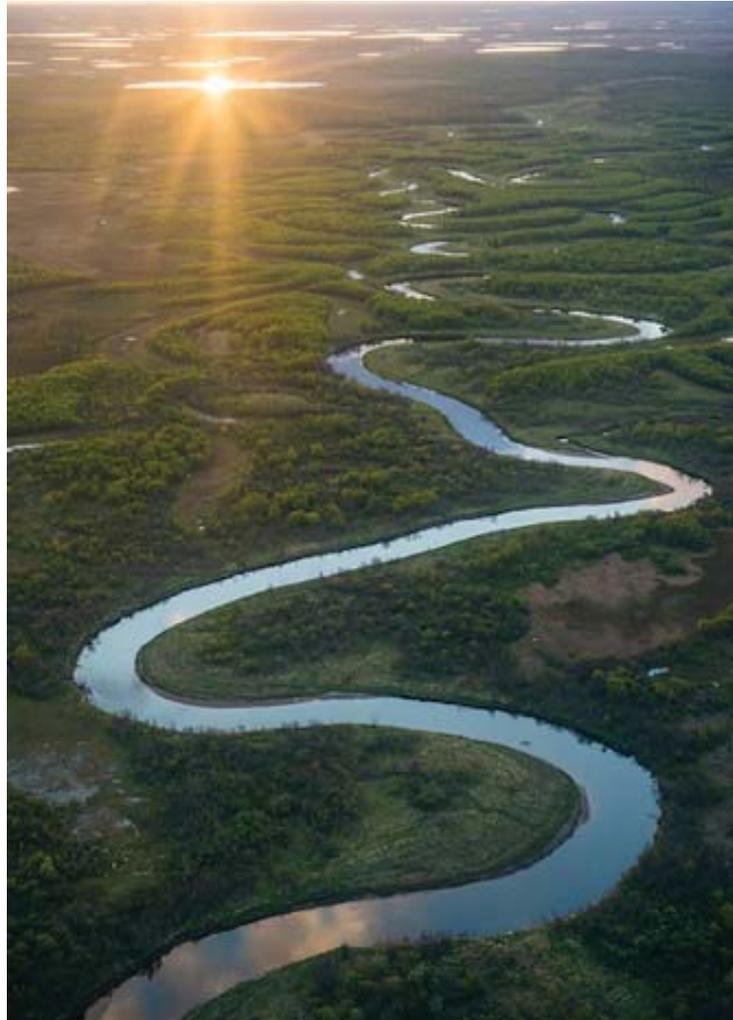


BRISTOL BAY Subsistence Regional Advisory Council



Carl Johnson

Evening sun reflects on a pond while a tributary winds its way down to the Kvichak River near the village of Levelock.

Meeting Materials
October 29–30, 2013
Dillingham

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BRISTOL BAY SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Dillingham City Hall – Dillingham, Alaska

October 29-30

8:30 a.m.

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

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

AGENDA

*Asterisk identifies action item.

- 1. **Call to Order** (*Chair*)
- 2. **Invocation**
- 3. **Roll Call and Establish Quorum** (*Secretary*)..... 4
- 4. **Welcome and Introductions** (*Chair*)
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- 10. **New Business** (*Chair*)
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NOTE: The Council will recess on first day prior to addressing this issue. There will be a public hearing at 7:00 p.m. , at which time the rural determination issue will be briefed to the public, and the public will have the opportunity to provide written and/or oral testimony. The Council will address this issue on the second day.

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- A. Confirm date and location of winter 2014 meeting
- B. Select date and location of fall 2014 meeting

13. Closing Comments

14. Adjourn (Chair)

To teleconference into the meeting, call the toll free number: 1-866-916-7020, then when prompted enter the passcode: 37311548

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife is committed to providing access to this meeting for those with a disability who wish to participate. Please direct all requests for accommodation for a disability to the Office of Subsistence Management at least five business days prior to the meeting.

If you have any questions regarding this agenda or need additional information, please contact Bristol Bay Council Coordinator Donald Mike at 907-786-3629 or contact the Office of Subsistence Management at 1-800-478-1456 for general inquiries.

REGION 4—Bristol Bay Regional Advisory Council

Seat	Yr Apptd <i>Term Expires</i>	Member Name & Address
1	1993 2013	Peter M. Abraham Togiak
2	1993 2013	Daniel James O’Hara Naknek
3	2003 2013	Nanci Ann Morris Lyon King Salmon Vice Chair
4	2007 2014	Molly B. Chythlook Dillingham Chair
5	2005 2014	Alvin Boskofsky Chignik Lake
6	2011 2014	John E. Jones, Sr. Chignik Lagoon
7	2003 2014	Dan O. Dunaway Dillingham
8	2012 2015	Lary J. Hill Iliamna
9	2006 2015	Thomas A. Hedlund Iliamna
10	2009 2015	Richard J. Wilson Naknek Secretary

BRISTOL BAY SUBSISTENCE REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes
February 12-13, 2013
Bristol Bay Borough Chambers
Naknek, Alaska

Call to Order

Meeting called to order by Madame Chair Molly Chythlook. Chair Chythlook requested moment of prayer/silence, led by Mr. Richard Wilson.

Roll Call and Establish Quorum

Roll called conducted by Coordinator Mike as requested by Chair Chythlook. Council members present: Nanci Morris Lyon, Molly Chythlook, Alvin Boskofsky, Dan Dunaway, Richard Wilson. On teleconference: Thomas Hedlund, Lary Hill. Seven members present, quorum established.

Absent: Peter Abraham, Dan O'Hara, John Jones, Sr.

Welcome and Introductions

Chair Chythlook welcomed guests and staff members.

Government Agency Employees

Donald Mike	FWS OSM
Carl Johnson	FWS OSM Council Coordination Chief
Tina Moran	FWS AK Pen/Becharof NWR Acting Refuge Mgr
Pat Walsh	FWS Togiak NWR
Tevis Underwood	FWS Togiak NWR Acting Refuge Mgr
Liz Julian	FWS Alaska Pen/Becharof NWR
Andy Aderman	FWS Togiak NWR Wildlife Biologist
Sherri Anderson	NPS wildlife biologist Katmai
Eric Veach	NPS Katmai Acting Superintendent
Troy Hamon	NPS Katmai Natural Resource Manager
John Campbell	NPS wildlife biologist Katmai
Mary McBurney	NPS Subsistence Manager
Clarence Summers	NPS Alaska Regional Office Subsistence Manager
Glenn Chen	BIA anthropologist
Susie Jenkins Brito	ADFG SW Regional Coordinator
Drew Crawford	ADFG Federal Subsistence Liaison Team

NGOs/Public

Gayla Woods
Danielle Stickman
Sharon Wilson
John Knutsen
Ronald Lind
Joe Klutsh

BBNA Subsistence Research Specialist
BBNA Subsistence Fisheries
Pebble Regional Outreach Coordinator
Naknek resident
Aniakchak NPS SRC member
King Salmon, AK

On Teleconference

Trent Liebich
Karen Hyer
Dan Sharp

FWS OSM Anchorage
FWS OSM Anchorage
BLM Anchorage

**Review and Adopt
Meeting Agenda**

Ms Morris Lyon moved to adopt the agenda. Mr. Wilson added Federal Local Hire update from the NPS, and subsistence salmon fishery in Naknek Lake under Old Business. Mr. Dunaway, added Unit 17A Moose Management Plan update on recent actions taken by the State BOG. Mr. Boskofsky requested the agenda be an open meeting agenda. Chair and RAC members concur. Ms Morris Lyon calls for the question. Meeting agenda adopted as amended.

**Election of
Officers**

Mr. Mike opened the nominations for the seat of Chair, serving as the Designated Federal Official. Mr. Wilson nominates Ms Chythlook, 2nd by Ms Morris Lyon. Mr. Boskofsky nominates Ms Morris Lyon and 2nd called by Mr. Dunaway. Mr. Hedlund nominates Mr. Wilson, 2nd by Mr. Hill. Mr. Dunaway move to close nominations for Chair. Mr. Mike requested votes be conducted by ballot voting through consensus from the Council. Ballot votes counted, Ms Molly Chythlook nominated as Chair for another term. Ms Nanci Morris Lyon nominated as Vice Chair and Mr. Richard Wilson nominated as Secretary by unanimous consent of the Council.

**Review and Adoption of
minutes: October 24-25, 2012**

Ms Morris Lyon moved to adopt and approve the minutes. Second called by Mr. Boskofsky. Discussion. Question called by Ms Morris Lyon. Minutes adopted.

Reports

Unit 17 Moose Management Plan

Unit 17A Moose Management Plan: Mr. Andy Aderman, Togiak NWR Biologist, briefed the RAC on the recent actions taken by the State BOG. The Unit 17A Moose Management Plan was presented to the Alaska BOG, which they adopted, along with recommendations from the Unit 17A Moose Working Group, as guidelines to liberalize the resident winter hunt and to establish a non-resident fall hunting opportunity as requested in State Proposal # 48.

The resident fall registration permit hunt remains unchanged. The BOG extended the winter registration permit hunt from up to 14 days to up to 31 days between Dec 1 to Jan 31. The harvest limit will be up to 2 moose for the winter hunt. A harvest quota for cows will be set. When the harvest quota for cows is reached, the remainder of the season (by emergency order) will be for antlered bulls only.

The non-resident hunt will be Sept 5 – Sept 15, with a harvest limit of 1 bull with 50-inch antlers or antlers with 4 or more brow tines on one side, by drawing hunt; up to 50 permits may be issued.

The BOG recommended 20 drawing permits be issued the first year (2014). The BOG further recommended the Department use their discretionary permit authority and the language in the Moose Management Plan (Goal 3, Objective 4) to establish a corridor during the fall hunt where aircraft access by moose hunters would be restricted.

The RAC endorsed (7 - 0) the Unit 17A Moose Management Plan presented by Mr. Aderman. The plan is a good plan, and a living document for any future opportunity to revisit the plan and address issues related to the moose management plan. The working group, and the plan, is committed to local consultation, which makes it work to address a resource issue for all users to agree on.

Council Member Reports

Council member reports: Mr. Boskofsky reported to the Council of the recent actions taken by the FSB on the Chignik Lake Chinook fishery. The outcome and final action by the FSB was not to his expectation. Chinook harvest will only be authorized by rod and reel.

After further discussion, the Council commented that another proposal will be submitted to allow the subsistence take of Chinook in the Chignik River below the weir with a gill net. Gill net is proposed to be used as a seining gear to harvest Chinook for the residents to meet their Chinook subsistence needs. OSM staff will assist in developing the fishery proposal.

ANILCA .805c Report: The Federal Subsistence Board met on January 22-24, 2013 in Anchorage. The Board adopted F13-13 with modification to allow rod and reel for subsistence fishing above the fishwheel in the Chignik River with no daily harvest or possession limit with a Federal registration permit. Gillnets will be allowed in Black Lake or its tributaries of Black or Chignik Lake. No conservation concern associated with the fishery, and this will provide subsistence opportunity for rural residents.

Public Comments/Testimony

Mr. Joe Klutsch testified on the Unit 17 Moose Management Plan recently passed by the State BOG. Mr. Klutsh also testified having professional guides from the local area is beneficial, are good stewards that understand the areas cultural diversity and resources.

Mr. Klutsch also testified on predator management, the NPS compendium, and fishery issues in Area M and T.

Call for Wildlife Proposals to change Federal subsistence regulations

Mr. Mike announced the opening of the 2014-16 Wildlife Proposal cycle. The OSM will be accepting proposals until March 29, 2013.

Mr. Aderman, Togiak NWR Biologist, announced two potential wildlife proposals. Unit 17A moose; extend the winter moose hunt to a 31 day season and increase bag limit of two moose and a proposal to open Unit 17 caribou to registration hunt from a general season. Mr. Dunaway moved to submit these two items as Federal subsistence proposals. Ms Morris Lyon seconds the motion. Motion passes.

Old Business

2012 Annual Report: The Council approved the 2012 Annual Report topics from its fall 2012 meeting. Draft issues to submit to the Federal Subsistence Board are; Chignik Fishery Information Stocks of Concern, Area M Fishery, and Bering Sea By-catch of salmon. The Council added the Unit 17 Moose Mgt Plan to the Annual Report. The Council stated the efforts made leading to the final plan is working very well. It encourages local effort, from

multi-agency and surrounding communities, on resource management issues. The Council requested an annual, or when necessary, status report on the implementation of the plan.

Wildlife Closure Review: Mr. Mike provided the talking points for WCR 12-05, Unit 9C moose, and WCR 12-07, Unit 17A and 17C Caribou.

OSM preliminary conclusion is to maintain status quo for Wildlife Closure Review 12-05 and WCR12-07.

WCR12-05 moose. Maintain closure for nonresident moose hunt in Unit 9 on Federal public lands. The Council supported the closure for the moose hunt in Unit 9 as recommended by the OSM.

Discussion: The Council discussed the need for quality moose data for all of Unit 9. Information needs; the Council discussed the need for additional data on range quality. Current moose biological data are dependent upon for the Council to base its recommendations on wildlife related proposals. Maintaining the status quo is necessary to continue the subsistence opportunity to harvest moose during the fall and winter hunts by Federally qualified subsistence users in the portion of Unit 9C.

WCR12-07 Caribou. The Council supports the closure for caribou on Federal public lands in Units 17A & C except by rural residents of Togiak, Twin Hills, Mankotak, Aleknagik, Dillingham, Clark's Point, and Ekuk. The population of the herd is still low, and maintaining the closure for nonresidents on Federal public lands is justified. Maintaining the status quo is necessary to conserve the caribou population and allow for subsistence harvest.

New Business

Draft Tribal Consultation Implementation Guideline: Ms Jean Gamache, NPS, provided an overview of the Federal Subsistence Boards Tribal Consultation Policy.

Ms Gamache also provided the Council an update related to the local hire program.

Naknek Lake Red Fish Harvest: The NPS provided a status report on the Naknek Lake Red Fish harvest permitted for the descendants of Katmai. The Council discussed submitting regulatory proposals for the State BOF consideration. OSM staff will assist the Naknek Village to move forward on the proposal to include harvest methods, traditional use areas, and maintaining the list of qualified users for this fishery.

Rural Determination: Mr. Carl Johnson, briefed the Council on the rural determination process. The Federal Subsistence Board is seeking guidance from the RAC and public on the rural determination process.

Agency Reports

Office of Subsistence Management: Mr. Carl Johnson briefed the Council regarding the letter sent by the Southeast RAC for each RAC to review on how customary & traditional use determinations are applied. The Southeast RAC is seeking comments on its proposal on how to apply C&T Use Determination. The Southeast RAC is proposing to use ANILCA Section 804 to make C&T determinations. A full briefing will be presented at the fall October 2013 meeting.

Mr. Johnson also provided briefings on the Federal/State of Alaska MOU, Budget update, staffing in OSM, update on Council appointments and nominations cycle, proposed regulatory cycle, and the Fisheries Resource Monitoring program.

Togiak NWR: Mr. Andy Aderman, Wildlife Biologist, provided the Council on recent biological surveys conducted on the Mulchatna Caribou Herd.

Katmai NP: Mr. Eric Veach, providing a briefing to the Council on the NPS compendium. The NPS is taking comments until February 15, 2013. The Katmai NP hired a new superintendent and will be reporting to duty by March 14, 2013 and other NPS staffing information and status of the NPS Concession program. Mr. Hamon briefed the Council on the status of Brooks Camp projects and status of the NPS boundary on Pikes Ridge.

Ms Mary McBurney reported on activities of the Aniakchak SRC.

BBNA: Ms Danielle Stickman, Subsistence Fisheries Scientist, reported on ongoing efforts in capacity building with surrounding communities in the region. Ms Stickman also reported on resource projects by BBNA currently ongoing.

Ms Gayla Woods, Subsistence Research Specialist, reported on various natural resource projects in cooperation with Federal and State agencies with BBNA.

Other agency reports: BLM, BIA and the ADFG provided short reports on personnel and resource projects for their respective agency.

**Time and Location
of Next meeting**

The next meeting will be Oct 22- 23, 2013 in Dillingham.
Winter meeting February 11 – 12, 2014 in Naknek

Adjournment Meeting adjourned.

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

\s\ Donald Mike

Donald Mike, DFO
Regional Advisory Council Coordinator

Molly Chythlook, Chair
Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

These minutes will be formally considered by the Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council at its next meeting on October 29, 2013, and any corrections or notations will be incorporated in the minutes of that meeting.

GUIDANCE ON ANNUAL REPORTS

Background

ANILCA established the Annual Reports as the way to bring regional subsistence uses and needs to the Secretaries' attention. The Secretaries delegated this responsibility to the Board. Section 805(c) deference includes matters brought forward in the Annual Report.

The Annual Report provides the Councils an opportunity to address the directors of each of the four Department of Interior agencies and the Department of Agriculture Forest Service in their capacity as members of the Federal Subsistence Board. The Board is required to discuss and reply to each issue in every Annual Report and to take action when within the Board's authority. In many cases, if the issue is outside of the Board's authority, the Board will provide information to the Council on how to contact personnel at the correct agency. As agency directors, the Board members have authority to implement most of the actions which would effect the changes recommended by the Councils, even those not covered in Section 805(c). The Councils are strongly encouraged to take advantage of this opportunity.

Report Content

Both Title VIII Section 805 and 50 C.F.R. 100.11 (Subpart B of the regulations) describe what may be contained in an Annual Report from the councils to the Board. This description includes issues that are not generally addressed by the normal regulatory process:

- an identification of current and anticipated subsistence uses of fish and wildlife populations within the region;
- an evaluation of current and anticipated subsistence needs for fish and wildlife populations from the public lands within the region;
- a recommended strategy for the management of fish and wildlife populations within the region to accommodate such subsistence uses and needs related to the public lands; and
- recommendations concerning policies, standards, guidelines, and regulations to implement the strategy.

Please avoid filler or fluff language that does not specifically raise an issue of concern or information to the Board.

Report Clarity

In order for the Board to adequately respond to each Council's annual report, it is important for the annual report itself to state issues clearly.

- If addressing an existing Board policy, Councils should please state whether there is something unclear about the policy, if there is uncertainty about the reason for the policy, or if the Council needs information on how the policy is applied.
- Council members should discuss in detail at Council meetings the issues for the annual report and assist the Council Coordinator in understanding and stating the issues clearly.
- Council Coordinators and OSM staff should assist the Council members during the meeting in ensuring that the issue is stated clearly.

Thus, if the Councils can be clear about their issues of concern and ensure that the Council Coordinator is relaying them sufficiently, then the Board and OSM staff will endeavor to provide as concise and responsive of a reply as is possible.

Report Format

While no particular format is necessary for the Annual Reports, the report must clearly state the following for each item the Council wants the Board to address:

1. Numbering of the issues,
2. A description of each issue,
3. Whether the Council seeks Board action on the matter and, if so, what action the Council recommends, and
4. As much evidence or explanation as necessary to support the Council's request or statements relating to the item of interest.



U.S. FISH and WILDLIFE SERVICE
BUREAU of LAND MANAGEMENT
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
BUREAU of INDIAN AFFAIRS
FWS/OSM 13053.CJ

Federal Subsistence Board
1011 E. Tudor Rd., MS 121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503-6199



SEP 11 2013

Molly Chythlook, Chair
Bristol Bay Subsistence
Regional Advisory Council
c/o U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Office of Subsistence Management
1011 East Tudor Road, MS 121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Dear Chairwoman Chythlook:

This letter responds to the Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council's (Council) 2012 Annual Report as approved at its winter 2013 meeting. The Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture have delegated the responsibility to respond to these reports to the Federal Subsistence Board (Board). The Board appreciates your effort in developing the Annual Report and values the opportunity to review the issues brought forward concerning your region. Annual Reports allow the Board to become more aware of the issues that fall outside of the regulatory process and affect subsistence users in your region.

The Board has reviewed your Annual Report and offers the following responses:

Issue 1: Chignik Fishery Information

The Council, at its fall 2012 meeting, addressed Federal fishery proposals in the Chignik Fishery Management Area. When developing its recommendations on regulatory proposals in that area for the Board's consideration, information on commercial harvest was readily available, but the Council found the data lacking for sport and subsistence harvests. These data inadequacies impair the Council's ability to develop sound recommendations on Federal subsistence proposals.

The Council requests that a summary report be provided at each fall meeting on the total number of salmon harvested by subsistence and sport fish user groups during the fishing season, and that the Board coordinate with the State to ensure such a report is provided. Such information will enable the Council, with complete and current data, to develop sound recommendations to the Board in the future.

Chairwoman Chythlook

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Response:

Due to budget constraints Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) was not able to conduct post-season survey efforts in 2010 and 2011 so harvest estimates for those years are based only on returned permits. The most recent published subsistence harvest information contains data through 2010. Alaska Department of Fish and Game is currently working on updating the estimates for 2011 and 2012. OSM staff will work with ADF&G to provide the Council with an updated report when it is available.

Sport fish harvest is monitored through sport fish guide logs and sport fish statewide harvest surveys collected by ADF&G. The sport fish harvest information is made available each year following the season. Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) staff will work with ADF&G to provide the Council with an update on sport fish harvest at its fall 2013 meeting.

Issue 2: Stocks of Concern

The Council is deeply concerned about interception of sockeye salmon in the Area M fishery bound for the terminal fisheries in Bristol Bay and Western Alaska. Initial reports on genetic information suggest that 50 percent of the commercial catch in the Area M fishery are sockeye bound for Bristol Bay. The sockeye return to the Bristol Bay Region is an important fishery for the residents of the Bristol Bay region, which in some cases fall under Federal fishery management jurisdiction. The Council requests a full briefing on genetic information regarding the catch and interception occurring in the Area M fishery to determine the extent of the interception of sockeye bound for Bristol Bay and Western Alaska.

Response:

The Western Alaska Salmon Stock Identification Program (WASSIP) is a comprehensive program to sample commercial and subsistence chum and sockeye salmon fisheries for genetic information in coastal marine areas of western Alaska. This program is unprecedented in its magnitude and scope, including salmon fisheries from Chignik Bay to Kotzebue Sound, stretching over 3,000 km of shoreline. They have produced a series of reports discussing the findings of their work. OSM staff will work with the State subsistence liaison to arrange for a member of the WASSIP to brief the RAC at its fall 2013 meeting.

Issue 3: Bering Sea Bycatch

The Council requests that it be provided continued briefings on the Bering Sea Pollock Fishery, which has a significant bycatch of salmon bound for Bristol Bay and Western Alaska. Salmon species for Bristol Bay and Western Alaska are an important resource for the livelihood and subsistence needs of our region's residents.

Response:

Office of Subsistence Management staff will continue to provide written briefs in the Council's meeting booklets, as requested, when there are new developments. If the Council would like this

Chairwoman Chythlook

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as an agenda item for each Council meeting, inform your Council Coordinator so that arrangements can be made. Council members can also find a variety of Bering Sea and Aleutian Islands salmon bycatch reports and information on the North Pacific Fishery Management Council website: <http://www.fakr.noaa.gov/npfmc/>

For specific, up-to-date salmon bycatch mortality totals, Council members can view these websites:

Chinook salmon

http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/sustainablefisheries/inseason/chinook_salmon_mortality.pdf

Chum salmon

http://alaskafisheries.noaa.gov/sustainablefisheries/inseason/chum_salmon_mortality.pdf

Issue 4: Unit 17A Moose Management Plan

The Council was briefed on the Unit 17A Moose Management Plan developed by the Unit 17A Moose Working Group (Working Group). The Working Group members, or their designees, developing the plan were the Togiak and Nushagak Advisory Committees, Bristol Bay Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council, Togiak National Wildlife Refuge, and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. The Working Group endorsed the plan on January 8, 2013, with the exception of the Bristol Bay Council representative. The final plan was presented to the Alaska Board of Game (BOG) at its meeting held in Wasilla on February 8, 2013.

The plan and actions taken by the BOG, were presented to the Council during its February 11, 2013 meeting held in Naknek by the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge wildlife biologist. Details of the plan were presented, outlining the plan for harvest in Unit 17A to the Council.

The Council unanimously endorsed the Unit 17A Moose Management Plan presented by Refuge staff. The Moose Management Plan is a product of cooperation among State and Federal agencies as well as the local advisory committees, and is a living document that provides future opportunity to revisit the plan and address issues related to moose management. The Working Group, through the Moose Management Plan, is committed to local consultation, which is crucial in developing a resource management plan that all users can support. The Council urges the Board to continue to support such cooperative efforts between Federal and State agencies to provide subsistence opportunities for rural residents.

Response:

The Board appreciates the Council's participation in the Unit 17 Moose Management Working Group, and acknowledges the benefits of cooperative resource management. Management plans, such as the Unit 17A Moose Management Plan (Management Plan), play an important role in setting Federal harvest regulations. Guidelines and objectives from the management plans are typically included in wildlife proposal analyses and are often part of the Board's deliberations for

Chairwoman Chythlook

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regulatory decisions. Later this year, the Board will be considering regulatory changes requested by emergency special action (WSA13-01) and proposal (WP14-21) to mirror State harvest regulations in Unit 17A. The State regulations were changed in February 2013 to enable implementation of the recently modified Management Plan. Finally, the Board will have an opportunity to review the Management Plan at its April 2014 meeting.

In closing, I want to thank you and your Council for their continued involvement and diligence in matters regarding the Federal Subsistence Management Program. I would like to specifically thank Peter Abraham and Daniel O'Hara for their 20 years of service, and Nanci Morris Lyon and Dan Dunaway for their 10 years of service to the Federal Subsistence Management program as members of this Council. I speak for the entire Board in expressing our appreciation for your efforts and our confidence that the subsistence users of the Bristol Bay Region are well represented through your work.

Sincerely,

Tim Towarak
Chair

- cc. Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council
Federal Subsistence Board
Interagency Staff Committee
Gene Peltola, Jr., Assistant Regional Director, OSM
Kathleen M. O'Reilly-Doyle, Deputy Assistant Regional Director, OSM
Carl Johnson, Council Coordination Division Chief, OSM
Donald Mike, Subsistence Council Coordinator, OSM
Administrative Record

CUSTOMARY AND TRADITIONAL USE DETERMINATION BRIEFING

The Federal Subsistence Board, and the Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council, would like your recommendations on the current customary and traditional use determination process. The Board last asked the Councils a similar question in 2011 as directed by the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture. All Councils, with the exception of the Southeast Council, indicated that the existing customary and traditional use determination process was working. At the request of the Southeast Council, this additional review is being conducted for your input.

