with a chute. Must be closely attended while in operation. All authorized gear types must return the chinook salmon to the water alive. Fishing with gillnets is prohibited.

Number 3, close Refuge waters to the harvest of coho salmon except by Federally qualified subsistence users to ensure the continuation of subsistence uses of coho salmon.

I believe during the executive session there was discussion about number 1, so I will skip right to the second request. The second request is to close Refuge waters of the Kuskokwim River mainstem and salmon-bearing tributaries to the harvest of chinook salmon as necessary to ensure healthy populations and the viability of chinook salmon populations in the Kuskokwim River drainage. Federally qualified subsistence users may take fish other than chinook salmon with approved means other than gillnets and chinook salmon must be returned to the water alive.

The harvest of chinook salmon in the Kuskokwim River drainage has been restricted during most years since 2009. The 20-year average chinook salmon harvest between 1990 and 2009 is estimated to be 67,200 fish. Recent chinook harvests have been considerably smaller due to small run sizes and/or harvest restrictions. They are estimated to be 22,544 in 2012; 47,113 in 2013; 11,000 in 2014; 16,124 in 2015; and in 2016 37,676.

For 2017, in-season chinook salmon data collected from the Bethel test fish and the Bethel sonar project indicate the chinook salmon run size in the Kuskokwim River will be one of the lowest on record. As of July 15th, 2017 the estimated chinook salmon run size past the Bethel area as monitored by the Bethel sonar project is 58,600 chinook salmon.

This is the first year of the sonar project, so great care must be taken in extrapolating
the chinook salmon run size past Bethel from this project until multiple years of data are available for comparison. As of July 16th, 2017 the Bethel test fishery has a cumulative catch per unit effort or CPUE of 347 chinook salmon, which is the second lowest cumulative CPUE on record from 2008 to 2016 with only 2013 CPUE being lower. Additionally, the 2017 run appears to be approximately two, maybe three days late.

The predicted end of cumulative CPUE of Bethel test fishery appears to be between 2012 and 2013. If the linear relationship between a cumulative end of season CPUE for chinook salmon at the Bethel test fishery and chinook salmon total run size as estimated by the chinook salmon run reconstruction model holds true, and this is Figure 6 in the analysis Page 15, the 2017 chinook salmon run size could be between 90,000 and 100,000 fish. However, estimating total run sizes from the Bethel test fishery should be taken with extreme caution when comparing previous run sizes with the current year. Substantial harvest occurred on the total run below Bethel test fishery during all prior chinook salmon seasons that did not occur during the 2017 season and as such has likely skewed the 2017 estimate based on the Bethel test fishery high.

After accounting for the effects on harvest in this relationship, an end of season cumulative CPUE of 300 to 400 chinook salmon would result in an estimated run size past Bethel of 56,000 to 81,243 fish, with the estimated total run size being 63,000 to 92,000 chinook salmon. This is on Figure 7 of the analysis, which is Page 16.

Again, extreme caution should be taken in these run size predictions based on the relationship between the end of season cumulative CPUE and total run sizes of chinook salmon because of the large amounts of prediction uncertainty. The escapement goal for the Kuskokwim River drainage is 65,000 to 120,000 to give you a frame of reference. We're looking at the run could be potentially at the lower end of it. It's looking pretty poor.

Escapement monitoring of chinook salmon at all the weir projects in the drainages is currently ongoing. Two of the weirs, Kwethluk and Tuluksak, are systems within Refuge waters. As of July 16th there
have been 4,382 chinook salmon counted at the Kwethluk River weir. This is slightly above the lower bounds of the sustainable escapement goal of 4,100 to 7,500, which was established in 2013.

There have been 315 chinook counted past the Tuluksak River weir and this is 87 fish above the 10-year mean for this date. During the past 10 years the returns to the Tuluksak River have been relatively low also. Harvest of salmon in the Kuskokwim River drainage is closed annually under State regulation until June 12th to protect the first pulse of the chinook salmon.

In 2017 through Board action on two special requests, Federal public waters of the Kuskokwim River drainage were closed to the harvest of chinook salmon except by Federally qualified users identified in a Section 804 subsistence user prioritization analysis starting June 12th. On July 7th, the Federal in-season manager rescinded this special action and reopened Refuge waters to the harvest of chinook salmon.