We will briefly describe the history of customary and traditional use determinations, and illustrate the differences between those determinations and an ANILCA Section 804 analysis. We will then ask for Council discussion and recommendations. Our focus is not on *how* customary and traditional use determinations are made, but on *why* they are made. The Southeast Council would like you to recommend, as a Council, to eliminate, amend, or make no changes to the current customary and traditional use determination process.

The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) does not require customary and traditional use determinations. Customary and traditional use regulations were adopted from the State when the Federal Subsistence Management Program was established in 1990. In the 1992 Record of Decision, the Federal Subsistence Board considered four customary and traditional use options and recommended to the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture that State customary and traditional use determinations continue to be used. The State's eight criteria for determining customary and traditional use were subsequently slightly modified for use in Federal regulations. Since the establishment of the Federal Subsistence Management Program, the Board has made some 300 customary and traditional use determinations.

The Board initially adopted the State's customary and traditional use criteria (renaming them "factors"), anticipating the resumption of State management of subsistence on Federal public lands, and intending to "minimize disruption to traditional State regulation and management of fish and wildlife" (55 FR 27188 June, 29, 1990). The State has not resumed subsistence management on Federal public lands, and it appears the Federal Subsistence Management Program will be permanent. (See **Appendix A** for a listing of the eight factors.)

Note that the Board does not use customary and traditional use determinations to restrict amounts of harvest. The Board makes customary and traditional use determinations, relative to particular fish stocks and wildlife populations, in order to recognize a community or area whose residents generally exhibit eight factors of customary and traditional use. The Southeast Council is concerned that the effect is to exclude those Federally qualified rural residents who do not generally exhibit these factors from participating in subsistence harvests in particular areas.

In 2009, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar announced a review of the Federal subsistence program. Part of that review focused on customary and traditional use determinations. Specifically, in 2010, the Secretary of the Interior, with the concurrence of the Secretary of Agriculture, asked the Board to "Review, with RAC input, the customary and traditional use determination process and present recommendations for regulatory changes."

All ten Regional Advisory Councils were asked for their perspectives on customary and traditional use determinations during the 2011 winter meeting cycle. Nine Councils did not suggest changes to the

process (see **Appendix B**). The Southeast Council, however, suggested one modification, which was included in its annual report. The modified regulation reads as follows:

§100.16 (a) The Board shall determine which fish stocks and wildlife populations have been customarily and traditionally used for subsistence. These determinations shall identify the specific community's or area's use of ~~specific fish stocks and wildlife populations~~ **all species of fish and wildlife that have been traditionally used, in their (past and present) geographic areas**. For areas managed by the National Park Service, where subsistence uses are allowed, the determinations may be made on an individual basis.

In other words, once a customary and traditional use determination is made for an area, residents in that area would have customary and traditional use for *all* species. There would be no need for customary and traditional use determinations for specific fish stocks and wildlife populations, or on a species-by-species basis.

Subsequently, the Southeast Council formed a workgroup to analyze the customary and traditional use determination process. The Southeast Council workgroup, after conducting an extensive review of Regional Advisory Council transcripts, determined that Councils were not adequately briefed on the Secretaries' request for Council recommendations on the process. The Southeast Council drafted a letter and a briefing document, which were provided to the other Regional Advisory Councils during the 2013 winter meeting cycle; these are included in your meeting materials.

Pursuant to the workgroup findings, the Southeast Council emphasized the following:

The current customary and traditional use determination process is being used to allocate resources between rural residents, often in times of abundance. This is an inappropriate method of deciding which residents can harvest fish or wildlife in an area and may result in unnecessarily restricting subsistence users. The SE Council has a history of generally recommending a broad geographic scale when reviewing proposals for customary and traditional use determinations. Subsistence users primarily harvest resources near their community of residence and there is normally no management reason to restrict use by rural residents from distant communities. If there is a shortage of resources, Section 804 of ANILCA provides direction in the correct method of allocating resources.

The Southeast Council does not support retaining the current customary and traditional use determination process. Instead, the Southeast Council suggests that, when necessary, the Board restrict harvests by applying ANILCA Section 804 criteria:

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

The Federal Subsistence Board, and also the Southeast Council, would like your recommendations on the current customary and traditional use determination process. Specifically, the Southeast Council would like you to consider whether to

- (1) eliminate customary and traditional use determinations and instead use, when necessary, ANILCA Section 804 criteria,
- (2) change the way such determinations are made, by making area-wide customary and traditional use determinations for all species (not species-by-species or by particular fish stocks and wildlife

populations),

(3) make some other change, or

(4) make no change.

Council input will provide the basis for a briefing to the Federal Subsistence Board in response to the Secretaries' directive to review the customary and traditional use determination process and present recommendations for regulatory change, if needed. The Board could then recommend that the Secretaries eliminate, amend, or make no change to the current customary and traditional use determination process.

APPENDIX A

For reference, here are the eight factors currently used in Federal regulations for making customary and traditional use determinations (36 CFR 242.16 and 50 CFR100.16):

(a) The Board shall determine which fish stocks and wildlife populations have been customarily and traditionally used for subsistence. These determinations shall identify the specific community's or area's use of specific fish stocks and wildlife populations. For areas managed by the National Park Service, where subsistence uses are allowed, the determinations may be made on an individual basis.

(b) A community or area shall generally exhibit the following factors, which exemplify customary and traditional use. The Board shall make customary and traditional use determinations based on application of the following factors:

- (1) A long-term consistent pattern of use, excluding interruptions beyond the control of the community or area;*
- (2) A pattern of use recurring in specific seasons for many years;*
- (3) A pattern of use consisting of methods and means of harvest which are characterized by efficiency and economy of effort and cost, conditioned by local characteristics;*
- (4) The consistent harvest and use of fish or wildlife as related to past methods and means of taking; near, or reasonably accessible from, the community or area;*
- (5) A means of handling, preparing, preserving, and storing fish or wildlife which has been traditionally used by past generations, including consideration of alteration of past practices due to recent technological advances, where appropriate;*
- (6) A pattern of use which includes the handing down of knowledge of fishing and hunting skills, values, and lore from generation to generation;*
- (7) A pattern of use in which the harvest is shared or distributed within a definable community of persons; and*
- (8) A pattern of use which relates to reliance upon a wide diversity of fish and wildlife resources of the area and which provides substantial cultural, economic, social, and nutritional elements to the community or area.*

APPENDIX B

Summary of Winter 2011 Council Comments on the Customary and Traditional Use Determination Process

(Note that summaries were drafted by OSM LT members or the Council Coordinator that attended the meetings; see the Council transcripts for details.)

The **Seward Peninsula Council** is satisfied with the current Federal subsistence customary and traditional use determination process. The Council noted that C&T determinations are important and that the Federal Subsistence Management Program provides ways to modify C&T determinations if needed.

The **Western Interior Council** is satisfied with the process used by the Federal Subsistence Board to make C&T determinations and thinks it works well. The Council felt that the Board is sensitive to local concerns, and there is room for the public to be involved. The Council felt that getting rid of the existing process would be problematic (i.e., what to do with the roughly 300 C&T determinations that have already been made), and inventing a new system could be counterproductive. The Council felt that maintaining the Councils' and AC's involvement in C&T determinations public process is key and the current process does just that.

The **Eastern Interior Council** is comfortable with the existing process and believes that it works well. In most cases there is no need to change the process. One member expressed the thought that the only time the process doesn't work well is when it is used to pit user against user.

The **North Slope Council** was fine with the current C&T process and had no suggestions for changes.

The **Yukon Kuskokwim Delta Council** was fine with the current C&T process, even though one member noted not always agreeing with the determinations.

The **Bristol Bay Council** observed that the C&T process works wonderfully in their region and noted that there is no burning need for change. There was discussion about the closure to hunting and subsistence uses in Katmai National Park.

The **Southcentral Council** is generally satisfied with the process used by the Federal Subsistence Board to make C&T determinations, stating that it is not perfect but it has worked. The Council liked the process because it puts the information on customary and traditional use in front of the Councils and the Board, and that is valuable. The process gives a good understanding of how the rural subsistence process works. The Council felt that it could be tweaked a bit, for example, if you have C&T for a variety of species, you shouldn't have to do a separate C&T finding for every other species – there should be a way to streamline the process. The Council also discussed the disparity of information needed in some parts of the state versus in other parts of the state (i.e., Ninilchik). The Council sees C&T as being inclusive, not exclusive. The Board needs to defer to Councils on their recommendations on C&T. The Council also reminded itself that it could do a better job by building a solid record in support of its decisions.

The **Northwest Arctic Council** discussed this topic at length. In the end, the Council stated that the current process is working and it did not have any recommended changes at this time.

The **Kodiak/Aleutians Subsistence Council** discussed this subject at length. It generally supported the overall process, though had a lot of comments. One Council member stated that he thinks that the process

is good. Sometimes the process is too liberal and other times it is too literal, but it has been improving and overall it is good. Another Council member noted that the method used for making customary and traditional use determinations isn't perfect, but he couldn't think of another way to do it. He added that it would be nice if more concrete words were used, for example, what do "long term use" and "seasonal use" really mean? Another Council member asked about the process with regard to how introduced species fit in, especially with regard to the factor including "long term use". Finally, a Council member noted that we need to ensure that the process works, and that the subsistence priority remains.

The **Southeast Council** is drafting a letter to the Board concerning this issue. The Council noted that the eight factor analysis is a carryover from State of Alaska regulations and recommends that the Federal Subsistence Management Program draft new more suitable Federal regulations which adhere to provisions contained within Section 804 of ANILCA. The Council recommends that:

- The Board give deference to the Council recommendation for customary and traditional use determinations.
- 50 CFR100.16(a) read: "The Board shall determine which fish stocks and wildlife populations have been customarily and traditionally used for subsistence. These determinations shall identify the specific community's or area's use of [specific fish stock and wildlife population] **all species of fish and wildlife that they have traditionally used, in their (past and present) geographical areas**".
- If an eight factor approach is continued, then the regulations should be modified to include specific language for a holistic approach.

Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

January 22, 2013

Customary and Traditional Use Determination Recommendation Briefing

Issue:

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

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

Background:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Southeast Council Findings:

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

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

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

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

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

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

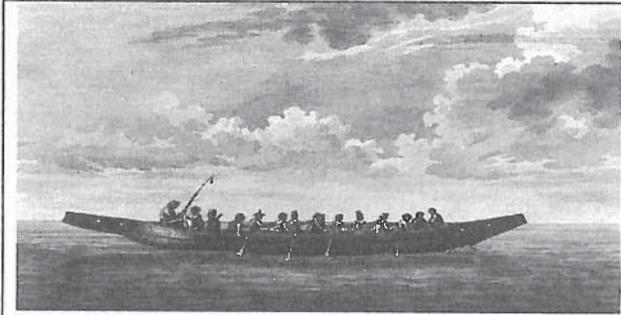
Action:

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

Key Contacts:

Bert Adams, Chair SESRAC – 907-784-3357

Robert Larson – SESRAC Coordinator – 907-772-5930



**Southeast Alaska Subsistence Regional
Advisory Council**

Bertrand Adams Sr., Chair

P. O. Box 349

Yakutat, Alaska 99689

kaadashan@alaska.net

RAC SE13001.RL

JAN 11 2013

Ms. Molly Chythlook, Chair
Bristol Bay Alaska Subsistence
Regional Advisory Council
1356 Nerka Drive
Dillingham, Alaska 99576

Dear Ms. Chythlook:

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

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

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

Ms. Molly Chythlook

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

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

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

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

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

Ms. Molly Chythlook

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

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

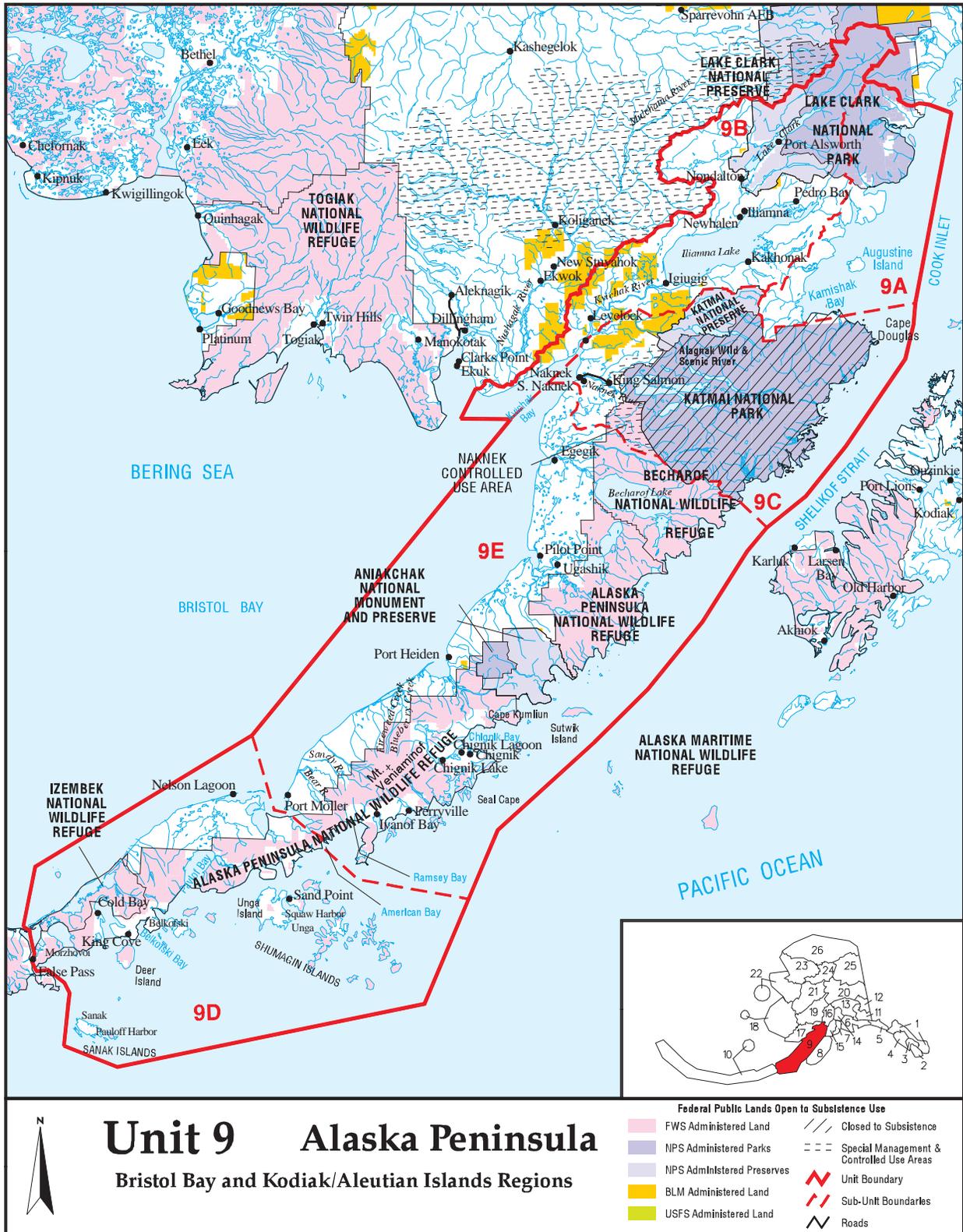
Gunalchéesh (thank you).

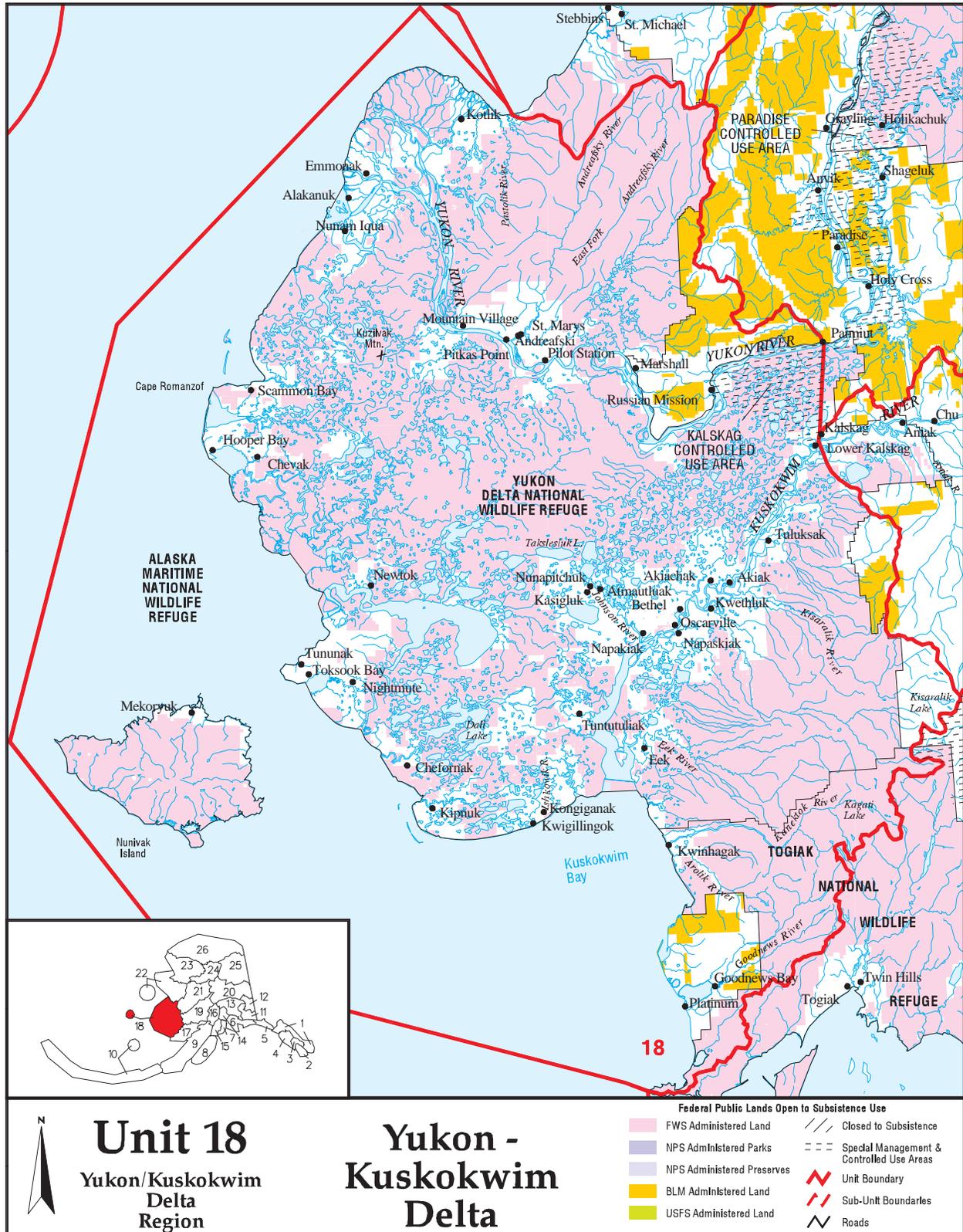
Sincerely,
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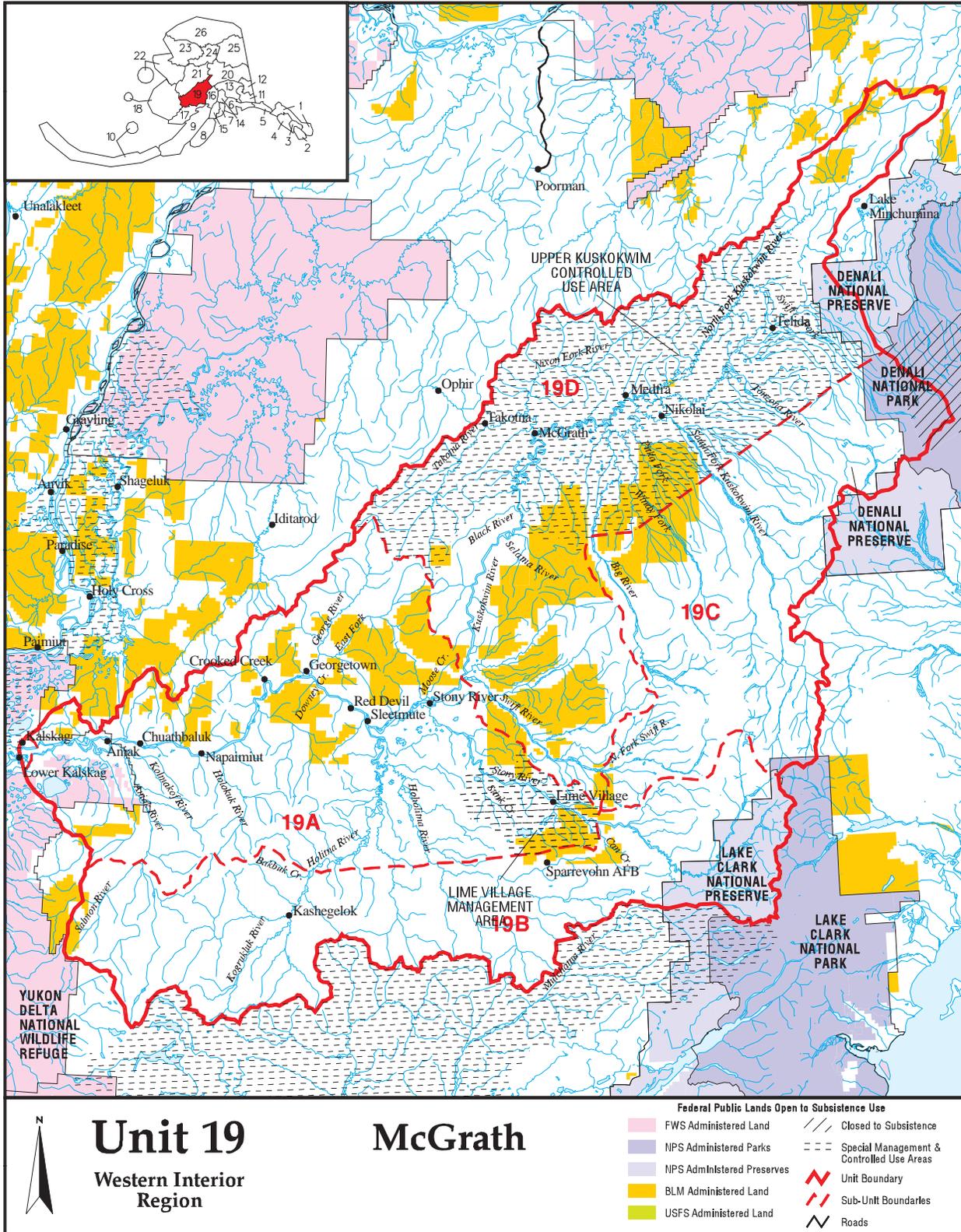
Bertrand Adams Sr., Chair

Enclosures

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







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

continued on next page

WP14-01 Executive Summary (continued)

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

DRAFT STAFF ANALYSIS WP14-01

ISSUES

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

DISCUSSION

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

Existing Federal Regulation

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

Units 1–5—Special Provisions

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

Proposed Federal Regulation

§ __.26 *Subsistence taking of wildlife*

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

...

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

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

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

Units 1–5—Special Provisions

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

Existing State Regulation

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

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

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

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

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

Extent of Federal Public Lands

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

Customary and Traditional Use Determinations

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

Regulatory History

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

Trapping Background

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

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

Effects of the Proposal

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

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

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

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

Few requirements for trap check intervals are currently in State or Federal regulations, and those regulations have been put in place in response to specific incidents or in areas with high potential for user

conflict. Under State regulation in Alaska, the only trap check time requirement in regulation is a 72-hour trap check in a small area near Gustavus in Unit 1C under State regulations, which was adopted due to multiple moose being incidentally caught in snares (ADF&G 2012b). A 4-day trap check requirement is required on the more accessible and heavily trapped portions of the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge (Kenai NWR) as a stipulation of the Refuge Special Use Permit in order to increase the potential for safe release of incidentally-caught non-target animals including bald eagles, moose and domestic dogs.

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

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

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

OSM PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

Oppose Proposal WP14-01.

Justification

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

While the information gathered from a harvest report form of non-target species caught in traps and snares could provide useful information, it would be an unnecessary requirement for Federally qualified

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

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WRITTEN PUBLIC COMMENTS

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

Miki and Julie Collins, Lake Minchumina

Oppose Statewide Proposal WP14-01: We oppose Statewide Proposal WP14-01 to create new regulations for requiring that identification tags be put on traps and snares and that traps and snares be checked every 6 days. It will be cumbersome, unnecessary and burdensome for federally qualified trappers to have constraints placed upon them to have to put identification tags on snares and traps and to check traps and snares every 6 days. Incidental catch of non-target species and reporting it is good, and should be done voluntarily by trappers. Traps and snares should only be checked if weather conditions are safe to check snares and traps. In rural areas, temperature conditions can be minus forty to fifty for 3 consecutive weeks. It would be unsafe to have regulations in place stating that snares and traps must be checked every six days.

Ahtna Inc. Customary and Traditional Use Committee

Oppose Statewide Proposal WP14-01: The release of live animals from traps is a huge safety issue and is very dangerous. A state wide regulation to mark your traps and check traps on a 6 day schedule is also a safety issue and very dangerous for the trapper. I've trapped the same area for 32 years in the Eastern Interior and a 6 day check would put the trapper in extreme risk at 50 and 60 degrees below when the fur is not moving and also dies very quickly in a trap. Trapper

know how often to check their trap in a specific area, they want the fur in the best possible condition. If Mr. Bopp has issues with the trappers in his area he can meet with them at Fish and Game Advisory meetings, Federal Subsistence meeting and City Council meetings in his area. It is a shame that people who know nothing about trapping want to impose regulations on the

WSA13-01 Executive Summary	
General Description	Special Action WSA13-01 requests an extension of the to-be-announced winter season and an increase in the harvest limit for moose under Federal hunting regulations in Unit 17A. <i>Submitted by the Bristol Bay Regional Advisory Council</i>
Proposed Regulation	<p>Unit 17A—Moose</p> <p><i>Unit 17A—1 bull by State registration permit Aug. 25–Sept. 20.</i></p> <p><i>Unit 17A—1 antlered bull up to 2 moose by State registration permit. Up to a 14 31-day season during the period Dec. 1–Jan. 31 may be opened or closed by the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Manager after consultation with ADF&G and the Chair of the Bristol Bay Regional Advisory Council.</i></p> <p><i>Winter season to may be announced</i></p>
OSM Preliminary Conclusion	Support
Bristol Bay Regional Council Recommendation	
Yukon/Kuskokwim Delta Regional Council Recommendation	
Interagency Staff Committee Comments	
ADF&G Comments	
Written Public Comments	None

DRAFT STAFF ANALYSIS WSA13-01

ISSUES

Special Action WSA13-01, submitted by the Bristol Bay Regional Advisory Council, requests an extension of the to-be-announced winter season and an increase in the harvest limit for moose under Federal hunting regulations in Unit 17A.

DISCUSSION

The proponent states that the Federal moose regulations should be changed to align with State seasons and harvest limits in Unit 17A. The changes are intended to slightly reduce the Unit 17A moose population to keep it in a healthy and productive state, and to prevent over-browsing of the habitat. The regulatory change will provide Federally qualified subsistence users up to 17 additional days of opportunity to harvest moose (up to 31 days total) in Unit 17A during December 2013 and January 2014. The proposal also provides additional harvest opportunity for Federally qualified subsistence users with more liberal harvest regulations that include an increased harvest limit and allowing users to harvest cow moose during the winter.

Existing Federal Regulation

Unit 17A—Moose

Unit 17A—1 bull by State registration permit *Aug. 25–Sept. 20.*

Unit 17A—1 antlered bull by State registration permit. Up to a 14-day season during the period Dec. 1–Jan. 31 may be opened or closed by the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Manager after consultation with ADF&G and the Chair of the Bristol Bay Regional Advisory Council. *Winter season to be announced*

Proposed Federal Regulation

Unit 17A—Moose

Unit 17A—1 bull by State registration permit *Aug. 25–Sept. 20.*

Unit 17A—1 antlered bull up to 2 moose by State registration permit. Up to a 31-day season during the period Dec. 1–Jan. 31 may be opened or closed by the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Manager after consultation with ADF&G and the Chair of the Bristol Bay Regional Advisory Council. *Winter season to may be announced*

Existing State Regulation

Unit 17A—Moose

Residents: One bull by permit available in person in Dillingham and Togiak beginning Aug 15 *RM573* *Aug. 25–Sept. 20*

OR

Two moose by permit available in person in Dillingham and Togiak (up to a 31-day season may be announced Dec 1 – Jan 31)

RM575

May be announced

Extent of Federal Public Lands

Federal public lands comprise approximately 87% of Unit 17A, and consist of 87% FWS and less than 1% of BLM managed lands (see **Unit 17 Map**).

Customary and Traditional Use Determinations

Residents of Kwethluk have a positive customary and traditional use determination to harvest moose in Units 17A and 17B, those portions north and west of a line beginning from the Unit 18 boundary at the northwest end of Nenevok Lake, to the southern point of upper Togiak Lake, and northeast to the northern point of Nuyakuk Lake, northeast to the point where the Unit 17 boundary intersects the Shotgun Hills.

Residents of Akiak and Akiachak have a positive customary and traditional use determination to harvest moose in Unit 17A, that portion north of Togiak Lake that includes the Izavieknik River drainages.

Residents of Unit 17, Goodnews Bay and Platinum (excluding residents of Akiachak, Akiak, and Quinhagak) have a positive customary and traditional use determination to harvest moose in Unit 17A remainder.

Regulatory History

Under State and Federal regulations there was no open season for the harvest of moose in Unit 17A from January 1, 1981 to August 20, 1997. Prior to 1981, the State moose season was Sept. 10–Sept. 20 and Dec. 10–Dec. 31, with a harvest limit of one bull moose.

Several proposals were submitted to the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) to establish a moose season in Unit 17A. Proposal P95-31 requested the establishment of an Aug. 20–Sept. 15 moose season. The Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council) tabled the proposal due to concerns about the moose population, and the Board deferred action on P95-31. Special Action S95-03 requested the establishment of a temporary Aug. 20–Sept. 20 moose season, but the Board rejected the request because the Council had not had an opportunity to review moose survey data and make a recommendation. Proposals P96-37 and P96-38 requested the establishment of moose seasons from Aug. 15–Sept. 20 and Aug. 20–Sept. 15, respectively. The Board supported the Councils recommendation to reject the proposals and recommend the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge develop a management strategy that allowed for subsistence harvest while promoting growth of the moose population.

In 1997, the Alaska Board of Game adopted State Proposal 134, which established a moose hunting season in Unit 17A with a harvest limit of one bull moose during Aug. 20–Sept. 15. The Council submitted Special Actions SA97-03 and SA97-03a to establish a moose season under Federal regulations. Special action SA97-03a was a modification of SA97-03, which requested the Federal season align with the State season and close when 10 bull moose were harvested. The Board approved SA97-03a.

Proposal P98-59 was submitted to take the temporary season, established by approval of SA97-03a, and put it into permanent regulation and align with State regulations. The Board deferred action on P98-59,

pending the development of a moose management plan in Unit 17A. The proposal was resubmitted as P99-40, but was rejected by the Board because P98-59 was still pending. Another temporary season was established with the Board's approval of Special Action WSA00-05. Proposal P01-20 was submitted to make the temporary season from WSA00-05 a permanent regulation, which the Board adopted.

Special Action WSA02-11 was submitted by the Togiak Traditional Council to establish a limited winter moose hunt in part of Unit 17A. WSA02-11 was subsequently modified by the Togiak Traditional Council, and recommended that a Federal registration permit be required instead of a State registration permit. The special action was approved with modification by the Board on November 12, 2002. The modification stipulated that the Federal subsistence hunt require the use of a State registration permit rather than the use of a Federal registration permit. Prior to approval of WSA02-11, proposed winter moose seasons had been previously rejected by the Board, including Special Action SA97-12, Proposal P00-61, a subsequent Request for Reconsideration RFR00-03, and Proposal P01-21. Proposal WP03-34 requested that the season temporarily established by WSA02-11 be placed in permanent regulation, but the Board deferred action because of a pending review by the Unit 17A Moose Planning Working Group.

Proposal WP04-46 requested that a limited moose hunt be held in Unit 17A during the period of Dec. 1–Jan. 31. The Board adopted the proposal with modifications consistent with the recommendation of the Bristol Bay Regional Advisory Council. The first modification implemented a winter hunt using the State registration permit instead of a Federal permit. The second modification included language stating “up to a 14-day season” during the period of Dec. 1–Jan. 31. Also in 2004, Proposal WP04-47 requested a winter moose hunt be held in Unit 17A from Jan. 1–Jan. 31, with a harvest limit of one moose and a closure of the season once 20 cows had been harvested. The Board rejected the proposal as a consent agenda item, as the action on WP04-46 was preferred by the Regional Advisory Councils.

In 2012, Proposal WP12-40 requested a modification of the Unit 17A winter season hunt area by expanding the season to all of Unit 17A. The Board adopted the proposal as a consent agenda item to provide additional harvest opportunity and to align with State regulations.

The winter moose season was extended in 2013 to provide additional harvest opportunity under Federal and State regulations. The State extended the winter moose season in Unit 17A for an additional 14 days from January 9–22, 2013 with Emergency Order No. 04-01-13. The justification for the season extension was that travel conditions and moose distribution were believed to have affected hunter success rates, resulting in approximately 6–8 moose being harvested. Aerial survey data and high rates of calf production and survival suggested the population could sustain additional harvest during the extended season. Special action WSA12-11 also requested an extension of the winter moose season in Unit 17A to January 9–22, as travel conditions had limited the opportunity for Federally qualified subsistence users to harvest moose during the 14-day winter season. It was determined the moose population could support the harvest of additional antlered bulls and WSA12-11 was approved by the Board to provide additional harvest opportunity, including utilization of the Federal designated hunter regulations.

Current Events Involving the Species

At its February 8–15, 2013 meeting, the Alaska Board of Game adopted Proposal 48B, which increased the harvest limit from 1 bull to 2 moose, increased the season length for the may-be-announced winter season from up to 14 to up to 31 days, and opened a Sept. 5–15 nonresident season that allowed for the harvest of one bull with 50-inch antlers or antlers with 4 or more brow tines on one side by registration permit. The nonresident season will be by drawing permit only and will begin in 2014/2015. These actions were consistent with the updated Unit 17A Moose Management Plan.

Biological Background

Moose are relative newcomers to southwest Alaska and to Unit 17A, possibly migrating into the area from the middle Yukon River drainages during the last century. Aerial surveys conducted in the late 1980s and 1990s often resulted in less than 10 moose being observed in the unit (Woolington 2008). Local residents harvested moose opportunistically, but other species such as caribou, bear, and beaver were the main sources of wildlife meat. The last 20 years of minimum count surveys in Unit 17A show a steady increase from less than 10 moose in the early 1990s to 1,166 moose observed in 2011 (**Figure 1**). The 2004 version of the Unit 17A Moose Management Plan established a minimum population objective of 300 moose and a target population of 1,100–1,750 moose for Unit 17A. However, the population objective was recently revised for a target population of 800–1,200 moose in the January 8, 2013 version of the Moose Management Plan. The population's carrying capacity was recently estimated to be between 900 and 1,350 moose (Unit 17A Moose Management Group 2013).

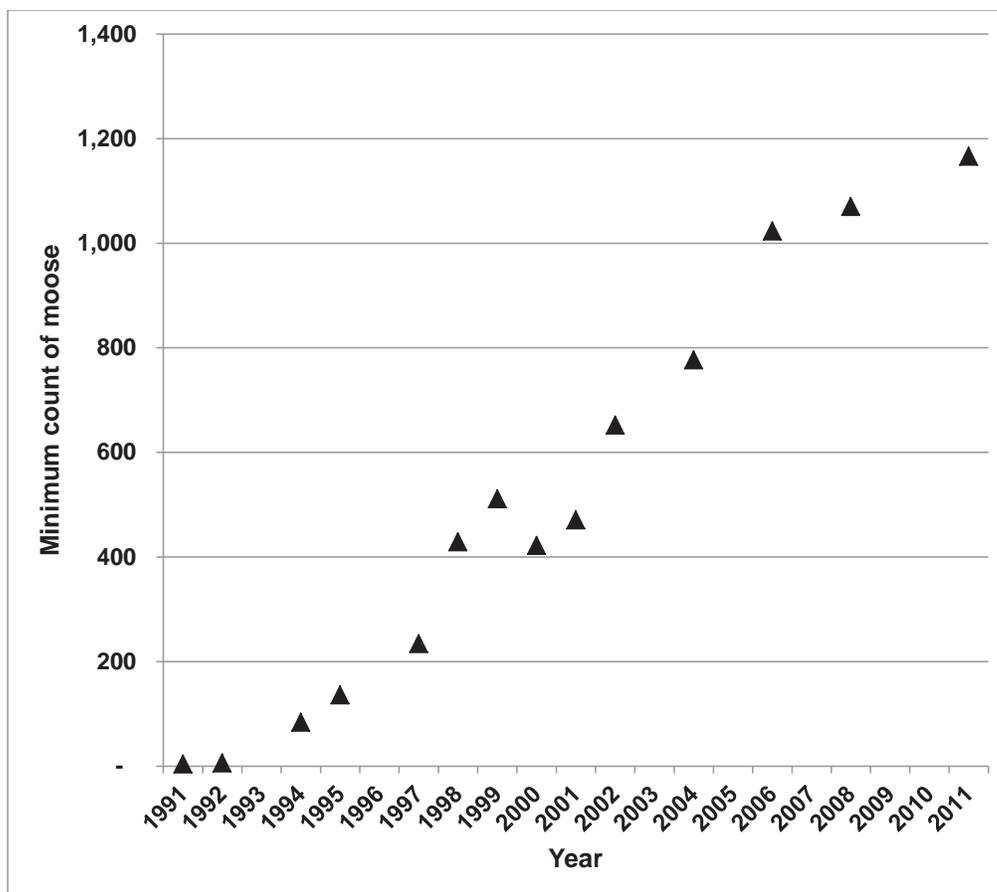


Figure 1. Minimum counts of moose observed during winter aerial surveys of Unit 17A between 1991 and 2011 (Aderman et al. 2012). Blanks indicate that no surveys were performed that year.

The Togiak National Wildlife Refuge and ADF&G began a cooperative research study in 1998 to better understand the demographics of the Unit 17A moose population (Aderman et al. 2012). Objectives of the study are to monitor the population size, calf production and recruitment, and survival of females and their offspring. Since the project began in 1998, 50 short-yearling (between 10 and 12-months old) females and 48 adult cows have been collared, and aerial radio tracking was conducted monthly for all

moose and weekly for cows during the calving period (Aderman et al. 2012). The minimum calf counts averaged 128 calves per 100 adult females (range 87–157 calves/100 females) between 1998 and 2011, and twinning rates averaged 64% (range 25%–94%) (Aderman et al. 2012). The twinning rates suggest that the population remains below carrying capacity (Gasaway et al. 1992, Aderman et al. 2012). Fall recruitment was estimated at 63 calves per 100 females (range 35–86 calves/100 females) between 1998 and 2011. Average calf survival from birth to November was 48% (range 28%–60%) and was 44% (range 28%–55%) through the following March/April survey period over the same time frame (Aderman et al. 2012). The average annual survival rate for female moose was 0.90 (range 0.76–0.97) from 1998 to 2011, with most mortalities occurring in late winter and spring (Aderman et al. 2012). Bull:cow ratios have typically been high throughout Unit 17 (Woolington 2010), and averaged 82 bulls:100 cows between 1998 and 2006 (Aderman 2008).

Between 2003 and 2011, an average of 33 moose were harvested annually in Unit 17A, and an average of 31% (range 6%–50%) of the harvest occurred during the winter season (**Table 1**). Over the same period 65%–100% of moose harvested in Unit 17A were by local residents of Unit 17 (**Table 1**). However, nonlocal residents also may include Federally qualified subsistence users, as the communities of Akiachak, Akiak, Kwethluk, Goodnews Bay, and Platinum all occur in Unit 18.

As the moose population has increased, so has the total annual harvest, from reported harvests of 11 moose in 2003 to 50 moose in 2011 (**Table 1**). As of April 27, 2013, 29 bull moose were reportedly harvested during the 2012 fall hunt while another 16 bulls were harvested during the winter hunt (Aderman 2013, pers. comm.).

Table 1. Hunter participation and moose harvest among local and nonlocal Alaska residents using State registration permits RM573 (fall season) and RM575 (to-be-announced winter season) in Unit 17A (Aderman 2013, pers. comm.). Federally qualified subsistence users are required to possess a State registration permit to harvest moose in the unit.

Year	Season	Residents of Unit 17			Nonlocal residents ^a			Total harvest
		Permits issued	Permits used	Harvest	Permits issued	Permits used	Harvest	
2003	Fall	52	44	6	7	3	1	11
	Winter	19	14	4	0	0	0	
2004	Fall	52	48	10	1	0	0	20
	Winter	44	29	10	0	0	0	
2005	Fall	68	58	20	5	3	1	24
	Winter	76	35	3	0	0	0	
2006	Fall	62	56	21	5	5	3	36
	Winter	48	26	11	6	5	1	
2007	Fall	81	63	32	2	0	0	41
	Winter	98	45	8	6	4	1	
2008 ^b	Fall	87	81	17	16	13	7	45
	Winter	110	64	21	0	0	0	
2009	Fall	98	82	18	21	17	11	31
	Winter	35	29	2	1	0	0	
2010 ^c	Fall	96	88	21	17	12	6	37
	Winter	30	25	10	1	0	0	
2011 ^c	Fall	114	103	22	25	20	6	50
	Winter	42	36	22	0	0	0	
2012 ^c	Fall	114	93	21	21	21	8	45
	Winter	58	36	16	0	0	0	

^a May include Federally qualified subsistence users from Akiachak, Akiak, Kwethluk, Goodnews Bay, and Platinum.

^b Fall 2008 was the first year that aircraft could be used during the hunt.

^c Preliminary harvest data.

Habitat

In 2011, the amount of moose habitat was estimated to comprise of 13.4% of Unit 17A (449 mi² of 3,357 mi²); however, the estimate did not include a mixed shrub category that contained an unknown amount percentage of willow and should be considered a minimum estimate (Aderman and Lowe 2011). A previous moose habitat mapping effort in 1999 estimated 560 mi² of optimal and 520 mi² of secondary moose winter habitats for Unit 17A, excluding the Nushagak Peninsula and areas west of the Matogak River (Aderman and Lowe 2011). Both estimates (1999 and 2011) were based on the same Landsat imagery from 1989.

Preliminary analyses of the nutritional quality suggest that forage species found in Unit 17A may provide more digestible protein than areas in Denali National Park and the Nelchina Basin (Aderman and Lowe 2011). The high amounts of digestible protein may help moose in Unit 17A achieve rapid body growth and lead to earlier sexual development.

Effects of the Proposal

If this Special Action is approved, it would align State and Federal regulations for the 2013/2014 regulatory year and provide additional opportunity for Federally qualified subsistence users to harvest moose in Unit 17A. Federally qualified subsistence users would have up to 17 additional days to harvest moose in the winter season, and the harvest limit would be increased from one antlered bull to 2 moose. Federally qualified subsistence users are required to have a State registration permit during the fall and winter moose seasons, and could harvest moose under State regulations regardless of the Board's decision. However, aligning State and Federal regulations would reduce regulatory complexity. In addition, adopting the proposal would allow Federally qualified users to harvest moose on Federal public land via Federal designated hunter regulations for other Federally qualified subsistence users.

Extending the winter season and increasing the harvest limit is expected to impact the moose population in Unit 17A. The proposed regulations provide the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge manager the flexibility to manage the harvest in order to keep the moose population within the guidelines of the Unit 17A Moose Management Plan. When the moose population is increasing and approaching carrying capacity, as is the current case, more liberal harvest regulations that allow for a longer season, increased harvest limits, and potentially allowing for the harvest of cows should help to reduce the population to more sustainable levels.

OSM PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

Support Special Action WSA13-01.

Justification

The proposed regulatory changes are consistent with recommendations of the Unit 17A Moose Management Plan, which state that when the moose population is increasing and approaching carrying capacity, more liberal harvest regulations that allow for a longer season, increased harvest limits, and potentially allowing for the harvest of cows should help to reduce the population to more sustainable levels. The proposed regulatory changes would also align with recent changes to State regulations to increase the harvest limit and the may-be-announced season. Federally qualified subsistence users would be provided with additional opportunity to harvest moose under Federal regulations, including the use of Federal designated hunter regulations. The moose population continues to increase and is within the estimated carrying capacity for the area.

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WP14-21 Executive Summary	
General Description	Proposal WP14-21 requests an extension of the to-be-announced winter season and an increase in the harvest limit for moose under Federal hunting regulations in Unit 17A. <i>Submitted by the Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council.</i>
Proposed Regulation	<p>Unit 17A—Moose</p> <p><i>Unit 17A—1 bull by State registration permit Aug. 25–Sept. 20.</i></p> <p><i>Unit 17A—1 antlered bull up to 2 moose by State registration permit. Up to a 14 31-day season during the period Dec. 1–Jan. 31 may be opened or closed by the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Manager after consultation with ADF&G and the Chair of the Bristol Bay Regional Advisory Council.</i></p> <p><i>Winter season to may be announced</i></p>
OSM Preliminary Conclusion	Support Proposal WP14-21 with modification to delete regulatory language found in the Unit 17A may-be-announced season, and delegate authority to the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Manager to open and close the season and set the harvest limit, including any sex restrictions (e.g., bulls only), for moose via a delegation of authority letter only.
Bristol Bay Regional Council Recommendation	
Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Council Recommendation	
Interagency Staff Committee Comments	
ADF&G Comments	
Written Public Comments	None

**DRAFT STAFF ANALYSIS
WP14-21**

ISSUES

Proposal WP14-21, submitted by the Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council, requests an extension of the to-be-announced winter season and an increase in the harvest limit for moose under Federal hunting regulations in Unit 17A.

DISCUSSION

The proponent states that the Federal moose regulations should be changed to align with State seasons and harvest limits in Unit 17A. The changes are intended to slightly reduce the Unit 17A moose population to keep it in a healthy and productive state, and to prevent over-browsing of the habitat. The regulatory change will provide Federally qualified subsistence users up to 17 additional days of opportunity to harvest moose (up to 31 days total) in Unit 17A during December/January. The proposal also provides additional harvest opportunity for Federally qualified subsistence users with more liberal harvest regulations that include an increased harvest limit and allowing users to harvest cow moose during the winter.

Existing Federal Regulation

Unit 17A—Moose

Unit 17A—1 bull by State registration permit *Aug. 25–Sept. 20.*

Unit 17A—1 antlered bull by State registration permit. Up to a 14-day season during the period Dec. 1–Jan. 31 may be opened or closed by the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Manager after consultation with ADF&G and the Chair of the Bristol Bay Regional Advisory Council. *Winter season to be announced*

Proposed Federal Regulation

Unit 17A—Moose

Unit 17A—1 bull by State registration permit *Aug. 25–Sept. 20.*

Unit 17A—~~1 antlered bull~~ up to 2 moose by State registration permit. Up to a ~~14~~ 31-day season during the period Dec. 1–Jan. 31 may be opened or closed by the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Manager after consultation with ADF&G and the Chair of the Bristol Bay Regional Advisory Council. *Winter season to ~~be~~ may be announced*

Existing State Regulation

Unit 17A—Moose

Residents: One bull by permit available in person *RM573* *Aug. 25–Sept. 20*
in Dillingham and Togiak beginning Aug 15

OR

Two moose by permit available in person in Dillingham and Togiak (up to a 31-day season may be announced Dec 1 – Jan 31)

RM575

May be announced

Extent of Federal Public Lands

Federal public lands comprise approximately 87% of Unit 17A, and consist of 87% FWS and less than 1% of BLM managed lands (**Unit 17 Map**).

Customary and Traditional Use Determinations

Residents of Kwethluk have a positive customary and traditional use determination to harvest moose in Units 17A and 17B, those portions north and west of a line beginning from the Unit 18 boundary at the northwest end of Nenevok Lake, to the southern point of upper Togiak Lake, and northeast to the northern point of Nuyakuk Lake, northeast to the point where the Unit 17 boundary intersects the Shotgun Hills.

Residents of Akiak and Akiachak have a positive customary and traditional use determination to harvest moose in Unit 17A, that portion north of Togiak Lake that includes the Izavieknik River drainages.

Residents of Unit 17, Goodnews Bay and Platinum (excluding residents of Akiachak, Akiak, and Quinhagak) have a positive customary and traditional use determination to harvest moose in Unit 17A remainder.

Regulatory History

Under State and Federal regulations there was no open season for the harvest of moose in Unit 17A from January 1, 1981 to August 20, 1997. Prior to 1981, the State moose season was Sept. 10–Sept. 20 and Dec. 10–Dec. 31, with a harvest limit of one bull moose.

Several proposals were submitted to the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) to establish a moose season in Unit 17A. Proposal P95-31 requested the establishment of an Aug. 20–Sept. 15 moose season. The Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council) tabled the proposal due to concerns about the moose population, and the Board deferred action on P95-31. Special Action S95-03 requested the establishment of a temporary Aug. 20–Sept. 20 moose season, but the Board rejected the request because the Council had not had an opportunity to review moose survey data and make a recommendation. Proposals P96-37 and P96-38 requested the establishment of moose seasons from Aug. 15–Sept. 20 and Aug. 20–Sept. 15, respectively. The Board supported the Councils recommendation to reject the proposals and recommend the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge develop a management strategy that allowed for subsistence harvest while promoting growth of the moose population.

In 1997, the Alaska Board of Game adopted Proposal 134, which established a moose hunting season in Unit 17A with a harvest limit of one bull moose during Aug. 20–Sept. 15. The Council submitted Special Actions SA97-03 and SA97-03a to establish a moose season under Federal regulations. Special action SA97-03a was a modification of SA97-03, which requested the Federal season align with the State season and close when 10 bull moose were harvested. The Board approved SA97-03a.

Proposal P98-59 was submitted to take the temporary season, established by approval of SA97-03a, and put it into permanent regulation and align with State regulations. The Board deferred action on P98-59, pending the development of a moose management plan in Unit 17A. The proposal was resubmitted as P99-40, but was rejected by the Board because P98-59 was still pending. Another temporary season was

established with the Board's approval of Special Action WSA00-05. Proposal P01-20 was submitted to make the temporary season from WSA00-05 a permanent regulation, which the Board adopted.

Special Action WSA02-11 was submitted by the Togiak Traditional Council to establish a limited winter moose hunt in part of Unit 17A. WSA02-11 was subsequently modified by the Togiak Traditional Council, and recommended that a Federal registration permit be required instead of a State registration permit. The special action was approved with modification by the Board on November 12, 2002. The modification stipulated that the Federal subsistence hunt require the use of a State registration permit rather than the use of a Federal registration permit. Prior to approval of WSA02-11, proposed winter moose seasons had been previously rejected by the Board, including Special Action SA97-12, Proposal P00-61, a subsequent Request for Reconsideration RFR00-03, and Proposal P01-21. Proposal WP03-34 requested that the season temporarily established by WSA02-11 be placed in permanent regulation, but the Board deferred action because of a pending review by the Unit 17A Moose Planning Working Group.

Proposal WP04-46 requested that a limited moose hunt be held in Unit 17A during the period of Dec. 1–Jan. 31. The Board adopted the proposal with modifications consistent with the recommendation of the Bristol Bay Regional Advisory Council. The first modification implemented a winter hunt using the State registration permit instead of a Federal permit. The second modification included language stating “up to a 14-day season” during the period of Dec. 1–Jan. 31. Also in 2004, Proposal WP04-47 requested a winter moose hunt be held in Unit 17A from Jan. 1–Jan. 31, with a harvest limit of one moose and a closure of the season once 20 cows had been harvested. The Board rejected the proposal as a consent agenda item, as the action on WP04-46 was preferred by the Regional Advisory Councils.

In 2012, Proposal WP12-40 requested a modification of the Unit 17A winter season hunt area by expanding the season to all of Unit 17A. The Board adopted the proposal as a consent agenda item to provide additional harvest opportunity and to align with State regulations.