Current State regulations allow for the harvest of all salmon in mainstem waters of the drainage by approved methods and means and restrict gillnets to six inches or smaller mesh. Salmon-bearing tributaries remain closed to the harvest of chinook salmon and to the use of gillnets.

Between June 12th and July 7th four opportunities were provided for the harvest of salmon by the Federal in-season manager. Refuge staff estimated over 87,000 salmon were harvested between Tuntutuliak and Akiak of which approximately 8,600 were chinook salmon. About 54,000 were chum salmon and approximately 24,000 were sockeye. This is also in Figure 3 in Table 1 of the analysis. I forgot to write down the page numbers for that. Sorry about that.

These estimates cover the areas of the river where the majority of the harvest occurs, but do not include harvest by Federally qualified users that live within the Refuge within Federal waters in the villages of Tuluksak, Lower Kalskag, Kalskag or Aniak or any of the upriver Federally qualified users. Therefore these estimates are considered a minimum.
If the special action request was approved, Refuge waters of the Kuskokwim River mainstem and salmon-bearing tributaries would close to the take of chinook salmon. The effect on chinook salmon would be to potentially allow more chinook salmon to escape into the spawning areas of the Kuskokwim River drainage, thereby expanding the efforts to maintain healthy populations of chinook salmon in the drainage.

Also if the special action was approved, Refuge waters of the Kuskokwim River mainstem and salmon-bearing tributaries would close to the take of chum and sockeye salmon except by Federally qualified subsistence users. Federally qualified subsistence users would not be allowed to use gillnets. They would be allowed to use only dip nets, beach seines, fish wheels, and rod and reel to harvest fish other than chinook salmon. Non-subsistence uses, including commercial and sport fishing for salmon, would not be allowed in Refuge waters. The effect on chinook salmon would be to allow more chinook salmon to escape into the spawning areas of the Kuskokwim River drainage, thereby expanding the efforts to maintain healthy populations of chinook salmon in the drainage.

Then onto the third request, which we're going to be much quicker with this one here, is to close Refuge waters to the harvest of coho salmon except by Federally qualified subsistence users to ensure the continuation of subsistence uses of coho salmon. As of July 16th, the Bethel test fishery had a CPUE of 5. These fish were just caught within the last couple days. They just started showing up. However, coho salmon have not been encountered at any of the salmon monitoring projects, which is not unusual for this time of year. It's pretty typical. Additionally, there's no forecast made for coho salmon run sizes.

Coho salmon run size estimates from 2000 to 2015 have ranged from approximately 500,000 to 2.7 million fish with an average run size of around 1 million fish. The last peak in coho salmon run sizes occurred in 2014 with approximately 1.4 million fish. The 2016 estimates of run size has yet to be published by Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

Due to the absence of a preseason

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forecast for the 2017 run and little in-season information as of July 16th, we have no data to determine if the run will be sufficient to support both subsistence and non-subsistence uses.

If the special action was approved, Refuge waters of the Kuskokwim River mainstem and salmon-bearing tributaries would close to the take of coho salmon except by Federally qualified subsistence users. Federally qualified subsistence users would be allowed to use all legal gear to take salmon. Conversely, nonsubsistence uses, including commercial and sport fishing for salmon, would not be allowed to harvest salmon.

If the special action was not approved, Refuge waters of the Kuskokwim River mainstem would remain open to the harvest of all salmon under current State regulations, including sport fisheries, and may include future commercial fishing opportunities. Specified salmon-bearing tributaries would remain closed to the harvest of chinook salmon and also to the harvest of any fish using gillnets. This may contribute to missing the lower bound of the chinook salmon drainage wide escapement goal, along with the individual tributary goals for the Kwethluk -- I'll cross that one out. The Kwethluk has made the lower bound. George and Kogrukluk Rivers.

The effect on subsistence uses may be decreased availability of coho salmon, and possibly chum salmon, if a commercial salmon fishery is permitted by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

With this I will turn it over to Jennifer Hardin, who will present the ISC recommendation for the special action.