The winter moose season was extended in 2013 to provide additional harvest opportunity under Federal and State regulations. The State extended the winter moose season in Unit 17A for an additional 14 days from January 9–22, 2013 with Emergency Order No. 04-01-13. The justification for the season extension was that travel conditions and moose distribution were believed to have affected hunter success rates, resulting in approximately 6–8 moose being harvested. Aerial survey data and high rates of calf production and survival suggested the population could sustain additional harvest during the extended season. Special action WSA12-11 also requested an extension of the winter moose season in Unit 17A to January 9–22, 2013, as travel conditions had limited the opportunity for Federally qualified subsistence users to harvest moose during the 14-day winter season. It was determined the moose population could support the harvest of additional antlered bulls and WSA12-11 was approved by the Board to provide additional harvest opportunity, including utilization of the Federal designated hunter regulations.

Current Events Involving the Species

At its February 8–15, 2013 meeting, the Alaska Board of Game adopted Proposal 48B, which increased the harvest limit from 1 bull to 2 moose, increased the season length for the may-be-announced winter season from up to 14 to up to 31 days, and opened a Sept. 5–15 nonresident season that allowed for the harvest of one bull with 50-inch antlers or antlers with 4 or more brow tines on one side by registration permit. The nonresident season will be by drawing permit only and will begin in 2014/2015. These actions were consistent with the updated Unit 17A Moose Management Plan.

Biological Background

Moose are relative newcomers to southwest Alaska and to Unit 17A, possibly migrating into the area from the middle Yukon River drainages during the last century. Aerial surveys conducted in the late 1980s and 1990s often resulted in less than 10 moose being observed in the unit (Woolington 2008). Local residents harvested moose opportunistically, but other species such as caribou, bear, and beaver were the main sources of wildlife meat. The last 20 years of minimum count surveys in Unit 17A show a steady increase from less than 10 moose in the early 1990s to 1,166 moose observed in 2011 (**Figure 1**). The 2004 version of the Unit 17A Moose Management Plan established a minimum population objective of 300 moose and a target population of 1,100–1,750 moose for Unit 17A. However, the population objective was recently revised for a target population of 800–1,200 moose in the January 8, 2013 version of the Moose Management Plan. The population’s carrying capacity was recently estimated to be between 900 and 1,350 moose (Unit 17A Moose Management Group 2013).

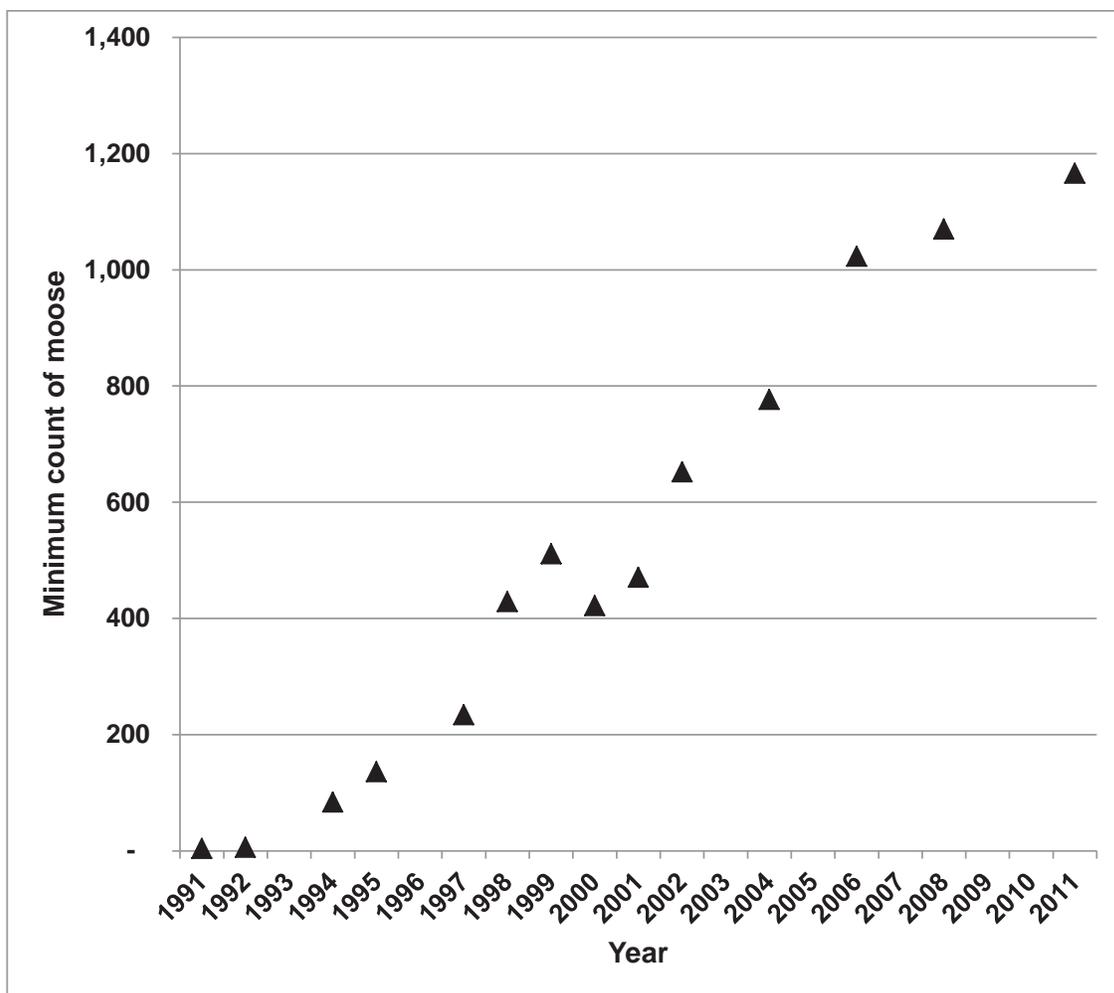


Figure 1. Minimum counts of moose observed during winter aerial surveys of Unit 17A between 1991 and 2011 (Aderman et al. 2012). Blanks indicate that no surveys were performed that year.

The Togiak National Wildlife Refuge and ADF&G began a cooperative research study in 1998 to better understand the demographics of the Unit 17A moose population (Aderman et al. 2012). Objectives of the study are to monitor the population size, calf production and recruitment, and survival of females and their offspring. Since the project began in 1998, 50 short-yearling (between 10 and 12-months old) females and 48 adult cows have been collared, and aerial radio tracking was conducted monthly for all moose and weekly for cows during the calving period (Aderman et al. 2012). The minimum calf counts averaged 128 calves per 100 adult females (range 87–157 calves/100 females) between 1998 and 2011, and twinning rates averaged 64% (range 25%–94%) (Aderman et al. 2012). The twinning rates suggest that the population remains below carrying capacity (Gasaway et al. 1992, Aderman et al. 2012). Fall recruitment was estimated at 63 calves per 100 females (range 35–86 calves/100 females) between 1998 and 2011. Average calf survival from birth to November was 48% (range 28%–60%) and was 44% (range 28%–55%) through the following March/April survey period over the same time frame (Aderman et al. 2012). The average annual survival rate for female moose was 0.90 (range 0.76–0.97) from 1998 to 2011, with most mortalities occurring in late winter and spring (Aderman et al. 2012). Bull:cow ratios have typically been high throughout Unit 17 (Woolington 2010), and averaged 82 bulls:100 cows between 1998 and 2006 (Aderman 2008).

Between 2003 and 2011, an average of 33 moose were harvested annually in Unit 17A, and an average of 31% (range 6%–50%) of the harvest occurred during the winter season (**Table 1**). Over the same period 65%–100% of moose harvested in Unit 17A were by local residents of Unit 17 (**Table 1**). However, nonlocal residents also may include Federally qualified subsistence users, as the communities of Akiachak, Akiak, Kwethluk, Goodnews Bay, and Platinum all occur in Unit 18.

As the moose population has increased, so has the total annual harvest, from reported harvests of 11 moose in 2003 to 50 moose in 2011 (**Table 1**). As of April 27, 2013, 29 bull moose were reportedly harvested during the 2012 fall hunt while another 16 bulls were harvested during the winter hunt (Aderman 2013, pers. comm.).

Habitat

In 2011, the amount of moose habitat was estimated to comprise of 13.4% of Unit 17A (449 mi² of 3,357 mi²); however, the estimate did not include a mixed shrub category that contained an unknown amount percentage of willow and should be considered a minimum estimate (Aderman and Lowe 2011). A previous moose habitat mapping effort in 1999 estimated 560 mi² of optimal and 520 mi² of secondary moose winter habitats for Unit 17A, excluding the Nushagak Peninsula and areas west of the Matogak River (Aderman and Lowe 2011). Both estimates (1999 and 2011) were based on the same Landsat imagery from 1989.

Preliminary analyses of the nutritional quality suggest that forage species found in Unit 17A may provide more digestible protein than areas in Denali National Park and the Nelchina Basin (Aderman and Lowe 2011). The high amounts of digestible protein may help moose in Unit 17A achieve rapid body growth and lead to earlier sexual development.

Effects of the Proposal

If this proposal is adopted, it would align State and Federal regulations and provide additional opportunity for Federally qualified subsistence users to harvest moose in Unit 17A. Federally qualified subsistence users would have up to 17 additional days to harvest moose in the winter season, and the harvest limit would be increased from one antlered bull to 2 moose. Federally qualified subsistence users are required to have a State registration permit during the fall and winter moose seasons, and could harvest

Table 1. Hunter participation and moose harvest among local and nonlocal Alaska residents using State registration permits RM573 (fall season) and RM575 (to-be-announced winter season) in Unit 17A (Aderman 2013, pers. comm.). Federally qualified subsistence users are required to possess a State registration permit to harvest moose in the unit.

Year	Season	Residents of Unit 17			Nonlocal residents ^a			Total harvest
		Permits issued	Permits used	Harvest	Permits issued	Permits used	Harvest	
2003	Fall	52	44	6	7	3	1	11
	Winter	19	14	4	0	0	0	
2004	Fall	52	48	10	1	0	0	20
	Winter	44	29	10	0	0	0	
2005	Fall	68	58	20	5	3	1	24
	Winter	76	35	3	0	0	0	
2006	Fall	62	56	21	5	5	3	36
	Winter	48	26	11	6	5	1	
2007	Fall	81	63	32	2	0	0	41
	Winter	98	45	8	6	4	1	
2008 ^b	Fall	87	81	17	16	13	7	45
	Winter	110	64	21	0	0	0	
2009	Fall	98	82	18	21	17	11	31
	Winter	35	29	2	1	0	0	
2010 ^c	Fall	96	88	21	17	12	6	37
	Winter	30	25	10	1	0	0	
2011 ^c	Fall	114	103	22	25	20	6	50
	Winter	42	36	22	0	0	0	
2012 ^c	Fall	114	93	21	21	21	8	45
	Winter	58	36	16	0	0	0	

^a May include Federally qualified subsistence users from Akiachak, Akiak, Kwethluk, Goodnews Bay, and Platinum.

^b Fall 2008 was the first year that aircraft could be used during the hunt.

^c Preliminary harvest data.

moose under State regulations regardless of the Board's decision. However, aligning State and Federal regulations would reduce regulatory complexity. In addition, adopting the proposal would allow Federally qualified subsistence users to harvest moose on Federal public land via Federal designated hunter regulations for other Federally qualified subsistence users.

Extending the winter season and increasing the harvest limit is expected to impact the moose population in Unit 17A. The proposed regulations provide the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge manager the flexibility to manage the harvest in order to keep the moose population within the guidelines of the Unit 17A Moose Management Plan. When the moose population is increasing and approaching carrying capacity, as is the current case, more liberal harvest regulations that allow for a longer season, increased harvest limits, and potentially allowing for the harvest of cows should help to reduce the population to more sustainable levels.

OSM PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

Support Proposal WP14-21 **with modification** to delete regulatory language found in the Unit 17A may-be-announced season, and delegate authority to the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Manager to open and close the season and set the harvest limit, including any sex restrictions (e.g., bulls only), for moose via a delegation of authority letter only (**Appendix I**).

The modified regulation should read:

Unit 17A—Moose

Unit 17A—1 bull by State registration permit

Aug. 25–Sept. 20.

Unit 17A—1 antlered bull up to 2 moose by State registration permit.

Up to a 14 day season during the period Dec. 1–Jan. 31 may be

opened or closed by the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Manager after consultation with ADF&G and the Chair of the Bristol Bay Regional Advisory Council.

~~Winter~~ *Up to a 31-day season to may be announced between Dec. 1–Jan. 31.*

Justification

The proposed regulatory changes are consistent with recommendations of the Unit 17A Moose Management Plan, which state that when the moose population is increasing and approaching carrying capacity, more liberal harvest regulations that allow for a longer season, increased harvest limits, and potentially allowing for the harvest of cows should help to reduce the population to more sustainable levels. The proposed regulatory changes would also align with recent changes to State regulations to increase the harvest limit and the may-be-announced season. Federally qualified subsistence users would be provided with additional opportunity to harvest moose under Federal regulations, including the use of Federal designated hunter regulations. The moose population continues to increase and is within the estimated carrying capacity for the area. The proposed changes, including creation of a delegation of authority letter, would provide the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge manager with flexibility to adjust the length of the winter season and harvest limit to more effectively manage the population.

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Woolington, J. D. 2010. Unit 17 moose management report. Pages 248-270 *in* P. Harper, editor. Moose management report of survey and inventory activities 1 July 2007–30 June 2009. Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Project 1.0. Juneau, AK.

Susanna Henry, Refuge Manager
 Togiak National Wildlife Refuge
 P.O. Box 270 MS 569
 Dillingham, Alaska 99576

Dear Ms. Henry:

This letter delegates specific regulatory authority from the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) to the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Manager, as approved by the Board, to issue emergency special actions if necessary to ensure the continued viability of a wildlife population, to continue subsistence uses of wildlife, or for reasons of public safety; or temporary special actions if the proposed temporary change will not interfere with the conservation of healthy wildlife populations, will not be detrimental to the long-term subsistence use of wildlife resources, and is not an unnecessary restriction on non-subsistence users. This delegation only applies to the Federal public lands subject to ANILCA Title VIII within Unit 17A as it applies to moose on these lands.

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

DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY

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

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

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

- To open a season of up to 31 days between December 1 and January 31, close a season, and set the harvest limit, including any sex restrictions, for moose on Federal public lands in Unit 17A.

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

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

The Federal public lands subject to this delegated authority are those within Unit 17A..

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

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

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

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

5. Support Services: Administrative support for regulatory actions will be provided by the Office of

Subsistence Management, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior.

Sincerely,

Tim Towarak
Chair, Federal Subsistence Board

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

DRAFT

WP14–22 Executive Summary	
General Description	Wildlife Proposal WP14-22 requests changes to the Federal subsistence caribou hunting regulations in Units 9A, 9B, 9C, 17A, 17B, 17C, 18, 19A, and 19B. The proposal requests the establishment of permit requirements for all of the units and that the to-be-announced season in Units 17A remainder and 17C remainder be shortened from Aug. 1–Mar. 31 to Aug. 1–Mar. 15. <i>Submitted by the Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council.</i>
Proposed Regulation	<p>Units 9A, 9B, 9C—Caribou</p> <p><i>Unit 9A—2 caribou by State registration permit; no more than 1 caribou may be a bull, and no more than 1 caribou may be taken Aug. 1–Jan. 31. Aug. 1–Mar. 15</i></p> <p><i>Unit 9B—2 caribou by State registration permit; no more than 1 caribou may be a bull, and no more than 1 caribou may be taken Aug. 1–Jan. 31. Aug. 1–Mar. 15</i></p> <p><i>Unit 9C, that portion within the Alagnak River drainage—2 caribou by State registration permit; no more than 1 caribou may be a bull, and no more than 1 caribou may be taken Aug. 1–Jan. 31. Aug. 1–Mar. 15</i></p> <p>Units 17A, 17B, 17C—Caribou</p> <p><i>Unit 17A—all drainages west of Right Hand Point—2 caribou by State registration permit; no more than 1 caribou may be a bull, and no more than 1 caribou may be taken Aug. 1–Jan. 31. The season may be closed and harvest limit reduced for the drainages between the Togiak River and Right Hand Point by announcement of the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Manager. Aug. 1–Mar. 15</i></p> <p><i>Units 17A remainder and 17C remainder—selected drainages; a harvest limit of up to 2 caribou by State registration permit will be determined at the time the season is announced. Season, harvest limit, and hunt area to be announced by the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Manager. Season to occur sometime within may be announced by the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Manager between Aug. 1–Mar. 31. 15.</i></p>

continued on next page

WP014–22 Executive Summary (continued)	
	<p><i>Units 17B and 17C—that portion of 17C east of the Wood River and Wood River Lakes—2 caribou by State registration permit; no more than 1 caribou may be a bull, and no more than 1 caribou from Aug. 1–Jan. 31.</i> Aug. 1–Mar. 15</p> <p>Unit 18—Caribou</p> <p><i>Unit 18—that portion to the east and south of the Kuskokwim River—2 caribou by State registration permit; no more than 1 caribou may be a bull; no more than 1 caribou may be taken Aug. 1–Sept. 30 and Dec. 20–Jan. 31.</i> Aug. 1–Sept. 30 Dec. 20—the last day of Feb.</p> <p><i>Unit 18 remainder—2 caribou by State registration permit; no more than 1 caribou may be a bull; no more than 1 caribou may be taken Aug. 1–Jan. 31.</i> Aug. 1–Mar. 15</p> <p>Units 19A, 19B—Caribou</p> <p><i>Unit 19A—north of the Kuskokwim River—2 caribou by State registration permit, no more than 1 caribou may be a bull; no more than 1 caribou may be taken from Aug. 1–Jan. 31.</i> Aug. 1–Mar. 15</p> <p><i>Unit 19A—south of the Kuskokwim River and Unit 19B (excluding rural Alaska residents of Lime Village)—2 caribou by State registration permit; no more than 1 caribou may be a bull; no more than 1 caribou may be taken Aug. 1–Jan. 31.</i> Aug. 1–Mar. 15</p>
OSM Preliminary Conclusion	Support Proposal WP14-22 with modification to delete regulatory language found in portions of Units 17A and 17C, and issue a delegation of authority letter (Appendix I) to the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Manager for specific in-season management authorities.
Bristol Bay Regional Council Recommendation	
Yukon/Kuskokwim Delta Regional Council Recommendation	
Western Interior Regional Council Recommendation	
Interagency Staff Committee Comments	

continued on next page

WP014–22 Executive Summary (continued)	
ADF&G Comments	
Written Public Comments	None

DRAFT STAFF ANALYSIS WP14-22

ISSUES

Wildlife Proposal WP14-22, submitted by the Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council, requests changes to the Federal subsistence caribou hunting regulations in Units 9A, 9B, 9C, 17A, 17B, 17C, 18, 19A, and 19B. The proposal requests the establishment of permit requirements for all of the units and that the to-be-announced season in Units 17A remainder and 17C remainder be shortened from Aug. 1–Mar. 31 to Aug. 1–Mar. 15.

DISCUSSION

The proponent states the regulatory changes should be made to align with recent changes to State regulations, which would result in a consistent hunt structure. Requiring Federally qualified subsistence users to use a State registration permit to harvest caribou under Federal regulations would allow managers to better assess hunter harvest.

The proponent states the regulatory changes should reduce confusion about the correct harvest limit regulations on the Mulchatna Caribou Herd. Specifically, the statewide general caribou harvest card contains five harvest tickets, but the present harvest limit for Mulchatna caribou is two caribou. Also, the requirement for a State registration permit would require hunters to report the outcome of their hunting efforts. The proponent states that Federally qualified subsistence users would not be affected by the permit requirement, as most hunters in the range of the Mulchatna Caribou Herd are already familiar with other registration permits and the associated State reporting system.

Note: A similar proposal (WP14-26) requesting to extend the Federal subsistence caribou season in Unit 18, that portion to the east and south of the Kuskokwim River, from Aug. 1–Sept. 30 and Dec. 20—the last day of February to Aug. 1–Mar. 15 with a State and registration permit is being analyzed separately.

Existing Federal Regulation

Note: The existing Federal regulations incorporate the recent Federal Subsistence Board approval of Temporary Special Action WSA13-02 (approved on July 26, 2013), as shown in bold.

Units 9A, 9B, 9C—Caribou

*Unit 9A—2 caribou **by State registration permit**; no more than 1 caribou may be a bull, and no more than 1 caribou may be taken Aug. 1–Jan. 31.* Aug. 1–Mar. 15

*Unit 9B—2 caribou **by State registration permit**; no more than 1 caribou may be a bull, and no more than 1 caribou may be taken Aug. 1–Jan. 31.* Aug. 1–Mar. 15

*Unit 9C, that portion within the Alagnak River drainage—2 caribou **by State registration permit**; no more than 1 caribou may be a bull, and no more than 1 caribou may be taken Aug. 1–Jan. 31.* Aug. 1–Mar. 15

Units 17A, 17B, 17C—Caribou

Unit 17A—all drainages west of Right Hand Point—2 caribou by State registration permit; no more than 1 caribou may be a bull, and no more than 1 caribou may be taken Aug. 1–Jan. 31. The season may be closed and harvest limit reduced for the drainages between the Togiak River and Right Hand Point by announcement of the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Manager. Aug. 1–Mar. 15

Units 17A remainder and 17C remainder—selected drainages; a harvest limit of up to 2 caribou by State registration permit will be determined at the time the season is announced. Season, harvest limit, and hunt area to be announced by the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Manager. Season may be announced by the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Manager between Aug. 1–Mar. 15

Units 17B and 17C—that portion of 17C east of the Wood River and Wood River Lakes—2 caribou by State registration permit; no more than 1 caribou may be a bull, and no more than 1 caribou from Aug. 1–Jan. 31. Aug. 1–Mar. 15

Unit 18—Caribou

Unit 18—that portion to the east and south of the Kuskokwim River—2 caribou by State registration permit; no more than 1 caribou may be a bull; no more than 1 caribou may be taken Aug. 1–Sept. 30 and Dec. 20–Jan. 31. Aug. 1–Sept. 30 Dec. 20—the last day of Feb.

Unit 18 remainder—2 caribou by State registration permit; no more than 1 caribou may be a bull; no more than 1 caribou may be taken Aug. 1–Jan. 31. Aug. 1–Mar. 15

Units 19A, 19B—Caribou

Unit 19A—north of the Kuskokwim River—2 caribou by State registration permit, no more than 1 caribou may be a bull; no more than 1 caribou may be taken from Aug. 1–Jan. 31. Aug. 1–Mar. 15

Unit 19A—south of the Kuskokwim River and Unit 19B (excluding rural Alaska residents of Lime Village)—2 caribou by State registration permit; no more than 1 caribou may be a bull; no more than 1 caribou may be taken Aug. 1–Jan. 31. Aug. 1–Mar. 15

Proposed Federal Regulation

Units 9A, 9B, 9C—Caribou

Unit 9A—2 caribou by State registration permit; no more than 1 caribou may be a bull, and no more than 1 caribou may be taken Aug. 1–Jan. 31. Aug. 1–Mar. 15

Unit 9B—2 caribou by State registration permit; no more than 1 caribou may be a bull, and no more than 1 caribou may be taken Aug. 1–Jan. 31. Aug. 1–Mar. 15

Unit 9C, that portion within the Alagnak River drainage—2 caribou by State registration permit; no more than 1 caribou may be a bull, and no more than 1 caribou may be taken Aug. 1–Jan. 31. Aug. 1–Mar. 15

Units 17A, 17B, 17C—Caribou

Unit 17A—all drainages west of Right Hand Point—2 caribou by State registration permit; no more than 1 caribou may be a bull, and no more than 1 caribou may be taken Aug. 1–Jan. 31. The season may be closed and harvest limit reduced for the drainages between the Togiak River and Right Hand Point by announcement of the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Manager. Aug. 1–Mar. 15

Units 17A remainder and 17C remainder—selected drainages; a harvest limit of up to 2 caribou by State registration permit will be determined at the time the season is announced. Season, harvest limit, and hunt area to be announced by the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Manager. Season to occur sometime within may be announced by the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Manager between Aug. 1–Mar. 31.

Units 17B and 17C—that portion of 17C east of the Wood River and Wood River Lakes—2 caribou by State registration permit; no more than 1 caribou may be a bull, and no more than 1 caribou from Aug. 1–Jan. 31. Aug. 1–Mar. 15

Unit 18—Caribou

Unit 18—that portion to the east and south of the Kuskokwim River—2 caribou by State registration permit; no more than 1 caribou may be a bull; no more than 1 caribou may be taken Aug. 1–Sept. 30 and Dec. 20–Jan. 31. Aug. 1–Sept. 30 Dec. 20–the last day of Feb.

Unit 18 remainder—2 caribou by State registration permit; no more than 1 caribou may be a bull; no more than 1 caribou may be taken Aug. 1–Jan. 31. Aug. 1–Mar. 15

Units 19A, 19B—Caribou

Unit 19A—north of the Kuskokwim River—2 caribou by State registration permit, no more than 1 caribou may be a bull; no more than 1 caribou may be taken from Aug. 1–Jan. 31. Aug. 1–Mar. 15

Unit 19A—south of the Kuskokwim River and Unit 19B (excluding rural Alaska residents of Lime Village)—2 caribou by State registration permit; no more than 1 caribou may be a bull; no more than 1 caribou may be taken Aug. 1–Jan. 31. Aug. 1–Mar. 15

Existing State Regulation

Unit 9—Caribou

Unit 9A, Unit 9B, and that portion of Unit 9C within the Alagnak River drainage

Residents only: Two caribou by permit available online at <http://hunt.alaska.gov> and in person in Anchorage, Bethel, Dillingham, Fairbanks, Homer, King Salmon, McGrath, Palmer, Soldotna, and at local license vendors beginning July 17. No more than one bull may be taken; no more than one caribou may be taken from Aug 1–Jan 31

RC503

Aug. 1–Mar. 15

Unit 9C, that portion north of the north bank of the Naknek River and south of the Alagnak River drainage

Residents only: One caribou by permit available online at <http://hunt.alaska.gov> and in person in King Salmon if a winter season is announced

RC504

may be announced

Unit 17—Caribou

Unit 17A, all drainages that terminate east of Right Hand Point

Residents only: Two caribou by permit available online at <http://hunt.alaska.gov> and in person in Anchorage, Bethel, Dillingham, Fairbanks, Homer, King Salmon, Palmer, Soldotna, and at local license vendors beginning July 17.

RC501

may be announced

Unit 17A remainder, Unit 17B, and that portion of Unit 17C east of the east banks of the Wood River, Lake Aleknagik, Agulowak River, Lake Nerka and the Agulukpak River

Residents only: Two caribou by permit available online at <http://hunt.alaska.gov> and in person in Anchorage, Bethel, Dillingham, Fairbanks, Homer, King Salmon, McGrath, Palmer, Soldotna, and at local license vendors beginning July 17. No more than one bull may be taken; no more than one caribou may be taken from Aug 1–Jan 31.

RC503

Aug. 1–Mar. 15

<i>Unit 17C remainder</i>	<i>Residents only: Two caribou by permit available online at http://hunt.alaska.gov and in person in Anchorage, Bethel, Dillingham, Fairbanks, Homer, King Salmon, Palmer, Soldotna, and at local license vendors beginning July 17.</i>	<i>RC501</i>	<i>may be announced</i>
Unit 18—Caribou			
<i>Unit 18</i>	<i>Residents only: Two caribou by permit available online at http://hunt.alaska.gov and in person in Anchorage, Bethel, Dillingham, Fairbanks, Homer, King Salmon, McGrath, Palmer, Soldotna, and at local license vendors beginning July 17. No more than one bull may be taken; no more than one caribou may be taken from Aug 1–Jan 31.</i>	<i>RC503</i>	<i>Aug. 1–Mar. 15</i>
Unit 19—Caribou			
<i>Unit 19A and Unit 19B</i>	<i>Residents only: Two caribou by permit available online at http://hunt.alaska.gov and in person in Anchorage, Bethel, Dillingham, Fairbanks, Homer, King Salmon, McGrath, Palmer, Soldotna, and at local license vendors beginning July 17. No more than one bull may be taken; no more than one caribou may be taken from Aug 1–Jan 31.</i>	<i>RC503</i>	<i>Aug. 1–Mar. 15</i>

Extent of Federal Public Lands

Unit 9

Federal public lands comprise approximately 40% of Unit 9A, and consist of 39% NPS and less than 1% of BLM and FWS managed lands. Federal public lands comprise approximately 44% of Unit 9B, and consist of 26% NPS and 18% BLM managed lands. Federal public lands comprise approximately 86% of Unit 9C, and consist of 78% NPS, 4% FWS, and 4% BLM managed lands (**Unit 9 Map**).

Unit 17

Federal public lands comprise approximately 87% of Unit 17A, and consist of 87% FWS and less than 1% of BLM managed lands. Federal public lands comprise approximately 8% of Unit 17B, and consist of

6% NPS, 1.5% BLM, and 1% FWS managed lands. Federal public lands comprise approximately 26% of Unit 17C, and consist of 11% BLM and 15% FWS managed lands (**Unit 17 Map**).

Unit 18

Federal public lands comprise approximately 66% of Unit 18, and consist of 63% FWS and 3% BLM managed lands (**Unit 18 Map**).

Unit 19

Federal public lands comprise approximately 22% of Unit 19A, and consist of 19.5% BLM and 2.5% FWS managed lands. Federal public lands comprise approximately 13% of Unit 19B, and consist of 11% NPS, 2.5% BLM, and less than 1% of FWS managed lands (**Unit 19 Map**).

Customary and Traditional Use Determinations

Unit 9

Residents of Units 9B, 9C, and 17 have a positive customary and traditional use determination to harvest caribou in Units 9A and 9B.

Residents of Units 9B, 9C, 17, and Egegik have a positive customary and traditional use determination to harvest caribou in Unit 9C.

Unit 17

Residents of Goodnews Bay, Platinum, Quinhagak, Eek, Tuntutuliak, and Napakiak have a positive customary and traditional use determination to harvest caribou in Unit 17A, that portion west of the Izavieknik River, Upper Togiak Lake, Togiak Lake, and the main course of the Togiak River.

Residents of Akiak, Akiachak, and Tuluksak have a positive customary and traditional use determination to harvest caribou in Unit 17A, that portion north of Togiak Lake that includes Izavieknik River drainages.

Residents of Kwethluk have a positive customary and traditional use determination to harvest caribou in Units 17A and 17B, those portions north and west of a line beginning from the Unit 18 boundary at the northwest end of Nenevok Lake, to the southern point of upper Togiak Lake, and northeast to the point where the Unit 17 boundary intersects the Shotgun Hills.

Residents of Bethel, Goodnews Bay, Platinum, Quinhagak, Eek, Akiak, Akiachak, Tuluksak, Tuntutuliak, and Napakiak have a positive customary and traditional use determination to harvest caribou in Unit 17B, that portion of Togiak National Wildlife Refuge within Unit 17B.

Residents of Units 9B, 17, Lime Village, and Stony River have a positive customary and traditional use determination to harvest caribou in Unit 17 remainder.

Unit 18

Residents of Unit 18, Manokotak, Stebbins, St. Michael, Togiak, Twin Hills, and Upper Kalskag have a positive customary and traditional use determination to harvest caribou in Unit 18.

Unit 19

Residents of Units 19A and 19B; Unit 18 within the Kuskokwim River drainage upstream from, and including, the Johnson River; and residents of St. Marys, Marshall, Pilot Station, and Russian Mission have a positive customary and traditional use determination to harvest caribou in Units 19A and 19B.

Regulatory History

State and Federal regulations for the Mulchatna Caribou Herd (MCH) were liberalized during the dramatic population increase that occurred in the 1990s. These regulations provided hunters with the opportunity to harvest additional caribou from the large, increasing population. Numerous modifications were made to the Federal subsistence regulations for various management units as the MCH population increased and expanded into new range. Following the population decline, regulations became more restricted in 2006 and 2007.

In March 2006, the Alaska Board of Game adopted new State regulations to reduce harvest limits within the range of the MCH from five to two caribou. In March 2007, the Alaska Board of Game further restricted the caribou harvest to allow no more than one bull to be taken, and no more than one caribou to be taken from Aug. 1–Jan. 31. In 2007, the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) took similar action and adopted Proposal WP07-23 with modification to reduce the harvest limits in Unit 9B, a portion of Unit 17A, Unit 17B, a portion of Unit 17C, Unit 18, a portion of Unit 19A, and Unit 19B; from five to three caribou due to the large population decline. In March 2009, the Alaska Board of Game eliminated the nonresident harvest on the MCH to ensure subsistence opportunity was being provided.

In 2010, the Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council submitted two proposals, WP10-51 and WP10-53. Proposal WP10-51 requested that the Federal caribou seasons be made consistent in Units 9A, 9B, 17B, a portion of 17C, 18, 19A, and 19B with an Aug. 1–Mar. 31 season. Proposal WP10-53 requested a consistent harvest limit of two caribou, with no more than one bull to be taken and no more than one caribou to be taken Aug. 1–Jan. 31 in Units 9A, 9B, a portion of 9C, 17A, 17B, 17C, 18, 19A, and 19B (excluding Lime Village). The Board adopted proposal WP10-51 with modification to make the season ending date March 15 for all units, including the remainder of Units 17A and 17C, and also adopted WP10-53 as submitted. In addition, Proposal WP10-60, submitted by the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge, requested the harvest limit for caribou in Unit 18 be reduced from three to two caribou. The Board adopted the proposal with modification to include a one-bull restriction and extend the one caribou restriction from Aug. 1–Nov. 30 to Aug. 1–Jan. 31, consistent with the actions taken on WP10-51 and WP10-53.

In 2011, Proposal WP12-42, submitted by the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge, requested that the harvest limit be reduced from two to one caribou and that the harvest season be shortened from Aug. 1–Mar. 15 to a split season of Aug. 1–Sept. 30 and Dec. 20–last day of February in Unit 18. In January 2012, the Board adopted WP12-42 with modification to maintain the two caribou harvest limit, but changed the harvest season to Aug. 1–Sept. 30 and Dec. 20–the last day of February in the portion of Unit 18 south of the Kuskokwim River (FSB 2012). The remainder of Unit 18 retained the Aug. 1–Mar. 15 harvest season. However, Federally qualified subsistence users are still able to harvest caribou from Aug. 1–Mar. 15 throughout Unit 18, including Federal public land, under State regulations.

Wildlife Special Actions WSA11-10/11 were submitted by the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge in February 2012. WSA11-10 requested a reduction in the season for caribou in Unit 18 of two weeks, and WSA11-11 called for Federal public lands in Unit 18 south and east of the Kuskokwim River to be closed to the harvest of caribou to all users starting Mar. 1, 2012. The Board rejected the special action

requests because it felt current information suggested there was not an emergency situation with the MCH necessitating such an action.

In February 2013, the Alaska Board of Game adopted Proposal 45A which changed the caribou hunt in Units 9A, 9B, portions of 9C, 17, 18, 19A and 19B from a general hunt to a registration hunt, with seasons and harvest limits aligned within the entire range of the MCH. These changes were made to better assess harvest and to better respond to in-season requests to alter season dates and harvest limits, and to help evaluate the response of caribou harvest and population dynamics to ongoing intensive management programs. In July 2013, Federal permit requirements and seasons dates were temporarily aligned with State regulations when the Board approved Temporary Special Action WSA13-02, which requested that a State registration permit be required for Federally qualified subsistence users to harvest caribou in Units 9A, 9B, 9C, 17A, 17B, 17C, 18, 19A and 19B; and shortened the to-be-announced season in Units 17A remainder and 17C remainder from Aug. 1–Mar. 31 to Aug. 1–Mar. 15. Also in 2013, the Association of Village Council Presidents submitted Temporary Special Action WSA13-03 to close Federal public lands to the harvest of caribou, except by Federally qualified subsistence users. The Board rejected the temporary special action because the MCH was at the lower end of the State management objective and population composition data was improving. Additionally, the newly established State registration permit would allow managers to better track harvest and improve in-season management.

Current Events Involving the Species

Between March 5th and March 16th of 2013, 20 tickets were written by U.S. Fish and Wildlife Officers to hunters in the Bethel area for caribou hunting violations. The majority of tickets were written for having no hunting licenses and no harvest tickets. Additional tickets were written for harvesting over the limit of two caribou, and one ticket was written for a chasing violation. Similar numbers of tickets and violations were also given out by State wildlife troopers (Bedingfield 2013, pers. comm.).

Public hearings were held on June 13, 2013 in Dillingham and on June 26, 2013 in Bethel to provide opportunity for members of the public to comment on Temporary Special Action WSA13-02. Public hearings in the affected areas are required prior to taking action on temporary special actions that may be in place for more than 60 days. Most of the public testimony was in support of the special action request to better align with State regulations. However, public comments also included concerns about availability of the new registration permits and requests to close the season to nonresident or non-Federally qualified users. Other comments included the effects of predation on the MCH, if there was a Federal population objective for the MCH, caribou migration routes, and a report of herding caribou with aircraft.

Public hearings were held on July 26, 2013 in Bethel and Dillingham to provide opportunity for members of the public to comment on WSA13-03. Public comments at the Bethel public hearing included five members of the public testifying in support of WSA13-03, and questions were raised regarding the status, management objectives, and data associated with the MCH. Those who supported the closure at the Bethel hearing stated that nonlocal hunters targeted trophy bulls and some wasted meat; local people do not know where the boundaries are between State, Federal, and Corporation lands; and that harvesting bulls is limiting reproduction. Public comments at the Dillingham public hearing included questioning whether the special action is necessary because the MCH may have reached its lowest population level and the herd's range is improving, more consistent use of terms by the Federal Subsistence Management Program, and that the current population level is probably closer to its historic size and high numbers in the 1990s were not sustainable due to available habitat. In addition, one resident from Dillingham submitted a public comment to the Office of Subsistence Management on July 25, 2013 in opposition

to WSA13-03. The individual stated several reasons for opposing the special action, including the high caribou numbers in the 1990s were not normal and the current population level is more similar to historic levels, managers have instituted a State registration permit to better track harvest, the bull:cow and calf:cow ratios are improving, the State has initiated predator control efforts on calving grounds, his personal observations suggesting the range conditions are improving, and potential impacts to users due to the late submission of the special action request.

Biological Background

The MCH ranges across approximately 60,000 square miles, primarily within Units 9B, 9C, 17, 18, and 19. Wintering areas during the 1980s and early 1990s were along the north and west side of Iliamna Lake, north of the Kvichak River, but telemetry data indicated the MCH had been moving to the south and west for wintering (Van Daele and Boudreau 1992 *cited in* Woolington 2007). Starting in the mid-1990s, caribou from the MCH began wintering in Unit 18 south of the Kuskokwim River and in southwestern Unit 19B in increasing numbers. During the winter of 2004/2005, much of the herd wintered in Unit 18, south of the Kuskokwim River, and another large part of the herd wintered in the middle Mulchatna River drainage. During 2005/2006, large numbers of caribou wintered near the lower Kvichak River (Woolington 2009).

The State's management objectives for the MCH have changed as the population's numbers have fluctuated. Prior to 2001, the management objective was to maintain a minimum population of 25,000 adults with a minimum ratio of 35 bulls:100 cows, manage the herd for maximum opportunity to hunt caribou, and manage the herd in a manner that encouraged range expansion west and north of the Nushagak River (Woolington 2001). In 2001, the Alaska Board of Game modified the population objective to maintain a population of 100,000–150,000 caribou (Woolington 2003). Most recently, at the Southcentral/Southeast Alaska Board of Game meeting in 2009, the population objective was reduced to 30,000–80,000 caribou, which was thought to be more realistic for the MCH (ADF&G 2009). The Alaska Board of Game also reduced the harvest objectives from 6,000–15,000 caribou to 2,400–8,000 caribou (ADF&G 2009).

The MCH increased at an average annual rate of 17% between 1981 and 1996, and approximately 28% from 1992 to 1994. Overall heard size peaked in 1996, at approximately 200,000 animals and a peak of 42 bulls:100 cows (Woolington 2007). The dramatic population growth is attributed to mild winters, movements into new unexploited range, low predation, and an estimated annual harvest of less than 5% of the population since the late 1970s (Woolington 2007). Since 1996, the population has declined. The latest photo census, conducted in 2008, provided a minimum count of 30,000 caribou, which is as the low end of the State's population objective (**Table 1**) (Woolington 2012). Preliminary results from a 2012 photo census suggest the population may still be around 30,000 caribou (Yugas 2013, pers. comm.). Possible signs of stress in the MCH when the population level was high included an outbreak of hoof rot in 1998 and low calf:cow ratios in the fall 1999 (Woolington 2001).

The MCH declined from 1996 to 2008 and estimated bull:cow ratios have been below the management objective since 2001, but recent composition surveys have shown some improvement in the bull:cow ratio (**Table 1**). The proportion of bulls classified as large during recent composition surveys (24%–27% between 2010 and 2012) has increased from lows observed in 2004 (7%) and 2006 (9%) (**Table 1**). In addition, preliminary data shows the number of parturient 2- and 3-year old cows increased in 2013 and calf weights have been good, which suggests the caribou are not nutritionally stressed (Butler 2013, pers. comm.). While the MCH is managed as a single herd, some segments of the population appear to be faring better than others, as estimated bull:cow and calf:cow ratios have been consistently higher in the

Table 1. Mulchatna Caribou Herd composition counts and population estimates, 1974-2012 (Woolington 2012).

Regulatory Year	Total				Small	Medium	Large	Total bulls	Composition sample size	Minimum estimate of herd size
	bulls:	Calves:	Calves	Cows	(% of bulls)	(% of bulls)	Bulls (% of bulls)			
	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>(%)</u>	<u>(%)</u>				<u>(%)</u>		
	<u>cows</u>	<u>cows</u>								
1974/75	55.0	34.9	18.4	---	---	---	---	---	1,846	
1978/79	50.3	64.5	27.6	---	---	---	---	---	758	
1980/81	31.3	57.1	30.0	---	---	---	---	---	2,250	
1981/82	52.5	45.1	22.8	---	---	---	---	---	1,235	
1986/87	55.9	36.9	19.2	---	---	---	---	---	2,172	
1987/88	68.2	60.1	26.3	---	---	---	---	---	1,858	
1988/89	66.0	53.7	24.4	---	---	---	---	---	536	
1993/94	42.1	44.1	23.7	53.7	---	---	---	22.6	5,907	150,000 ^a
1996/97	42.4	34.4	19.5	56.6	49.8	28.5	21.7	24.0	1,727	200,000 ^a
1998/99	40.6	33.6	19.3	57.4	27.8	43.7	28.5	23.3	3,086	--- ^b
1999/00	30.3	14.1	9.8	69.3	59.9	26.3	13.8	21.0	4,731	175,000 ^c
2000/01 ^e	37.6	24.3	15.0	61.8	46.6	32.9	20.4	23.2	3,894	--- ^b
2001/02	25.2	19.9	13.7	68.9	31.7	50.1	18.3	17.7	5,728	--- ^b
2002/03	25.7	28.1	18.3	65.0	57.8	29.7	12.5	16.7	5,734	147,000 ^d
2003/04 ^f	17.4	25.6	17.9	69.9	36.2	45.3	18.5	12.2	7,821	--- ^b
2004/05 ^g	21.0	20.0	14.2	71.0	64.2	28.9	6.9	14.9	4,608	85,000 ^h
2005/06 ⁱ	13.9	18.1	13.7	75.8	55.3	33.3	11.5	10.6	5,211	--- ^b
2006/07 ^j	14.9	25.5	18.1	71.3	57.5	33.7	8.9	10.6	2,971	45,000 ^k
2007/08 ^l	23.0	15.8	11.4	72.1	52.7	36.0	11.3	16.6	3,943	--- ^b
2008/09 ^m	19.3	23.4	16.4	70.1	46.8	36.1	17.1	13.5	3,728	30,000 ⁿ
2009/10 ^o	18.5	31.0	20.7	66.9	39.7	43.9	16.3	12.4	4,595	--- ^b
2010/11 ^p	16.8	19.5	14.3	73.3	30.0	43.7	26.3	12.4	4,592	--- ^b
2011/12 ^q	21.7	19.0	13.5	71.1	32.2	41.3	26.5	15.4	5,282	--- ^b
2012/13 ^r	23.2	29.8	19.5	65.3	38.3	38.1	23.6	15.2	4,853	--- ^b

^a Estimate derived from photo-counts, corrected estimates, subjective estimate of the number of caribou in areas not surveyed, and interpolation between years when aerial photo surveys not conducted.

^b No current population estimate based on surveys.

^c Estimate based on photocensus conducted 7/8/1999.

^d Estimate based on photocensus conducted 6/30/2002.

^e NOTE: Fall 2000 bull:cow ratio and bull percentages corrected from previous table.

^f Based on pooling data from surveys conducted 10/11/2003 and 10/14/2003.

^g Based on pooling data from surveys conducted 10/12/2004 and 10/30/2004.

^h Estimate based on photocensus conducted 7/7/2004.

ⁱ Based on pooling data from surveys conducted 10/10/2005 and 10/14/2005.

^j Based on pooling data from surveys conducted 10/13-14/2006 and 10/22/2006.

^k Based on photocensus conducted 7/11/2006.

^l Based on pooling data from surveys conducted 10/7-8/2007 and 10/11/2007.

^m Based on pooling data from surveys conducted 10/7/2008 and 10/8/2008.

ⁿ Based on photocensus conducted 7/7/2008.

^o Based on pooling data from surveys conducted 10/12/2009 and 10/16/2009.

^p Based on pooling data from surveys conducted 10/10-11/2010 and 10/13/2010.

^q Based on pooling data 10/9/2011-10/11/2011.

^r Based on pooling data from surveys conducted 10/5-10/6/2012.

western portion of the MCH range (**Figures 1 and 2**). Preliminary data shows that calf survival is high in the Kemuk Mountain area (western portion), which has an active intensive management program for wolves, but is lower in the Tundra Lake area (eastern portion) (Butler 2013, pers. comm.). Individuals from eastern and western portions of the MCH range appear to have readily mixed prior to 2007 and 2008, but there has recently been more isolation between caribou in the two areas (Woolington 2011a, 2012).

Habitat

Taylor (1989) reported that the carrying capacity of traditional winter areas of the herd had been exceeded by the mid to late 1980s and that the herd had to utilize other areas to continue its growth. It appears that the MCH has been using these non-traditional winter ranges at an ever increasing rate over the last 25 years. Portions of the herd's range showed signs of heavy use during periods of high caribou abundance, with extensive trailing evident along major travel routes. Woolington (2011b) reported that some of the summer and fall range of the MCH in the Nushagak Hills and elsewhere was trampled and showed signs of heavy grazing, while traditional winter ranges on the north and west sides of Iliamna Lake also showed signs of heavy use despite the fact that few caribou appear to continue to utilize these areas.

Harvest History

Reported caribou harvest by all users in Units 9A, 9B, 9C, 17A, 17B, 17C, 18, 19A, and 19B has declined from 3,924 caribou in 2000/2001 to 450 caribou in 2010/2011 (**Table 2**). However, a significant amount of unreported harvest has likely occurred (Woolington 2011b). Annual reported harvest by Federally qualified subsistence users increased between 2000 and 2005, but has since declined (**Table 2**). Reported harvest by non-Federally qualified users (nonlocal Alaska residents and nonresidents) significantly declined between 2000 and 2010 (**Table 2**). Nonresident seasons were closed in State regulations in 2009 in the affected areas.

Until recently, most of the harvest has occurred in August and September (66% in 2004/2005 and 47% in 2005/2006) (Woolington 2011b). Since 2007/2008, an increasing percentage of the total annual harvest has occurred during February and March (54% in 2007/2008, 55% in 2008/2009, and 42% in 2009/2010) (Woolington 2011b).

Effects of the Proposal

If this proposal is adopted, the permit requirements and season dates Federal subsistence caribou regulations in Units 9A, 9B, 9C, 17A, 17B, 17C, and 19A, and 19B would be aligned with the recently modified State regulations, which require a State registration permit to harvest caribou. Federal permit requirements would be aligned with State regulation in Unit 18, but seasons in the portion of Unit 18 east and south of the Kuskokwim River would remain misaligned due to the Federal split season (Aug. 1–Sept. 30 and Dec. 20–last day of Feb.); however, WP14-26 requests a continuous season that would align with other State seasons throughout the range of the MCH. The affected areas consist of Federal and non-Federal lands, and requiring a State registration permit under Federal and State regulations would reduce regulatory complexity for all users and law enforcement officers. The State registration permit may also reduce confusion regarding harvest limits with the current general harvest tickets, as mentioned by the proponent. The requirement for a State registration permit would likely have a minimal impact on Federally qualified subsistence users, as the process for obtaining a registration permit is similar to obtaining a harvest ticket. State registration permits can be obtained at license vendors or online. Similar permits requirements already occur with Federal moose regulations in Units 9A, 9B, 9C, 17 and 18.

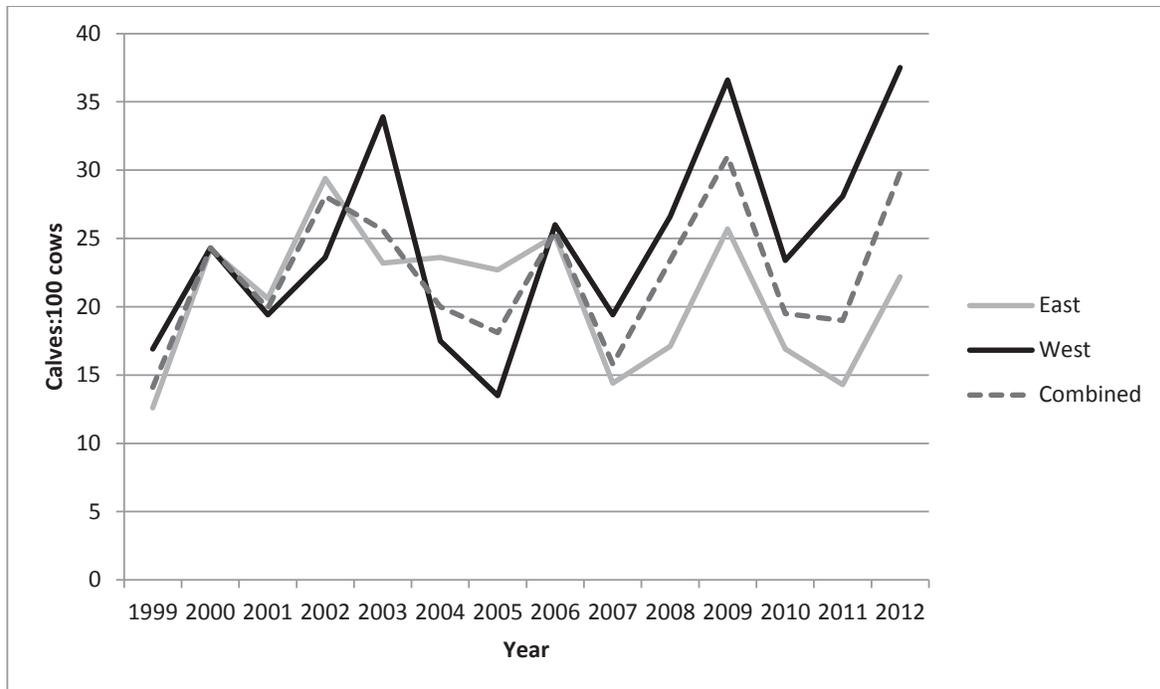


Figure 1. Calf:cow ratio estimates for the Mulchatna Caribou Herd during fall (October) population composition surveys (Woolington 2012). Surveys were conducted on the east (Unit 17B and the eastern portion of Unit 19B) and west (Unit 18 and the western portion of Unit 19B) sides of the herd’s range. Combined composition data also includes survey data from Units 19A and 17C and a small group of caribou in the upper Tikchik River basin.