MS. HARDIN: Thank you, Mr. Chair. For the record, my name is Jennifer Hardin and I'm the acting chair of the Interagency Staff Committee. The Interagency Staff Committee recommendation on Emergency Special Action FSA17-05 is as follows: Support Fisheries Emergency Special Action FSA17-05 with modification to immediately close Refuge waters of the Kuskokwim River salmon-bearing tributaries to the harvest of chinook salmon by all users until August 30.
This closure may be rescinded by the in-season manager before August 30 based on chinook salmon escapement indices.

Despite early forecasts of a chinook salmon run size within the escapement goal range, the 2017 run may not meet the lower bound of the escapement goal and may be one of the lowest runs on record. Previous in-season Federal management actions, completed in consultation with the Kuskokwim River Inter Tribal Fish Commission, Regional Advisory Council representatives and the State of Alaska, have focused on conserving chinook salmon throughout the entire Kuskokwim drainage.

Currently, the ratio of chum and sockeye salmon to chinook salmon is consistently high in the mainstem of the Kuskokwim River at the Bethel test fishery, and the majority of the chinook salmon run has now passed Bethel. It is estimated that 97 percent of the run is complete based on historical average run timing. Subsequently, chinook salmon conservation should now focus on protection of the species within specific tributaries where chinook salmon are now staging, migrating, or already on their spawning grounds.

The closure to the harvest of chinook salmon by all users in salmon-bearing tributaries in Federal public waters is needed to assure the continued viability of Kuskokwim River chinook salmon consistent with ANILCA Section 816. The 75th percentile of chinook salmon passage at the Kwethluk River weir has been as late as July 20, and average stream residency post-weir passage is approximately four weeks, suggesting that the majority of spawning will take place by the end of August.

Based on this historic spawning data, August 30 was subsequently identified as a potential date when the chinook salmon closure could end. This date may be adjusted based on the continual evaluation of in-season biological data and input from the Kuskokwim River Inter Tribal Fish Commission, Regional Advisory Council representatives, the State of Alaska, and the Kuskokwim River Salmon Management Working Group.

Tributaries closed to harvest of
chinook salmon will remain open to the take of other
salmon species by all users by means other than
gillnet. Gillnet use is currently prohibited by State
regulations in the salmon-bearing tributaries
identified in this recommendation. This will allow for
the harvest of other species
using selective gear types while also protecting the
chinook salmon stocks. Current gillnet gear
restrictions for all users on the main stem of the
Kuskokwim River minimize chinook salmon harvest while
allowing for subsistence harvest of other salmon
species that are currently more abundant and not of
conservation concern.

Coho salmon have just started to enter
the Kuskokwim River system and should not be
pre-maturely regulated until biological information is
available to evaluate their status as pre-season
abundance estimates are not generated.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

That concludes the recommendation of
the Interagency Staff Committee.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you,
Jennifer. Any questions for the staff.

Greg.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Just for clarity
purposes did you say the regulations that are in place
right now by the State have the mainstem and the
tributaries closed to the use of gillnets?

MR. HARRIS: Just the tributaries right
now.

MR. SIEKANIEC: So the tributaries are
closed to the use of gillnets.

MS. KENNER: The restrictions that
Jennifer was referring to in the mainstem is people can
only use 6-inch or less mesh size nets.

MR. SIEKANIEC: So let me make sure I
have it right. So in the mainstem 6-inch or less size
in tributaries are closed to the use of gillnets.
MS. KENNER: Under State regulations.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Okay. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Any other questions for staff.

The floor is open.

(No comments)

MR. SIEKANIEC: Mr. Chairman. Since there are no other questions or discussion it seems like, I would be willing at this time from the Fish and Wildlife Service to make a motion to support the FSA17-05 and if I do get a second I will provide the justification as to why I intend to vote in opposition to FSA17-05 in its entirety.

MR. BROWER: Second.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Motion has been made and seconded. Go ahead, Greg.

MR. SIEKANIEC: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So we've heard a lot about the season from the standpoint of the Board and how the management has gone and the relationship that's been established between our in-season manager, the Intertribal Fish Commission and the working group.