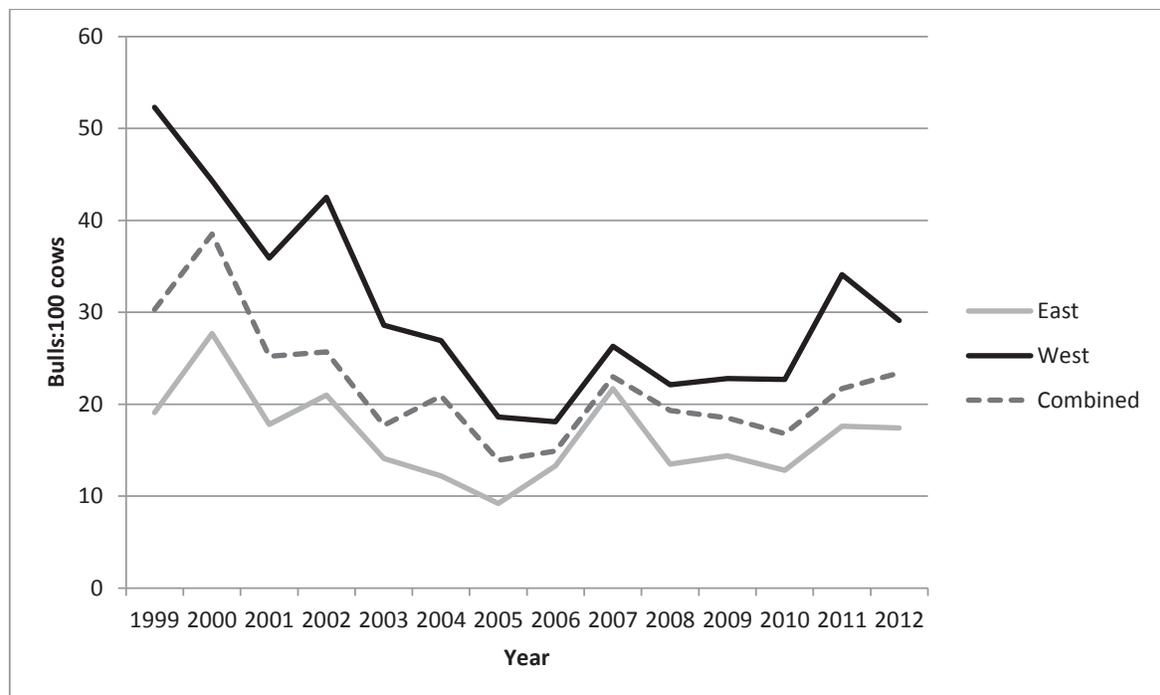


Figure 2. Bull:cow ratio estimates for the Mulchatna Caribou Herd during fall (October) population composition surveys (Woolington 2012). Surveys were conducted on the east (Unit 17B and the eastern portion of Unit 19B) and west (Unit 18 and the western portion of Unit 19B) sides of the herd’s range. Combined composition data also includes survey data from Units 19A and 17C and a small group of caribou in the upper Tikchik River basin.

The use of a State registration permit would allow managers to better track harvest, be more responsive to in-season management needs, and allow harvest opportunity for Federally qualified subsistence users to be maximized. The State registration permit has a requirement to report harvest within 5 days taking a caribou, whereas the general harvest tickets have a requirement to report harvest within 15 of taking the bag limit or the close of the season. Harvest reporting is an important aspect of harvest management, especially with fluctuating populations like the Mulchatna Caribou Herd, and reporting would likely improve as reporting rates are higher with registration permits.

Table 2. Reported harvest of caribou and sex composition of the harvest by Federally qualified subsistence users and non-Federally qualified users in Units 9A, 9B, 9C, 17A, 17B, 17C, 18, 19A, and 19B using State harvest tickets, 2000–2010 (OSM 2013). Federally qualified subsistence users are residents of communities with a positive customary and traditional use determination for the respective Federal hunt areas.

Year	Federally qualified subsistence users						Nonlocal residents						Nonresidents					
	Harvest		Percent of harvest		Harvest		Percent of harvest		Harvest		Percent of harvest		Harvest		Percent of harvest			
	Bulls	Cows	Bulls	Cows	Bulls	Cows	Bulls	Cows	Bulls	Cows	Bulls	Cows	Bulls	Cows	Bulls	Cows		
2000	431	67%	31%	1,462	67%	32%	2,031	93%	6%									
2001	645	60%	39%	1,512	56%	43%	1,659	91%	8%									
2002	352	64%	34%	1,061	58%	42%	1,284	89%	10%									
2003	795	54%	44%	1,227	48%	51%	1,076	91%	8%									
2004	601	60%	39%	914	34%	66%	778	78%	21%									
2005	835	52%	47%	713	30%	69%	488	67%	33%									
2006	423	59%	41%	264	44%	56%	275	62%	36%									
2007	403	58%	41%	104	48%	49%	128	63%	36%									
2008	257	58%	41%	74	45%	55%	58	66%	34%									
2009	247	69%	28%	63	62%	38%	0	0%	0%									
2010	381	53%	46%	69	45%	55%	0	0%	0%									

The Federal to-be-announced season in the Units 17A remainder and 17C remainder would be reduced by up to 16 days, from Aug. 1–Mar. 31 to Aug. 1–Mar. 15. The proposed change would align the potential Federal caribou season with other areas within the range of the Mulchatna Caribou Herd.

OSM PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

Support Proposal WP14-22 with modification to delete regulatory language found in portions of Units 17A and 17C, and issue a delegation of authority letter (**Appendix I**) to the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Manager for specific in-season management authorities. In Unit 17A within all drainages west of Right Hand Point, delegate the authority to open and close the season and set the harvest limit, including any sex restrictions (e.g., bulls only). In Unit 17A remainder and Unit 17C remainder, delegate the authority to open and close the season, set the harvest limit, and identify the hunt area for the may-be-announced season.

The modified regulation should read:

Units 9A, 9B, 9C—Caribou

Unit 9A—2 caribou by State registration permit; no more than 1 caribou may be a bull, and no more than 1 caribou may be taken Aug. 1–Jan. 31. Aug. 1–Mar. 15

Unit 9B—2 caribou by State registration permit; no more than 1 caribou may be a bull, and no more than 1 caribou may be taken Aug. 1–Jan. 31. Aug. 1–Mar. 15

Unit 9C, that portion within the Alagnak River drainage—2 caribou by State registration permit; no more than 1 caribou may be a bull, and no more than 1 caribou may be taken Aug. 1–Jan. 31. Aug. 1–Mar. 15

Units 17A, 17B, 17C—Caribou

Unit 17A—all drainages west of Right Hand Point—2 caribou by State registration permit; no more than 1 caribou may be a bull, and no more than 1 caribou may be taken Aug. 1–Jan. 31. The season may be closed and harvest limit reduced for the drainages between the Togiak River and Right Hand Point by announcement of the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Manager. Aug. 1–Mar. 15

Units 17A remainder and 17C remainder—selected drainages; a harvest limit of up to 2 caribou by State registration permit will be determined at the time the season is announced. Season, harvest limit, and hunt area to be announced by the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Manager. ~~Season to occur sometime may be announced within Aug. 1–Mar. 31.~~ **announced within Aug. 1–Mar. 15.**

Units 17B and 17C—that portion of 17C east of the Wood River and Wood River Lakes—2 caribou by State registration permit; no more than 1 caribou may be a bull, and no more than 1 caribou from Aug. 1–Jan. 31. Aug. 1–Mar. 15

Unit 18—Caribou

Unit 18—that portion to the east and south of the Kuskokwim River—2 caribou by State registration permit; no more than 1 caribou may be a bull; no more than 1 caribou may be taken Aug. 1–Sept. 30 and Dec. 20–Jan. 31. Aug. 1–Sept. 30 Dec. 20–the last day of Feb.

Unit 18 remainder—2 caribou by State registration permit; no more than 1 caribou may be a bull; no more than 1 caribou may be taken Aug. 1–Jan. 31. Aug. 1–Mar. 15

Units 19A, 19B—Caribou

Unit 19A—north of the Kuskokwim River—2 caribou by State registration permit, no more than 1 caribou may be a bull; no more than 1 caribou may be taken from Aug. 1–Jan. 31. Aug. 1–Mar. 15

Unit 19A—south of the Kuskokwim River and Unit 19B (excluding rural Alaska residents of Lime Village)—2 caribou by State registration permit; no more than 1 caribou may be a bull; no more than 1 caribou may be taken Aug. 1–Jan. 31. Aug. 1–Mar. 15

Justification

The population level of the Mulchatna Caribou Herd continues to be low, and harvest of the herd has declined since 2003. More adaptive management is needed to ensure conservation of the resource. Changing from a general harvest ticket to a State registration permit will allow for better harvest tracking due to reporting requirements. Better harvest tracking would allow managers to be more responsive to in-season management needs. The new permit requirement would also align State and Federal caribou regulations, which will help reduce regulatory complexity for all users and law enforcement. Shortening the potential season dates for the may-be-announced caribou season in Units 17A remainder and 17C remainder will reduce regulatory complexity by aligning season dates within the range of the Mulchatna Caribou Herd. The creation of a delegation of authority letter for portions of Unit 17A and 17C will serve to clarify regulations for in-season management. Recent illegal hunting issues in the Bethel area highlight the importance of a registration hunt to help prevent potential localized overharvest.

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Susanna Henry, Refuge Manager
 Togiak National Wildlife Refuge
 P.O. Box 270 MS 569
 Dillingham, Alaska 99576

Dear Ms. Henry:

This letter delegates specific regulatory authority from the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) to the Manager of the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge, as approved by the Board, to issue emergency special actions if necessary to ensure the continued viability of a wildlife population, to continue subsistence uses of wildlife, or for reasons of public safety; or temporary special actions if the proposed temporary change will not interfere with the conservation of healthy wildlife populations, will not be detrimental to the long-term subsistence use of wildlife resources, and is not an unnecessary restriction on non-subsistence users. This delegation only applies to the Federal public lands subject to ANILCA Title VIII within all drainages west of Right Hand Point in Unit 17A and Units 17A remainder and 17C remainder as it applies to caribou on these lands.

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

DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY

- 1. Delegation:** The Togiak National Wildlife Refuge Manager is hereby delegated authority to issue emergency or temporary special actions affecting caribou on Federal lands as outlined under the Scope of Delegation of this section. Any action greater than 60 days in length (temporary special action) requires a public hearing before implementation. Special actions are governed by Federal regulation at 36 CFR 242.19 and 50 CFR 100.19.
- 2. Authority:** This delegation of authority is established pursuant to 36 CFR 242.10(d)(6) and 50 CFR 100.10(d)(6), which states: “The Board may delegate to agency field officials the authority to set harvest and possession limits, define harvest areas, specify methods or means of harvest, specify permit requirements, and open or close specific fish or wildlife harvest seasons within frameworks established by the Board.”
- 3. Scope of Delegation:** The regulatory authority hereby delegated is limited to the following authorities within the limits set by regulation at 36 CFR 242.26 and 50 CFR 100.26:

- To open and close the season and set the harvest limit for caribou on Federal public lands in Unit 17A—all drainages west of Right Hand Point.
- To open and close the season, set the harvest limit (including any sex restrictions), and identify the hunt area for the may-be-announced season in Unit 17A remainder and 17C remainder.

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

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

The Federal public lands subject to this delegated authority are those within Unit 17A—all drainages west of Right Hand Point, and those portions within Units 17A remainder and 17C remainder.

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

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

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

You may defer a special action request, otherwise covered by this delegation of authority, to the Federal Subsistence Board in instances when the proposed management action will have a significant impact on a

large number of Federal subsistence users or is particularly controversial. This option should be exercised judiciously and may be initiated only when sufficient time allows for it. Such deferrals should not be considered when immediate management actions are necessary for conservation purposes. The Federal Subsistence Board may determine that a special action request may best be handled by the Board, subsequently rescinding the delegated regulatory authority for the specific action only.

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

Sincerely,

Tim Towarak
Chair, Federal Subsistence Board

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

WP14-26 Executive Summary	
General Description	<p>Proposal WP14-26 requests that for Unit 18 - that portion to the east and south of the Kuskokwim River, the caribou hunt be changed to require a joint State/Federal registration permit; the 1 bull harvest restriction be eliminated and the split season be eliminated and a continuous season from Aug. 1 to Mar. 15th be established. Additionally, the proponent asks that the Yukon Delta National Wildlife manager be given delegated authority to close or re-open Federal public lands to all users for this hunt if needed for conservation concerns after consultation with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge manager, and the chair of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Regional Advisory Council. <i>Submitted by the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge.</i></p>
Proposed Regulation	<p>Unit 18—Caribou</p> <p><i>Unit 18- that portion to the east and south of the Kuskokwim River-2 caribou by a joint ADF&G and Federal registration permit. ; no more than 1 caribou may be a bull; no more than 1 caribou may be taken Aug. 1-Sept. 30 and Dec. 20-Jan. 31.</i></p> <p><i>Through a letter of delegation: The Yukon Delta National Wildlife manager has the authority to close or re-open Federal public lands to all users for this hunt if necessary for conservation concerns, after consultation with ADF&G, the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge manager, and the chair of the Yukon-Kuskowkwim Delta Regional Advisory Council.</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Aug. 1-Sept. 30Mar. 15</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Dec. 20-the last day of Feb.</i></p>
OSM Preliminary Conclusion	<p>Support Proposal WP14-26 with modification to administer the hunt via a State registration permit only, retain the harvest limit restrictions, and delegate authority to open or close the season via a delegation of authority letter only.</p>
Yukon/Kuskokwim Delta Regional Council Recommendation	
Seward Peninsula Regional Council Recommendation	
Western Interior Regional Council Recommendation	

continued on next page

WP14-26 Executive Summary (continued)	
Interagency Staff Committee Comments	
ADF&G Comments	
Written Public Comments	None

DRAFT STAFF ANALYSIS WP14-26

ISSUES

Proposal WP14-26, submitted by the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge, requests that for Unit 18 - that portion to the east and south of the Kuskokwim River, the caribou hunt be changed to require a joint State/Federal registration permit; the 1 bull harvest restriction be eliminated and the split season be eliminated and a continuous season from Aug.1 to Mar. 15th be established. Additionally, the proponent asks that the Yukon Delta National Wildlife manager be given delegated authority to close or re-open Federal public lands to all users for this hunt if needed for conservation concerns after consultation with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge manager, and the chair of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Regional Advisory Council.

DISCUSSION

The proponent requests a change in the hunt structure and season dates in order to align Federal subsistence regulations with recent changes made to State regulations for the Mulchatna Caribou Herd (MCH). The changes modify the hunt from a general hunt to a registration hunt. The proponent states that a registration hunt will allow for better end of season harvest estimates and make it easier for Federal subsistence hunters to harvest caribou. The proponent also states that since the MCH population is near the bottom of its management objective, a registration hunt would allow Federal managers to close Federal public lands to all users to prevent localized overharvest.

After further discussion with the proponent, it was determined that this hunt should be administered via a State registration permit and not by a joint State/Federal permit as written in the original proposal. Furthermore, it was the intent of the proponent to align regulations with the State season and to also work with the State on possible changes to the harvest limit so that hunters could harvest two caribou without having to be concerned about taking two bulls after they have shed antlers in late winter.

Note: Another proposal, submitted by the Bristol Bay Regional Advisory Council for the 2014 -2016 regulatory cycle, requests the requirement of a State registration permit for the MCH in Units 9A, 9B, 9C, 17A, 17A remainder, 17C remainder, 17B, a portion of Unit 18, Unit 18 remainder, and portions of Unit 19A. It also requests a shortening of the season in Units 17A remainder and 17C remainder from Aug. 1 – Mar. 31 to Aug. 1–Mar. 15.

Existing Federal Regulation

Unit 18—Caribou

*Unit 18- that portion to the east and south of the Kuskokwim River- 2 Aug.1- Sept. 30
caribou; no more than 1 caribou may be a bull; no more than 1 caribou
may be taken Aug. 1-Sept. 30 and Dec. 20-Jan. 31.*

*Dec. 20 - the last day
of Feb.*

Proposed Federal Regulation

Unit 18–Caribou

Unit 18- that portion to the east and south of the Kuskokwim River-2 caribou by a joint ADF&G and Federal registration permit. ~~no more than 1 caribou may be a bull; no more than 1 caribou may be taken Aug. 1-Sept. 30 and Dec. 20-Jan. 31.~~ Aug. 1-Sept. 30Mar. 15

Through a letter of delegation: The Yukon Delta National Wildlife manager has the authority to close or re-open Federal public lands to all users for this hunt if necessary for conservation concerns, after consultation with ADF&G, the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge manager, and the chair of the Yukon-Kuskowkwim Delta Regional Advisory Council. Dec. 20-the last day of Feb.

Existing State Regulation

Unit 18 – Caribou

Residents – two caribou by registration permit; however no more than 1 bull may be taken and no more than 1 caribou may be taken from Aug. 1- Jan. 31. Aug. 1- Mar. 15*

**This regulation was passed by the Alaska Board of Game in February 2013 and will be effective 1 July 2013.*

Extent of Federal Public Lands

Federal public lands comprise approximately 66% of Unit 18 and consist of 63% US Fish and Wildlife Service managed lands and 3% Bureau of Land Management managed lands (**Unit 18 map**).

Customary and Traditional Use Determinations

Rural residents of Unit 18, St. Michael, Stebbins, Togiak, Twin Hills, Upper Kalskag, and Manokotak have a positive customary and traditional determination for caribou in Unit 18.

Regulatory History

State and Federal regulations for the MCH were liberalized during the dramatic population increase that occurred in the 1990s. These regulations provided abundant hunting opportunities. Numerous modifications were made to the Federal regulations for various management units as the MCH population increased and as it expanded into new range. Following the population decline, regulations became more restrictive in 2006 and 2007.

In March 2006, the Alaska Board of Game adopted new regulations to reduce harvest limits within the range of the MCH from five to two caribou. In March 2007, the Alaska Board of Game further restricted the caribou harvest to allow no more than one bull to be taken, and no more than one caribou to be taken Aug. 1–Jan. 31.

In 2007, the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) adopted Proposal WP07-23 with modification to reduce the harvest limits in Unit 9B, a portion of Unit 17A, Unit 17B, a portion of Unit 17C, Unit 18, a portion of Unit 19A, and Unit 19B, from five caribou to three due to the large population decline.

In March 2009, the Alaska Board of Game eliminated nonresident harvest on the MCH due to the harvestable surplus being lower than the amount necessary for subsistence.

In 2010, Proposal WP10-51 submitted by the Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council, requested that the caribou season in Units 9A, 9B, 17B, a portion of 17C, 18, 19A, and 19B be changed from Aug. 1–Mar. 15 to Aug. 1–Mar. 31, extending the existing season by 16 days. The Board adopted the proposal with modification to make the season ending date Mar. 15 for all units. In addition, Proposal WP10-60 submitted by the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge, requested that the harvest limit for caribou in Unit 18 be reduced from three to two. The Federal Subsistence Board adopted the proposal with modification to include a 1-bull restriction and extend the 1-caribou restriction from Aug. 1 – Nov. 30 to Aug. 1 –Jan. 31.

In 2011, Proposal WP12-42 was submitted by the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge, requested a reduction in the harvest limit from two to one caribou and a reduction in the season by approximately three months in Unit 18. The Board adopted the proposal at its January 2012 meeting with modification to maintain the harvest limit of two caribou, eliminate the March portion of the season, and limit the impact on the MCH to east of the Kuskokwim River.

Wildlife Special Action WSA11-10/11 submitted by the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge in February of 2012, requested a reduction in the season for caribou in Unit 18 of two weeks and called for Federal public lands in Unit 18 south and east of the Kuskokwim River to be closed to the harvest of caribou to all users starting Mar. 1, 2012. The Board rejected the Special Action request because it felt current information suggested there was not an emergency situation with the MCH necessitating such an action.

In February 2013, the Alaska Board of Game adopted Proposal 45A which changed the caribou hunt in Units 9A, 9B, portions of 9C, 17, 18, 19A and 19B from a general hunt to a registration hunt, with seasons and harvest limits aligned within the entire range of the MCH. These changes were made to better assess harvest and to better respond to in-season requests to alter season dates and harvest limits.

Current Events Involving the Species

Between Mar. 5th and Mar. 16th of 2013, 20 tickets were written by US Fish and Wildlife Service officers to hunters in the Bethel area for caribou hunting violations. The majority of tickets were written for having no hunting licenses and no harvest tickets. Additional tickets were written for harvesting over the limit of two caribou and one ticket was written for a chasing violation. Similar numbers of tickets and violations were also given out by State wildlife troopers (Bedingfield 2013, pers. comm.).

Biological Background

The State's management objectives for the MCH were to maintain a population of 100,000-150,000 with a minimum bull:cow ratio of 35:100 and to maximize opportunity to hunt caribou (Woolington 2009). However, at the Feb. 27 - Mar. 9, 2009 southcentral/southeast meeting in Anchorage, the Alaska Board of Game reduced the population objective to 30,000-80,000 caribou, citing that these numbers were more realistic for this herd (ADF&G 2009, Woolington 2011b). The Alaska Board of Game also reduced harvest objectives from 6,000-15,000 to 2,400-8,000 during this meeting (ADF&G 2009). The latest

photocensus provided a minimum estimate of 30,000 caribou, near the minimum population objective (**Table 1**) (Woolington 2012). Since 2001, bull:cow ratios have been estimated at less than 35:100 which is below the management objective for the herd (**Table 1**).

The MCH increased at an average annual rate of 17% between 1981 and 1996 and approximately 28% from 1992-1994, though this latter increase was likely an artifact of more precise survey techniques. Overall herd size peaked in 1996, at approximately 200,000 animals with a peak bull:cow ratio of 42:100 (Woolington 2011b). The dramatic population growth is attributed to mild winters, movements onto new unexploited range, low predation, and an estimated annual harvest of less than 5% of the population since the late 1970s (Woolington 2011b). Since 1996, the population, bull:cow ratio, and calf:cow ratio have declined significantly (**Table 1**). Preliminary results from a 2012 photo census suggest the population may still be around 30,000 caribou (Yuhas 2013, pers. comm.). The specific reasons for the population declines are poorly understood but are most likely a combination of factors including deteriorating range conditions, disease, predation, and weather events (Woolington 2011b).

The MCH declined from 1996 to 2008 and estimated bull:cow ratios have been below the management objective since 2001, but recent composition surveys have shown some improvement in the bull:cow ratios. The proportion of bulls classified as large during recent composition surveys (24%–27% between 2010 and 2012) has increased from lows observed in 2004 (7%) and 2006 (9%). In addition, preliminary data shows the number of parturient 2- and 3-year old cows increased in 2013 and calf weights have been good, which suggests the caribou are not nutritionally stressed (Butler 2013, pers. comm.). While the MCH is managed as a single herd, some segments of the population appear to be faring better than others, as estimated bull:cow and calf:cow ratios have been consistently higher in the western portion of the MCH range. Preliminary data shows that calf survival is high in the Kemuk Mountain area (western portion), which has an active intensive management program for wolves, but is lower in the Tundra Lake area (eastern portion) (Butler 2013, pers. comm.). Individuals from eastern and western portions of the MCH range appear to have readily mixed prior to 2007 and 2008, but there has recently been more isolation between caribou in the two areas (Woolington 2011a, 2012).

The MCH ranges across approximately 60,000 square miles, primarily within Units 9B, 9C, 17, 18, and 19. Wintering areas during the 1980s and early 1990s were along the north and west side of Iliamna Lake, north of Kvichak River, but telemetry data indicated the MCH had been moving to the south and west for wintering (Van Daele and Boudreau 1992). Starting in the mid-1990s, caribou from the MCH began wintering in Unit 18 south of the Kuskokwim River and in southwestern Unit 19B in increasing numbers. During the winter of 2004/05, much of the herd wintered in Unit 18, south of the Kuskokwim River, and another large part of the herd wintered in the middle Mulchatna drainage. During 2005/06, large numbers wintered near the lower Kvichak River (Woolington 2009), while during the winter of 2008/09 a large part of the herd wintered in Unit 18 south of the Kuskokwim River with the rest of the herd in the lower Nushagak and Kvichak drainages (Woolington 2011b).

Habitat

Portions of the herds range are showing signs of heavy use with extensive trailing evident along major travel routes. Woolington (2011b) reported that some of the summer and fall range of the MCH in the Nushagak Hills and elsewhere was trampled and showing signs of heavy grazing, while traditional winter ranges on the north and west sides of Iliamna Lake also showed signs of heavy use despite the fact that few caribou appear to continue to utilize these areas.

Table 1. Mulchatna Caribou Herd composition counts and population estimates, 1974-2011 (Woolington 2012).

Regulatory Year	Total bulls:	Calves:	Calves	Cows	Small bulls (% of bulls)	Medium bulls (% of bulls)	Large Bulls (% of bulls)	Total bulls (%)	Composition sample size	Minimum estimate of herd size
	<u>100</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>(%)</u>	<u>(%)</u>	<u>bulls)</u>	<u>bulls)</u>	<u>bulls)</u>	<u>(%)</u>	<u>size</u>	<u>size</u>
	<u>cows</u>	<u>cows</u>								
1974/75	55.0	34.9	18.4	---	---	---	---	---	1,846	
1978/79	50.3	64.5	27.6	---	---	---	---	---	758	
1980/81	31.3	57.1	30.0	---	---	---	---	---	2,250	
1981/82	52.5	45.1	22.8	---	---	---	---	---	1,235	
1986/87	55.9	36.9	19.2	---	---	---	---	---	2,172	
1987/88	68.2	60.1	26.3	---	---	---	---	---	1,858	
1988/89	66.0	53.7	24.4	---	---	---	---	---	536	
1993/94	42.1	44.1	23.7	53.7	---	---	---	22.6	5,907	150,000 ^a
1996/97	42.4	34.4	19.5	56.6	49.8	28.5	21.7	24.0	1,727	200,000 ^a
1998/99	40.6	33.6	19.3	57.4	27.8	43.7	28.5	23.3	3,086	--- ^b
1999/00	30.3	14.1	9.8	69.3	59.9	26.3	13.8	21.0	4,731	175,000 ^c
2000/01 ^e	37.6	24.3	15.0	61.8	46.6	32.9	20.4	23.2	3,894	--- ^b
2001/02	25.2	19.9	13.7	68.9	31.7	50.1	18.3	17.7	5,728	--- ^b
2002/03	25.7	28.1	18.3	65.0	57.8	29.7	12.5	16.7	5,734	147,000 ^d
2003/04 ^f	17.4	25.6	17.9	69.9	36.2	45.3	18.5	12.2	7,821	--- ^b
2004/05 ^g	21.0	20.0	14.2	71.0	64.2	28.9	6.9	14.9	4,608	85,000 ^h
2005/06 ⁱ	13.9	18.1	13.7	75.8	55.3	33.3	11.5	10.6	5,211	--- ^b
2006/07 ^j	14.9	25.5	18.1	71.3	57.5	33.7	8.9	10.6	2,971	45,000 ^k
2007/08 ^l	23.0	15.8	11.4	72.1	52.7	36.0	11.3	16.6	3,943	--- ^b
2008/09 ^m	19.3	23.4	16.4	70.1	46.8	36.1	17.1	13.5	3,728	30,000 ⁿ
2009/10 ^o	18.5	31.0	20.7	66.9	39.7	43.9	16.3	12.4	4,595	--- ^b
2010/11 ^p	16.8	19.5	14.3	73.3	30.0	43.7	26.3	12.4	4,592	--- ^b
2011/2012 ^q	21.7	19.0	13.5	71.1	32.2	41.3	26.5	15.4	5,282	--- ^b
2012/2013 ^r	23.2	29.8	19.5	65.3	38.3	38.1	23.6	15.2	4,853	--- ^b

^a Estimate derived from photo-counts, corrected estimates, subjective estimate of the number of caribou in areas not surveyed, and interpolation between years when aerial photo surveys not conducted.

^b No current population estimate based on surveys.

^c Estimate based on photocensus conducted July 8, 1999.

^d Estimate based on photocensus conducted June 30, 2002.

^e NOTE: Fall 2000 bull:cow ratio and bull percentages corrected from previous table.

^f Based on pooling data from surveys conducted 10/11/2003 and 10/14/2003.

^g Based on pooling data from surveys conducted 10/12/2004 and 10/30/2004.

^h Estimate based on photocensus conducted July 7, 2004.

ⁱ Based on pooling data from surveys conducted 10/10/2005 and 10/14/2005.

^j Based on pooling data from surveys conducted 10/13-14/2006 and 10/22/2006.

^k Based on photocensus conducted July 11, 2006.

^l Based on pooling data from surveys conducted 10/7-8/2007 and 10/11/2007.

^m Based on pooling data from surveys conducted 10/7/2008 and 10/8/2008.

ⁿ Based on photocensus conducted July 7, 2008.

^o Based on pooling data from surveys conducted 10/12/2009 and 10/16/2009.

^p Based on pooling data from surveys conducted 10/10-11/2010 and 10/13/2010.

^q Based on pooling data from surveys conducted 10/9-11/2011.

^r Based on pooling data from surveys conducted 10/5-6/2012

Harvest History

Harvest on the MCH continues to decline. Total reported MCH harvest was 2,175 in 2005, but had declined to 309 by 2010. The harvest of males was as high as 86% in 1991/92, but decreased to 48% of the reported harvest in 2005/06. Bulls accounted for two thirds of the harvest in 2009/10 (Woolington 2011b).

In past years, most of the harvest occurred in August and September (47% in 2005/06 and 51% in 2006/07) (Woolington 2009), with the majority of harvest occurring close to villages on State lands. In recent years, February and March have accounted for a high amount of the harvest: 55% in 2008/09 and 42% in 2009/2010 (Woolington 2011b). Reported harvest during the other nine months has always been relatively low. Between 1991 and 2010, harvest in July accounted for less than 0.2% of the total annual harvest; October, November, December and January accounted for less than 8%; and April accounted for less than 9% (Woolington 2011b). It should be noted, however, that these data only account for the reported harvest and some harvest may be occurring that is unreported.

In Unit 18, harvest by both Federally and non-Federally qualified hunters has generally declined since 2003, when the reported harvest for the unit was at the highest, with the exception of 2010, the last year for which data is available (**Table 2**).

Table 2. Unit 18 reported caribou harvest, 2000-2009 (USFWS 2013).

Year	Federally qualified hunters	Non-Federally qualified hunters	Total
2000	121	17	138
2001	309	81	390
2002	145	113	258
2003	435	309	744
2004	295	179	474
2005	372	160	532
2006	234	90	324
2007	329	51	380
2008	211	40	251
2009	196	29	225
2010	336	26	362

Effects of the Proposal

If this proposal is adopted, a joint State/Federal registration permit would be required; the 1 bull harvest restriction would be eliminated and the split season would be eliminated establishing a continuous season from Aug.1 to Mar. 15th. Additionally, the proposal would give delegated authority to the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge manager to close or re-open this hunt if necessary for conservation concerns. These changes would align Federal subsistence regulations with recent changes made to State regulations for the MCH, thereby reducing regulatory complexity for hunters. The use of a registration permit would allow managers to better track harvest, be more responsive to in-season management needs and allow harvest opportunity for subsistence users to be maximized. The State registration permit has a requirement to report harvest within 5 days of taking a caribou, whereas the general harvest tickets have a requirement to report harvest within 15 of taking the bag limit or the close of the season. Harvest

reporting is an important aspect of harvest management, especially with fluctuating populations like the Mulchatna Caribou Herd, and reporting would likely improve as reporting rates are higher with registration permits.

OSM PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

Support Proposal WP14-26 with modification to administer the hunt via a State registration permit only, retain the harvest limit restrictions, and delegate authority to open or close the season via a delegation of authority letter only (**Appendix 1**). The modified regulation would read:

Unit 18—Caribou

Unit 18- that portion to the east and south of the Kuskokwim River-2 caribou by State ~~a joint ADF&G and Federal~~ registration permit. ; no more than 1 caribou may be a bull; no more than 1 caribou may be taken Aug. 1-Jan. 31 and Dec. 20-Jan. 31. *Aug. 1-Sept. 30Mar. 15*

~~*Through a letter of delegation: The Yukon Delta National Wildlife manager has the authority to close or re-open Federal public lands to all users for this hunt if necessary for conservation concerns, after consultation with ADF&G, the Togiak National Wildlife Refuge manager, and the chair of the Yukon-Kuskowkwim Delta Regional Advisory Council.*~~ *Dec. 20-the last day of Feb.*

Justification

The MCH continues to be at the low end of its management objective and harvest of the herd has been in decline since 2003. More adaptive management is needed to ensure conservation of the resource. Switching from a general harvest to a registration hunt and giving delegated authority to the Yukon Delta National Wildlife manager to close or re-open a hunt will allow for better tracking of harvest and allow managers to be more responsive to in-season management needs, while also maximizing harvest opportunities for subsistence users. In addition, alignment of hunting dates between Federal and State regulations will help reduce regulatory complexity for hunters. Recent illegal hunting issues in the Bethel area highlight the importance of a registration hunt in helping to prevent potential localized overharvest. Creation of a delegation of authority letter will allow for hunt management flexibility through in season adjustment to close and reopen Federal Public lands for this hunt. Retention of the harvest limit restrictions is needed to keep regulations consistent throughout the range of the MCH.

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Appendix 1

Refuge Manager
Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge
P.O. Box 346
Bethel, Alaska 99559

Dear Mr. Peltola:

This letter delegates specific regulatory authority from the Federal Subsistence Board (Board) to the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge Manager, as approved by the Board, to issue emergency special actions if necessary to ensure the continued viability of a wildlife population, to continue subsistence uses of wildlife, or for reasons of public safety; or temporary special actions if the proposed temporary change will not interfere with the conservation of healthy wildlife populations, will not be detrimental to the long-term subsistence use of wildlife resources, and is not an unnecessary restriction on non-subsistence users. This delegation only applies to the Federal public lands subject to ANILCA Title VIII within Unit 18, that portion to the east and south of the Kuskokwim River, as it applies to caribou on these lands.

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

DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY

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

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

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

- To open or close the season for caribou on Federal public lands in Unit 18, that portion to the east and south of the Kuskokwim River. You may also close Federal Public Lands

to the take of these species by all users.

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

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

The Federal public lands subject to this delegated authority are those within Unit 18 that portion to the east and south of the Kuskokwim River.

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

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

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

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

necessary for conservation purposes. The Federal Subsistence Board may determine that a special action request may best be handled by the Board, subsequently rescinding the delegated regulatory authority for the specific action only.

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

Sincerely,

Tim Towarak
Chair, Federal Subsistence Board

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

DRAFT 2014 FISHERIES RESOURCE MONITORING PLAN

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

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

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

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

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

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

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

PROJECT EVALUATION PROCESS

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

Four factors are used to evaluate studies:

1. Strategic Priority

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2. Technical-Scientific Merit

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

3. Investigator Ability and Resources

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

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

4. Partnership-Capacity Building

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

POLICY AND FUNDING GUIDELINES

Several policies have been developed to aid in implementing funding.

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

Finances and Guideline Model for Funding

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

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

5. Stock Status and Trends Studies (SST).

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

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

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

2014 FISHERIES RESOURCE MONITORING PLAN

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

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

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

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

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

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

SOUTHWEST ALASKA OVERVIEW

Issues and Information Needs

The 2014 Notice of Funding Opportunity for the Southwest Alaska Region identified two priority information needs:

- Obtain reliable estimates of Chinook salmon escapements (for example, projects using weir, sonar, mark-recapture methods).
- Description and analysis of social network(s) underlying the allocation and management of subsistence salmon fisheries in villages in the Bristol Bay-Chignik Area.

Projects Funded Under the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program

Since the inception of the Monitoring Program in 2000, 50 projects have been funded in the Southwest Region, and two will still be operating during 2014 (**Tables 1 and 2**). The ongoing projects address salmon harvests in the Aleutians Islands and Lake Clark climate change trends.

2014 Investigation Plans

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

Available Funds

Federal Subsistence Board guidelines direct initial distribution of funds among regions and data types. While regional budget guidelines provide an initial target for planning, they are not rigid allocations. Upon review and evaluation, the Technical Review Committee, Regional Advisory Councils, Interagency Staff Committee and Federal Subsistence Board have the opportunity to address the highest priority projects across regions. For 2014, approximately \$555,000 would be available for funding new projects in the Southwest Alaska Region.

Recommendations for Funding

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

14-401 Buskin River Sockeye Salmon Stock Assessment and Monitoring	\$ 108,044
14-402 Afognak Lake Sockeye Salmon Stock Monitoring	\$ <u>77,153</u>
Total	\$ 185,197

The two projects recommended for funding by the Technical Review Committee comprise a strong Monitoring Plan for the region by addressing strategically important information needs based on sound science and by promoting cooperative partnerships.

Summaries of Projects submitted for Funding

Each project submitted for funding in the Southwestern Alaska Region in 2014 is summarized below (see Executive Summaries for more details on all projects).

14-401 Buskin River Sockeye Salmon Stock Assessment and Monitoring. Fund. This four-year project would continue to provide estimates of sockeye salmon spawning escapement into the Buskin river system through operation of two weirs, and obtain information on residency and traditional fishing sites from subsistence fishery participants. The sockeye salmon run to Buskin River supports what is usually the largest subsistence fishery in terms of both harvest and permits issued in the Kodiak Management Area. This project is essentially a continuation, with slight modification, of work funded through the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program since 2000. This project would address a priority information need identified in the 2014 Notice of Funding Opportunity.

14-402 Afognak Lake Sockeye Salmon Stock Monitoring. Fund. This four-year project would continue the current sockeye salmon smolt enumeration and limnology data collection project at Afognak Lake. Continuation of this project, combined with the sockeye salmon adult enumeration project funded through the Alaska Sustainable Salmon Fund (AKSSF), will enable researchers to better identify factors affecting sockeye salmon production, and consequently, the availability of this subsistence resource for harvest opportunities, relative to current climatic conditions. This project will also help identify how past management actions have affected sockeye salmon production vital to the Afognak Bay subsistence fishery, providing management biologists a frame of reference to better assess current conditions and future actions. This project would address a priority information need identified in the 2014 Notice of Funding Opportunity.

14-451 Bristol Bay Subsistence Salmon Network Analysis. Do Not Fund. This three-year project would investigate both the social networks of shared subsistence salmon resources in selected Bristol Bay communities, and how such networks could be understood within the Federal subsistence management system. While this project would partially address a priority information need identified in the 2014 Notice of Funding Opportunity, it is not recommended for funding. The Technical Review Committee recommended that the investigators submit a new proposal during the next funding cycle (2016), but with fewer investigators, which will cut down on the cost of travel and salaries, reducing the overall budget. The investigators are also encouraged to redesign their proposal so that those investigators with training in anthropological research methods and application will be responsible for the research, analysis, and the final report.

2014 Draft Fisheries Resource Monitoring Plan–Southwest Region

Table 1. Summary of Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program projects completed in Southwest Alaska since 2000. Abbreviations used for investigators are: ADFG=Alaska Department of Fish and Game, APIA= Aleutian-Pribilof Islands Association, BBNA=Bristol Bay Native Association, ISU= Idaho State University, KANA=Kodiak Area Native Association, NTC= Nondalton Tribal Council, NPS=National Park Service, QT=Qawalangin Tribe, USFWS=U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, USGS=U.S. Geological Survey, USS&E=US Science and Education, and UW=University of Washington.

Project Number	Project Title	Investigators
<u><i>Bristol Bay Salmon</i></u>		
00-010	Togiak River Salmon Weir	USFWS
00-031	Alagnak River Sockeye Salmon Escapement	ADFG, NPS, BBNA
00-033	Alagnak River Angler Effort Index	ADFG
00-042	Lake Clark Sockeye Salmon Assessment	USGS
01-047	Togiak River Subsistence Harvest Monitoring	BBNA, ADFG, USFWS
01-075	Nondalton Sockeye Salmon and Freshwater Fish TEK	NPS, NTC
01-095	Lake Clark Sockeye Salmon Escapement	USGS, UW
01-109	Traditional Ecological Knowledge of AkPeninsula/Becharolf NWR	ADFG, BBNA
01-173	Alagnak River Harvest Salmon Assessment of Recreational Fishery	ADFG
01-204	Ugashik Lakes Coho Salmon Escapement Estimation	USFWS, ADFG, BBNA
03-046	Fisheries Biotechnician Training Program	NPS
04-411	^a Lake Clark Sockeye Salmon Run Timing	ADFG
04-454	Bristol Bay Sharing, Bartering, and Trade of Subsistence Resources	ADFG, BBNA
05-402	Lake Clark Sockeye Salmon Escapement	NPS, USGS
08-402	Togiak River Chinook Salmon Radio Telemetry	USFWS, BBNA
08-405	^a Lake Clark Sockeye Salmon Assessment	NPS, USS&E, BBNA
10-402	^a Togiak River Chinook Salmon Adult Assessment	USFWS, BBNA, ADFG
<u><i>Chignik Salmon</i></u>		
02-098	Kametlook River Coho Salmon Escapement & Carrying Capacity	USFWS, BBNA
02-099	Clark River Estimation of Sockeye and Coho Salmon Escapement	USFWS, BBNA
03-043	Perryville Coho Salmon Escapement	USFWS
05-405	Perryville-Chignik Coho and Sockeye Salmon Aerial Surveys	USFWS
07-404	Perryville-Clark River Coho and Sockeye Salmon Aerial Surveys	USFWS
<u><i>Bristol Bay-Chignik Freshwater Species</i></u>		
00-011	Togiak River Dolly Varden Genetic Baseline Development	USFWS
00-012	Bristol Bay Traditional Knowledge of Fish	ADFG
02-034	Kvichak River Resident Species Subsistence Fisheries Assessment	ADFG, BBNA
04-401	Ungalikthlik and Negukthlik Rivers Rainbow Trout Assessment	USFWS
04-415	Tazimina Rainbow Trout Assessment	ADFG
05-403	^a Lake Clark Whitefish Assessment	ADFG, BBNA
07-408	^a Togiak River Rainbow Smelt Assessment	USFWS, BBNA
07-452	Kvichak Watershed Subsistence Fishing Ethnography	ADFG, BBNA, NPS
<u><i>Kodiak-Aleutians</i></u>		
00-032	Buskin River Sockeye Salmon Stock Assessment	ADFG
01-059	McLees Lake Sockeye Salmon Escapement	USFWS
01-206	Mortenson Creek Sockeye and Coho Salmon Escapement	USFWS
02-032	Lower AK Peninsula/Aleutians Subsistence Fish Harvest Assessment	ADFG, APIA, ISU
03-047	Afognak Lake Sockeye Salmon - Smolt Enumeration Feasibility	ADFG
04-402	Mortenson Creek Sockeye and Coho Salmon Escapement	USFWS
04-403	McLees Lake Sockeye Salmon Escapement	USFWS
04-412	Afognak Lake Sockeye Salmon Stock Assessment	ADFG
04-414	Buskin River Sockeye Salmon Stock Assessment	ADFG
04-457	Kodiak Subsistence Fisheries Harvest Assessment and TEK	ADFG, KANA
07-401	Afognak Lake Sockeye Salmon Smolt Assessment	ADFG
07-402	Buskin River Sockeye Salmon Weir	ADFG
07-405	McLees Lake Sockeye Salmon Weir	USFWS, ADFG, QT
10-401	^a Afognak Lake Sockeye Salmon Smolt and Adult Assessment	ADFG
10-403	^a Buskin River Sockeye Salmon Adult Assessment	ADFG
10-404	^a Buskin River Sockeye Salmon Smolt Assessment Feasibility	ADFG
10-406	^a McLees Lake Sockeye Salmon Weir	USFWS, ADFG, QT
12-453	^a Kodiak Salmon Fishery Changing Patterns	ADFG

^a Final Report in preparation.

Table 2. Summary of ongoing 2014 projects funded under the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program in Southwest Alaska. Abbreviations used for investigators are: ADFG=Alaska Department of Fish and Game, ISU=Idaho State University.

Project Number	Project Title	Investigators	Budget	
			2014	2015
	<u>Bristol Bay Salmon</u>			
12-450	Aleutian Islands Salmon and Other Subsistence Harvests	ISU	\$100.0	
12-452	Lake Clark Whitefish Climate Change Trends	ADFG	\$53.4	
Total Southwest Alaska Monitoring Program			\$100.0	\$0.0

Table 3. Southwest Alaska project costs, by organization (Alaska Native, State, Federal, other), for investigation plans submitted to the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program for funding consideration in 2012.

Project Number	Title	Budget (\$000s)			
		Alaska Native	State	Federal	Other
<u>Stock Status and Trends</u>					
14-401	Buskin River Sockeye Salmon Stock Assessment and Monitoring		\$108.0		
14-402	Afognak Lake Sockeye Salmon Stock Monitoring		\$77.2		
<u>Harvest Monitoring and Traditional Ecological Knowledge</u>					
14-451	Bristol Bay Subsistence Salmon Network Analysis				\$186.9

Table 4. Southwest Alaska local hire and matching funds for investigation plans submitted to the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program for funding consideration in 2014. Abbreviations used are: ADFG=Alaska Department of Fish and Game and ISU=Idaho State University.

Project Number	Lead Organization	Title	Funding (\$000s)	
			Local Hire	Matching
<u>Stock Status and Trends</u>				
14-401	ISU	Buskin River Sockeye Salmon Stock Assessment and Monitor	\$8.6	\$34.0
14-402	ADFG	Afognak Lake Sockeye Salmon Stock Monitoring	\$30.8	
<u>Harvest Monitoring and Traditional Ecological Knowledge</u>				
14-451	ADFG	Bristol Bay Subsistence Salmon Network Analysis		

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

Project Number	Title	TRC	Requested Budget (\$000)		
			2014	2015	2016
<u>Stock Status and Trends</u>					
14-401	Buskin River Sockeye Salmon Stock Assessment	Yes	\$108.0	\$111.8	\$115.5
14-402	Afognak Lake Sockeye Salmon Stock Monitoring	Yes	\$77.2	\$88.5	\$91.2
<u>Harvest Monitoring and Traditional Ecological Knowledge</u>					
14-451	Bristol Bay Subsistence Salmon Network Analysis	No	\$186.9	\$135.4	\$54.9
Total			\$372.1	\$335.7	\$261.6
Guidelines			\$555.0		

Executive Summary

Project Number: 14-401

Title: Buskin River sockeye salmon stock assessment and monitoring, Kodiak, Alaska

Geographic Area: Kodiak Island, Kodiak/Aleutians Region

Information Type: Stock Status and Trends (SST)

Principal Investigator(s): Donn Tracy, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG), Sport Fish Division, 211 Mission Road, Kodiak, AK 99615-6399

Costs: 2014: \$ 108,044 2015: \$111,806 2016: 115,454 2017: \$149,426

Total Cost: \$484,730

Recommendation: Fund

Issue: Investigators will annually enumerate escapement and sample the age composition of sockeye salmon migrating into Buskin River drainage for inseason management of subsistence and other fisheries and evaluate and refine a biological escapement goal (BEG). Investigators will also interview subsistence fishers to determine their residency demographics and historical participation in subsistence fisheries occurring within the Kodiak-Aleutians region. Lastly, genetic samples from the sockeye salmon subsistence harvest will be collected and analyzed to apportion run components comprising the total catch.

Objectives:

1. Census the sockeye salmon escapement into Buskin Lake approximately from June 1 to August 1, and Louise/Catherine lakes tributary approximately from June 1 through August 31.
2. Estimate the age composition of the sockeye salmon run (combined subsistence harvest in the Chiniak Bay section and escapement) to Buskin Lake such that the estimates are within 5 percent-age points of the true value 95% of the time.
3. Estimate the age composition of the sockeye salmon run (escapement) to Louise/Catherine lakes tributary such that the estimates are within 7.5 percentage points of the true value 95% of the time.
4. Estimate proportions of the sockeye salmon subsistence harvest in the Buskin River Section of Chiniak Bay of Buskin and Louise/Catherine lakes run components through DNA analysis such that the estimates are within 7 percentage points of the true value 90% of the time in the absence of genetic error.
5. Construct a brood table to evaluate the sockeye salmon BEG.
6. Provide education and career development opportunity for federally qualified subsistence users.

Methods: Investigators will install a salmon counting weir on the Buskin River and Louise/Catherine lakes tributary to annually census the spawning escapement of sockeye salmon. Additionally, sockeye salmon will be sampled at the weirs and subsistence harvest for age, sex and length (ASL), providing estimates of the escapement and subsistence harvest by age. Also, samples for genetic stock identification

collected from the subsistence harvest will be analyzed to apportion the Buskin Lake and Louise/Catherine lakes components and more accurately re-construct total returns. Analyses of the return and age data will be incorporated into a brood table and used to evaluate the BEG. Participants in the subsistence fishery will be surveyed to determine their residency and traditional areas fished.

Products: Weir counts, total harvest (including subsistence), age, and fishery participant survey data will be reported annually by the investigators in ADF&G publications and in performance and annual progress reports to the Office of Subsistence Management (OSM). Daily weir counts during each year of the project will be posted on the ADF&G website and also made available to managers and the public in Kodiak verbally and in print. Annual reports will be delivered to the Fisheries Information Services Division (FIS) of the OSM by May 1 in 2015-2017. The final report will be delivered to the FIS by May 1, 2018.

Investigators Ability and Resources: The ADF&G has a long history of fisheries data collection and analysis and presently operates 16 salmon escapement weirs within the Kodiak Region. The investigator and support staff have approximately 30 years combined experience in fisheries research and management, including annual oversight of sockeye and coho salmon weirs on the Buskin River during the last 13 years. All department research projects undergo rigorous review by highly qualified and experienced biometric and administrative staff. All materials needed for installing and operating the Buskin River drainage salmon weirs are in possession of ADF&G in Kodiak. Additionally, ADF&G annually administers a subsistence fishing permit system that provides subsistence harvest data.

Partnerships/Capacity Building: The investigators promote local hire of federally qualified subsistence users as project technicians. During each year of funding the investigators will continue a high school student intern program established in 2003 to provide education and career development opportunities for federally qualified subsistence users. Through cooperation with the Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge (KNWR) the investigators have utilized the Buskin River weir as an educational tool for the KNWR Summer Science and Salmon Camp program.

Executive Summary

Project Number: 14-402

Project Title: Afognak Lake Sockeye Salmon Stock Monitoring

Geographic Area: Southwest Region / Kodiak-Aleutians Area

Principal Investigator: Steven Thomsen, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), Division of Commercial Fisheries, 211 Mission Road, Kodiak, AK 99615.

Co-Investigator: Heather Finkle, ADF&G, Division of Commercial Fisheries, Kodiak.

Project Cost: FY2013: \$77,153 FY2014: \$88,463 FY2015: \$91,232 FY2016: \$34,863

Total Cost: \$291,711

Recommendation: Fund

Issue: This proposal seeks funding to continue the current sockeye salmon *Onchorhynchus nerka* smolt enumeration and limnology data collection projects at Afognak Lake. Local subsistence users rely on the harvest of Afognak Lake sockeye salmon for subsistence. In fact, the Afognak River has historically supported one of the largest sockeye salmon subsistence fisheries for Kodiak Archipelago residents. The number of sockeye salmon returning to Afognak River has diminished substantially in recent years, resulting in closures to commercial, sport, and subsistence fishing in Afognak Bay. Commercial, subsistence, and sport fisheries targeting the Afognak River stock have steadily increased since 2008 but have yet to attain previous harvest levels. Although the most recent three years of sockeye salmon escapements are promising, the 2012 smolt outmigration estimate was the lowest since estimates began in 2003, indicating that future adult returns may be lower, potentially resulting in further closures. Continuation of the sockeye salmon smolt and limnological studies at Afognak Lake, combined with adult enumeration funded through AKSSF, will enable researchers to better identify factors affecting sockeye salmon production, and therefore, the availability of subsistence opportunities, relative to current climatic conditions. This project will also help identify how past management actions have affected sockeye salmon production vital to the Afognak Bay subsistence fishery, providing management biologists a frame of reference to better assess current conditions and future actions.

Objectives:

Smolt

1. Estimate the abundance, age composition, and average size of sockeye salmon smolt outmigrating from Afognak Lake annually from 2014 through 2016.
2. Continue to build the time-series dataset of smolt population size, age composition, and condition for comparison to available historical fisheries and limnological data.

Lake Studies and Climate Change

3. Evaluate the effects of the water chemistry, nutrient status, and plankton (phytoplankton and zooplankton) production of Afognak Lake on the smolt production and future adult returns from 2014 through 2016.

4. Re-evaluate Afognak Lake bathymetry, while collecting high resolution water quality data and juvenile salmon distribution using an Aquamapper AUV, once in 2014.
5. Assess available historical fisheries and limnological data in relation to climate change effects, upon completion of objectives 1–4.

Methods:

Objectives 1 and 2 (smolt). Two inclined-plane smolt traps will be operated in the Afognak River to capture a portion of the sockeye salmon smolt outmigration from Afognak Lake with mark-recapture techniques to estimate the total smolt outmigration. Age, weight, and length data from sockeye salmon smolt will be collected and used to estimate the age composition, average length, weight, and condition of the outmigration. Smolt data will be added to the ADF&G database and used for comparison with available historical fisheries and limnological data.

Objectives 3 and 5 (lake studies). Five limnological surveys of Afognak Lake will be conducted on a yearly basis. Data will be added to the ADF&G database and used for comparison with available historical fisheries and limnological data.