I want to remind us a little bit that last January we worked to provide the opportunity and actually asked our in-season manager to work on the establishment of this Phase 2, which incorporated, as well as the Intertribal Fish Commission, the working group into it and to try to build a consensus body out there on direction that they would go for decision making and the decisions that would be made through the special action request or special actions taken by our in-season manager.

The main concern that I really have is if we take an action now that has presented as a special action, which I personally believe should have been more of an appeal to pass decisions that have already been made, would really challenge the credibility that's been established through the course of this last summer here or is underway right now.
When you have an agreement between the Intertribal Fish Commission, the working group and the in-season manager that said it's now time and appropriate to turn the management over to the State for the duration of the season because the viability of the chinook population is not a question at this point in time and with the restrictions that the State has applied to it I think really jeopardizes that ability for us to maintain a relationship that would be as strong and is working that we will need it next year and obviously into the future.

That concerns me greatly that we would start to -- you know, from the Board's standpoint say, well, we wanted you to do this, but, sorry, we're not willing to stand behind you now that you've made that very difficult decision which took a lot of time to sort of bring people to gather around. As was evidenced, I believe, even by Chief Ivan who sent the letter in who sort of reiterated that while we have such a great process working out here now, please don't sort of change our ability to make these types of decisions.

I'm also, I guess, concerned a little bit that some of the special action recommendations in this weird way will actually reduce our ability to conserve chinook populations and could end up with us in a jeopardized situation where if we were to take over the fishery again, the State could then change and remove its closures that they have and we can't limit gear type again and there we are back in a very similar spot where other users then could use gear that we can no longer restrict. So we have some weird dynamics going on around this potential fishery.

I guess I'll stop right there. I want to stay with, you know, the Board -- we asked these groups to come together and do this. They very successfully did. It's unfortunate they had to make the struggles with the chinook run the way it is and nobody wanted to see that.

At this point in time I would say that the justification I would really want us to think strongly about is that they worked hard to meet what the Board asked them to do and they're there now and they have this big agreement. I'm really concerned we jeopardize that and next year we aren't going to have a
working group come together, nor an Intertribal Fish
Commission relationship with the Service.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you,
Greg.

Any other discussion from the Board.

(No comments)

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Call for the
question.

MR. BROWER: Call for question.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: The question
has been called. Again, the motion is in the positive.
The maker of the motion is going to vote to the
negative, which will -- just so you know your vote in
the positive is to support this special action. A no
vote means no special action. Shall we do a roll call.

MR. PELTOLA: Roll call vote on
Fisheries Special Action Request 17-05 as submitted by

MR. FROST: No.

MR. PELTOLA: Bureau of Land
Management.

MR. CRIBLEY: No.

MR. PELTOLA: Public Member Brower.

MR. BROWER: Yes.

MR. PELTOLA: Public Member Pitka.

MS. PITKA: No.

MR. PELTOLA: Bureau of Indian Affairs.

MR. POLACCA: No.

MR. PELTOLA: Fish and Wildlife
Service.
MR. SIEKANIEC: No.

MR. PELTOLA: Forest Service.

MS. PENDLETON: No.

MR. PELTOLA: Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: No.

MR. PELTOLA: Failure to adopt 17-05 on a 1-7 vote.

CHAIRMAN CHRISTIANSON: Thank you, Staff, for that presentation. Thank you for the Board. According to my agenda that concludes the business for the day.

We thank everybody in attendance today. Thanks for the Staff and your diligent work in getting ready. Again, it was a trying season on the Kuskokwim and still a little bit more work to go yet.

Don't forget in the morning we're having a field trip. I think Gene has a couple of announcements.

MR. PELTOLA: As a reminder, Board Members who are participating in the trip down to observe the Kenai gillnet, one, 7:15 a.m. at the Fish and Wildlife Service office; two, dress appropriately for a boat ride; and three, bring munchies.

(Off record)

(END OF PROCEEDINGS)
CERTIFICATE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

)ss.

STATE OF ALASKA

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

THAT the foregoing, contain a full, true and correct Transcript of the FEDERAL SUBSISTENCE BOARD MEETING, VOLUME III taken electronically by our firm on the 17th day of July 2017, in Anchorage, Alaska;

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 27th day of July 2017.

_______________________________
Salena A. Hile
Notary Public, State of Alaska
My Commission Expires: 09/16/18