Objective 4 (lake studies). An YSI Ecomapper autonomous underwater vehicle (AUV) will be used, on one occasion in 2014, to accurately map lake bathymetry in Afognak Lake. Simultaneously, the AUV will collect high resolution water quality data and fish distribution.

Objectives 2 and 5: Further modeling and assessment using recent smolt emigration data paired with bioenergetics modeling, paleolimnological data, nutrient-phytoplankton-zooplankton models, and spawner-recruit models will be used to help identify environmental factors (changing lake conditions, prey availability and climate change) and their impact on sockeye salmon rearing success. This modeling can provide a complete picture of system health and juvenile production and allow for separation of freshwater and marine effects on overall population production.

Products: The ADF&G will complete two annual Fisheries Data Series reports and one final Fisheries Data Series report presenting the results of all research activities associated with the objectives. Presentations will be made by ADFG staff to the Kodiak Regional Advisory Council and to the Kodiak Regional Salmon Planning Team. A student presentation will be made and posted on afognak.com by Afognak Native Corporation (ANC) students participating in partnership/capacity building. Collected scale samples will be archived in the ADF&G office in Kodiak. Final edited copies of all data files will be archived electronically in a standard format by the Division of Commercial Fisheries, Research Section.

Investigators Ability and Resources: Steven Thomsen and Heather Finkle are both experienced fisheries research biologists with ADF&G in Kodiak. Together they have over 30 years experience implementing and managing multiple adult and juvenile salmonid projects and investigating lake limnology. In addition, ADF&G provides supporting staff, including supervisory oversight, publication specialists, peer review staff, supporting management and sport fish staff, biometric review, and logistical staff. The Kodiak ADF&G Commercial Fisheries Research section conducts five sockeye salmon smolt abundance projects and collects limnological data from over 20 lakes within the Kodiak Area each year. Much of the equipment and other resources needed to successfully conduct this project have been acquired previously and are available for this investigation. Lastly, the Division of Commercial Fisheries maintains a subsistence fishing permit system, which provides both state and federal managers with subsistence harvest data.

Partnership and Capacity Building: The ADF&G in collaboration with ANC and Native Village of Afognak will continue to work together in an annual educational project. The collaborative effort is designed to educate and train native student interns with fisheries management and research practices and ADF&G staff with subsistence harvesting methods and traditional ways of life.

Executive Summary

Project Number: 14-451

Title: Description and analysis of the subsistence salmon network in Bristol Bay

Geographic Area: Southwest Alaska

Information Type: Harvest Monitoring (HM) and Cultural Knowledge-Traditional Ecological Knowledge (CK/TEK)

Principal Investigator(s): Davin Holen, Alaska Department of Fish and Game; Courtenay Gomez, Bristol Bay Native Association; Dr. Drew Gerkey, National Socio-Environmental Synthesis Center at the University of Maryland (current) and Department of Anthropology at Oregon State University (during project)

Co-Investigator(s): Danielle Stickman and Gayla Woods, Bristol Bay Native Association; Lisa Hutchinson-Scarborough and Theodore Krieg, Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Cost: **TOTAL:** \$377,098 **2015:** \$186,871 **2016:** \$135,377 **2017:** \$54,850

Recommendation: Do Not Fund

Issue: The 2014 Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program has identified an information need for a “description and analysis of social networks underlying the allocation and management of subsistence salmon fisheries in villages in the Bristol Bay-Chignik Area,” within the priority information needs for Southwest Alaska. This project has identified 6 key communities with different regional sharing patterns based on previous studies carried out by project researchers. The goal of this project is to provide information on how the social network “functions in the allocation and management of subsistence resources... and how such a model might be applied and utilized in Federal subsistence management.”

This project would investigate both the social network of shared subsistence salmon resources in Bristol Bay communities and also how such networks could be understood within the Federal subsistence management system. All residents of the Bristol Bay Management Area qualify for participation in Federal subsistence fisheries. Because of the number of communities in Bristol Bay and the depth of knowledge this project seeks to gather a sample of communities was chosen representing different areas of Bristol Bay where sharing networks have been identified by researchers. In addition they represent different Federal nexus within the Bristol Bay – Chignik area. These communities include Chignik Lake, Chignik Lagoon, Egegik, Nondalton, Port Heiden, and Togiak.

The Federal Subsistence Board has recognized customary and traditional uses of salmon, other finfish, and shellfish for rural residents of this management area. The study would focus specifically on how subsistence salmon harvests are shared between communities. Different communities target different salmon species depending on a variety of circumstances. For example, Togiak focuses on harvesting Chinook salmon, which is readily available in the Togiak River drainage, and Nondalton almost exclusively harvests sockeye salmon in the subsistence fishery in the Lake Clark drainage.

This project would provide information to help the Alaska Board of Fisheries, ADF&G Fisheries Managers, the Bristol Bay Regional Advisory Council, state fish and game local advisory committees, and the Federal Subsistence Board to better understand the dynamics of the underlying sharing network

of salmon harvested in both state and federally managed subsistence fisheries throughout the Bristol Bay and Chignik area. Under state law all Alaskans are eligible to participate in subsistence regardless of community of residence in the state. Salmon harvested by local residents and family and friends from urban centers is widely distributed throughout the state. This project seeks to understand this sharing network, which is important for all Alaska residents.

Objectives:

1. Estimate the harvest of salmon by residents of Chignik Lake (pop. 73), Chignik Lagoon (pop. 78), Egegik (pop. 109), Nondalton (pop. 164), Port Heiden (pop. 102), and Togiak (pop. 817).
2. Describe the harvest of salmon in terms of species, gear, location, and timing of harvests.
3. Through harvest surveys and key respondent interviews describe the sharing network both within the community, the broader region, and throughout Alaska.

Methods: This community-based research project emphasizes community approval of research designs, informed consent and anonymity of study participants, community review of draft study findings, and the provision of study findings to each study community upon completion of the research. Prior to conducting field research, project investigators will develop and adopt a formal MOA to guide research activities based upon their organization and individual research specialties.

1) Household Harvest Survey. The harvest survey is useful to meet Objective 1 to estimate the harvest of salmon by project community residents and Objective 2 to describe the harvest of salmon in terms of species, gear, location, and timing of harvests. Household harvest surveys will be coded after each data-gathering trip and provided to ADF&G information management staff for data entry. Data analysis will occur between June and September 2015. These results will be checked and analyzed by information management staff at ADF&G and final tables created after review by project researchers. Tables will be available for the community meeting to take place in April 2016. Once all mapping is complete the data is downloaded from the server into ArcGIS 10. Maps are then generated from the geodatabases and will be prepared for the community review meetings in April 2016.

2) Key Respondent Interviews. Key respondent interviews will provide information on sharing networks within the community, the broader Bristol Bay – Chignik area, and Alaska. These interviews are the focus of this research and there will be two rounds of interviews and will be conducted by BBNA and ADF&G research staff. Researchers will identify key respondents in each community during household harvest surveys and through consultation with community members during the community scoping meetings. Key respondents will represent a range of harvesting effort and experience in the fishery. The key respondent interviews will be coded and sections of the interviews transcribed and analyzed along with notes taken during the interviews. A qualitative data analysis software will be used to code the data.

Potential for Partnership and Capacity Building: ADF&G and BBNA will share the responsibilities for conducting field investigations in this project, including identifying study communities, obtaining community approvals, administering the survey, interviewing key respondents, and distributing follow-up materials in the study communities. Tribal councils in study communities will be consulted about the project, and project approvals will be obtained prior to conducting fieldwork. Temporary field assistants will be hired by BBNA in each study community to assist with administration of the survey instrument and to help coordinate local logistical support and participation.

THE PARTNERS FOR FISHERIES MONITORING PROGRAM

The Partners for Fisheries Monitoring Program is a competitive grant program funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Subsistence Management (OSM). The program was created to build community involvement in subsistence fisheries research and management. Grants funded through the Partners Program provide up to four years of funding for the employment of social scientists, biologists, and educators within Tribal and rural organizations. The social scientists, biologists, and educators live in the community where the Partner organization is based, and are responsible for development and implementation of locally focused subsistence fisheries research, and educational programs.

Currently, the Partners Program funds four biologists and one resource specialist in five Native organizations. Each one serves as an investigator on a Fisheries Research Monitoring Program (FRMP) project. These projects are designed to provide information used to help manage Federal subsistence fisheries on Federal public lands. The FRMP projects also provide an opportunity for local youth to become involved with fisheries research through internships and summer camps. The internships provide an opportunity for locals to work as seasonal fisheries technicians learning how to run field projects focused on collecting information used for fisheries management. The science camps provide opportunities for students to work with village elders to learn traditional skills and to work with biologists on fisheries monitoring projects. Since inception the program has sponsored more than 250 high school and college interns. Many of these interns have gone on to pursue education and employment in Alaska fisheries research and management in Federal, State, Native and non-profit organizations.

The Partners Program has been successful in helping bridge subsistence knowledge and local expertise with fisheries management. OSM relies on the Partners Program biologists and resource specialist to communicate local subsistence fisheries concerns. These concerns are used in development of priority information needs, providing a guide for the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program. The Partners Program biologists and resource specialist live in rural communities where they witness the interaction between the subsistence user and their resources. They serve as a local contact where subsistence users can provide current and traditional information about local fish stocks, suggest future research needs, and discuss Federal subsistence fishing regulations. The partnerships generated through this program have strengthened the common goal of maintaining subsistence fisheries for future generations.

The Partners Program provides an important link between the Federal Subsistence Program and rural Alaskans wanting to become more involved in Federal Subsistence Fisheries research and management. The next opportunity for funding is scheduled to be announced in the fall of 2014.

For additional information about how a Tribal or rural organization can seek funding through the Partners for Fisheries Monitoring Program, contact Partners Program Coordinator, Dr. Palma Ingles, palma_ingles@fws.gov, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1011 E. Tudor Road, MS 121, Anchorage, AK 99503-6199, phone: 907-786-3870.

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FRMP Project:

- Whitefish trends in Lake Clark and Iliamna Lake

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dgillikin@knafish.org

FRMP Projects:

- Abundance and Run Timing of Adult Salmon in George River
- Location, Migration Timing, and Description of Kuskokwim River Bering Cisco Spawning Origins

TANANA CHIEFS CONFERENCE

121 1st Avenue, Suite 600
Fairbanks, AK 99701
907-452-8251, ex. 3318; fax 459-3852

Fishery Biologist: Brian McKenna
brian.mckenna@tananachiefs.org

FRMP Project:

- Abundance and Run Timing of Adult Salmon in Henshaw Creek

NATIVE VILLAGE OF EYAK

Box 1388
Cordova, AK 99574
907- 424-7738; fax 907- 424-7739

Fishery Biologist: John Whisse, john@eyak-nsn.gov

FRMP Project:

- Chinook salmon population monitoring on the Copper River
- Feasibility of remote streambed RFID readers for long-term salmon Copper River

ORUTSARAMIUT NATIVE COUNCIL

Box 927
Bethel, AK 99559
907- 543-2608; fax 907- 543-2639

Fisheries Resource Specialist: Roberta Chavez
rchavez@nativecouncil.org

FRMP Project:

- Lower Kuskokwim Chinook Harvest Age Sex and Length Composition
- Kuskokwim River Salmon Inseason Subsistence Catch Monitoring
- Kuskokwim Area Post-Season Subsistence Salmon Harvest Monitoring



United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge
P.O. Box 346
Bethel, Alaska 99559

IN REPLY REFER TO:
Yukon Delta NWR

September 11, 2013

Eugene R. Peltola Jr.
Assistant Regional Director
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Office of Subsistence Management
1011 E. Tudor Road, Mail Stop 121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Dear Gene:

I am writing this letter as the acting Federal In-Season Manager for the Kuskokwim Area and as the acting Refuge Manager of Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge) to state my concerns over the “not to fund” decision made by OSM for the operation of the Tuluksak Weir. I am especially concerned on the ability for the In-Season Manager to have the best available science to make decisions and to meet the legal intents to the management of the refuge and the subsistence user under the intents of Title III and Title VIII of ANILCA.

Chinook salmon are part and parcel of ecosystem function for associated terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. Under Title III of ANILCA, the refuge is mandated to “conserve fish and wildlife populations and habitats in their natural diversity, including but not limited to, shorebirds, seabirds, whistling (tundra) swans, emperor, white-fronted and Canada (cackling) geese, black brant and other migratory birds, **salmon**, muskox and marine mammals”. Therefore, appropriate management is necessary to protect lower river Chinook salmon stocks, as a measure to ensure ecosystem function and protect biological diversity on the Refuge as a matter of federal law and policy. The data collected at the Tuluksak Weir is additive to make drainage-wide decisions, and Tuluksak River Chinook salmon are a direct responsibility of the Refuge and the Service.

In 2013, considering that Chinook escapement on the Kuskokwim River will likely be a record low, and that total runs of Chinook salmon will continue to be some of the lowest on record reiterates the need for continued data collection to provide data continuity on the fishery. This is imperative to management, and to discontinue weir operations because of successive record low Chinook salmon escapements on the Tuluksak River and because of a newly applied State management strategy is not a responsible or prudent decision. In addition, in OSM’s funding process there were no pre-application funding criteria specific to the State’s new management strategy and it was distressing to see this justification to fund or not fund as part of the proposal review process.



United States Department of the Interior



FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge
P.O. Box 346
Bethel, Alaska 99559

IN REPLY REFER TO:
Yukon Delta NWR

The Tuluksak weir has been operational from 1991-1994 and 2001-2013. Through its operation the weir provides local employment for people in the village of Tuluksak, and provides an important educational nexus for our local communities on salmon ecology and management. This project is a stellar example of FWS and community partnering with an Alaska Native community and government.

Most troubling is the data suggests the Tuluksak River Chinook stock may be at risk of extirpation, and that a life-giving subsistence species which is part of the cultural identity to the people of Tuluksak is also at risk. It is seemingly logical that continued data collection is imperative, especially in light of any upstream habitat restoration projects through partnerships with industry, agency and philanthropic organizations (i.e. Fish and Wildlife Conservation Fund) to conserve this salmon stock. The weir is an in season and post season evaluation tool that also monitors the escapement of chum and coho salmon which support important Federal subsistence fisheries, and their respective escapement numbers.

Title III of ANILCA mandates that FWS provide for subsistence opportunity for the rural user, where Title VIII prioritizes subsistence above all other uses of the resource within Federal lands in Alaska. The ability to manage within the intents of ANILCA requires data from within the conservation unit. Substantial changes in management strategy should consider cumulative effects in the agency's ability to manage when faced with a new management paradigm that is virtually untested in the field. The abolishment of the Tuluksak Weir detracts from our ability to manage within the intents of the law.

I truly hope that OSM will reconsider the option "to fund" the Tuluksak Weir. If funding is not continued the refuge's in-season management capacities will be negated which will negatively affect the salmon resource and ultimately the subsistence user. Thank you for considering this matter which is important to the Refuge and the region.

Sincerely,

Thomas C. J. Doolittle
Acting Refuge Manager
YUKON DELTA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

cc Holly Gaboriault
Polly Wheeler
Jeffry Anderson

BRIEFING ON THE REVIEW OF THE RURAL DETERMINATION PROCESS

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

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

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

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

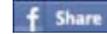
The Federal Subsistence Board will meet April 15–17, 2014 in Anchorage to review all the comments it received during the comment period. The Board will then make recommendations to the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture on possible changes to improve the process. These recommendations will be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

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

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

DOI News

Secretary Letter on Federal Subsistence Board Implementation



01/07/2011

December 17, 2010

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

Dear Mr. Towarak:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sincerely,

/s/ Ken Salazar

Ken Salazar

Enclosure

<< Previous

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

Next >>

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



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

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

Kevin Shea,

Acting Administrator, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

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

BILLING CODE 3410-34-P

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Fish and Wildlife Service

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

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

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

ACTION: Notice; request for comments.

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

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

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

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

- *Electronically:* Comments addressing this notice may be sent to subsistence@fws.gov.
- *By hard copy:* U.S. mail or hand-delivery to: USFWS, Office of Subsistence Management, 1011 East Tudor Road, MS 121, Attn: Theo Matuskowitz, Anchorage, AK 99503-6199, or hand delivery to the Designated Federal Official attending any of the Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Council public meetings.

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

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

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

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

Background

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

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

Federal Subsistence Board

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

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

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

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

Public Meetings

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

Attachment 2

77006 Federal Register / Vol. 77, No. 250 / Monday, December 31, 2012 / Notices

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

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

Tribal Consultation and Comment

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

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

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

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

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

Purpose of This Notice

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

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

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

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

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

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

Request for Input

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dated: December 5, 2012.

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

Dated: December 6, 2012.

Steve Kessler,
Subsistence Program Leader, USDA-Forest Service.

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

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

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Forest Service

Transfer of Land to the Department of Interior

AGENCY: Forest Service, USDA.

ACTION: Notice of Land Transfer.

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

DATES: This notice becomes effective December 31, 2012.

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

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

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

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



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



Forest Service

Federal Subsistence Board News Release

For Immediate Release:
January 14, 2013

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

Federal Subsistence Board Seeks Comments on Rural Determinations Process

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Submit written comments by one of the following methods:

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

E-mail: subsistence@fws.gov

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

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

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

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

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Scheduled Forums for Public Comments

**telephonic access will be provided to these events*

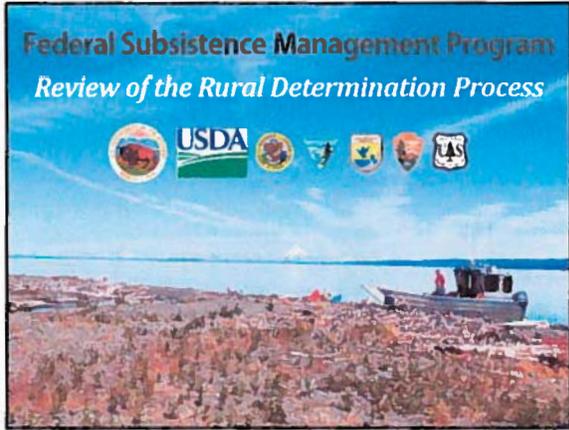
Forum	Meeting Date	Location
*Regional Advisory Council Meetings		
North Slope	Aug. 20-21, 2013	Barrow
Northwest Arctic	Aug. 21-22, 2013	Kotzebue
Southeast	Sept. 24-26, 2013	Ketchikan
Kodiak/Aleutians	Sept. 24-25, 2013	Kodiak
Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta	Oct. 2-3, 2013	Bethel
Southcentral	Oct. 2-3, 2013	Copper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

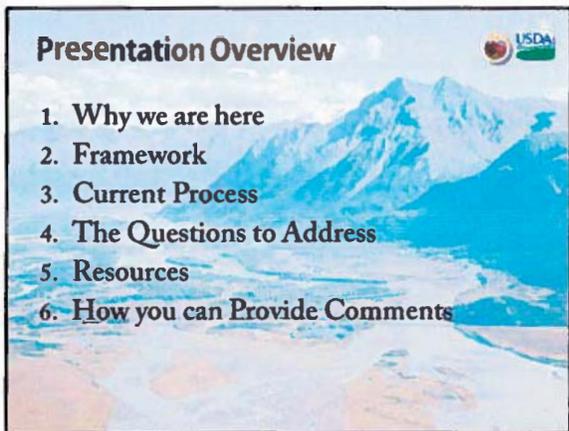
Forum	Meeting Date	Location
*ANCSA Corporation Consultations		
First	Aug. 14, 2013	USFWS Regional Headquarters, Anchorage
Second	Sept. 11, 2013	USFWS Regional Headquarters, Anchorage
AFN Youth and Elders	Oct. 2013	Fairbanks
AFN Convention Booth	Oct. 2013	Fairbanks

Steps in the Review of the Rural Determination Process

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

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







Framework

Title VIII - ANILCA

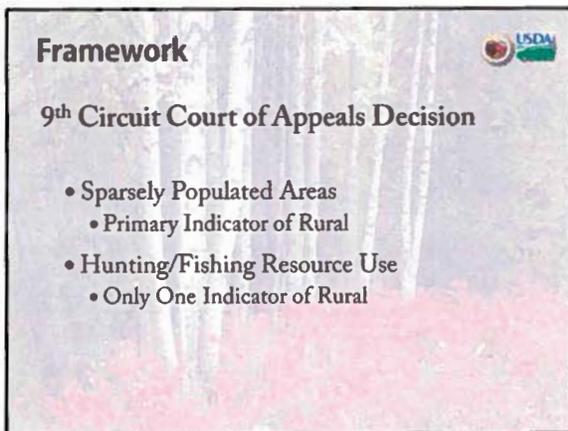
- Rural Subsistence Priority
- Residents of Rural Communities / Areas



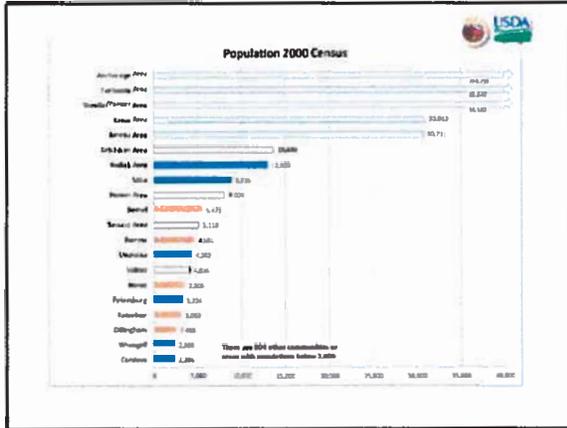
Framework

9th Circuit Court of Appeals Decision

- Sparsely Populated Areas
 - Primary Indicator of Rural
- Hunting/Fishing Resource Use
 - Only One Indicator of Rural







Current Process

Overview of Criteria

1. Grouping (Aggregation) of Communities
2. Population Threshold
3. Rural Characteristics
4. Timelines
5. Information Sources

Current Process

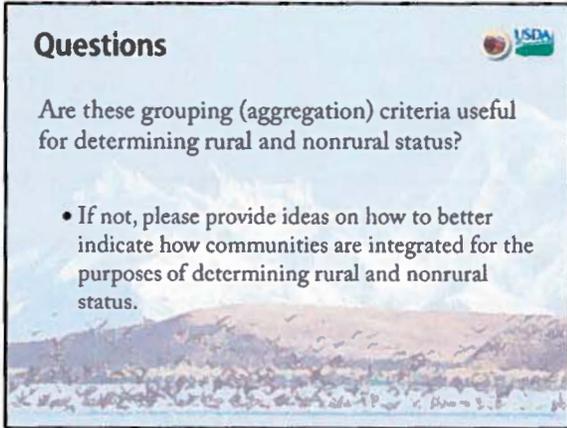
1. Grouping of Communities

- Economic, Social, Communal Integration
 - Do 30% or more working people commute from one community to another?
 - Do they share a common high school attendance area?
 - Are the communities in proximity and road accessible to one another?

Questions 

Are these grouping (aggregation) criteria useful for determining rural and nonrural status?

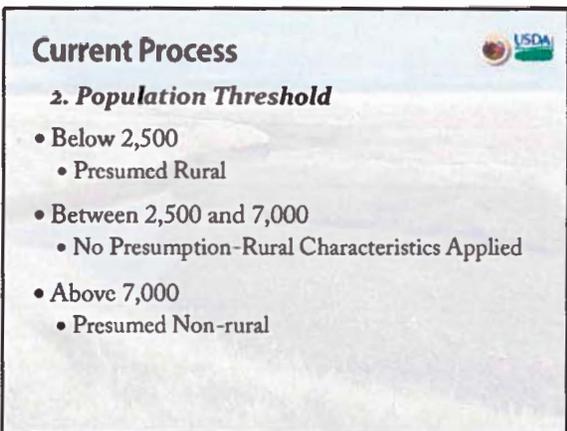
- If not, please provide ideas on how to better indicate how communities are integrated for the purposes of determining rural and nonrural status.



Current Process 

2. Population Threshold

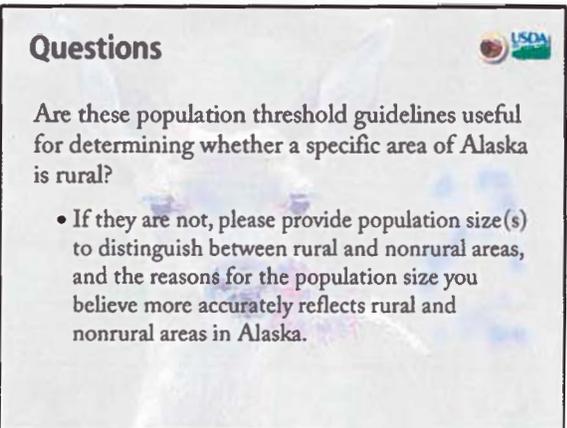
- Below 2,500
 - Presumed Rural
- Between 2,500 and 7,000
 - No Presumption-Rural Characteristics Applied
- Above 7,000
 - Presumed Non-rural



Questions 

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

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



Current Process 

3. Rural Characteristics

- Use of Fish and Wildlife
- Economic Development and Diversity
- Infrastructure
- Transportation
- Educational Institutions

Questions 

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

- If they are not, please provide a list of characteristics that better define rural and nonrural status.

Current Process 

4. Timelines

- 10-year Cycle
- Out of Cycle in Special Circumstances

5. Information Sources

- Recent Census Population Data
- Census Information Varies Decade to Decade

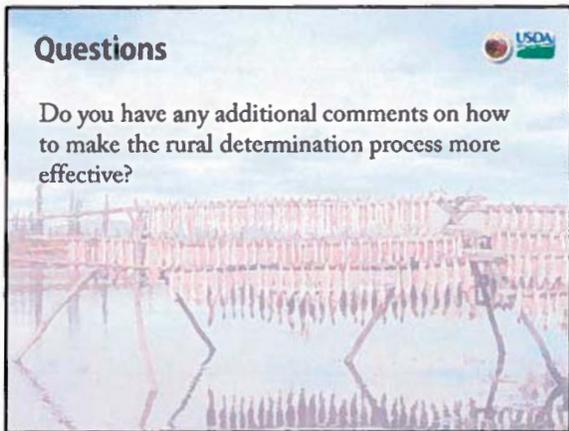
Questions 

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

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

Questions 

Do you have any additional comments on how to make the rural determination process more effective?



Resources 

Available to You

Web Site-
<http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/library/policies/rural-determination.cfm>

Email

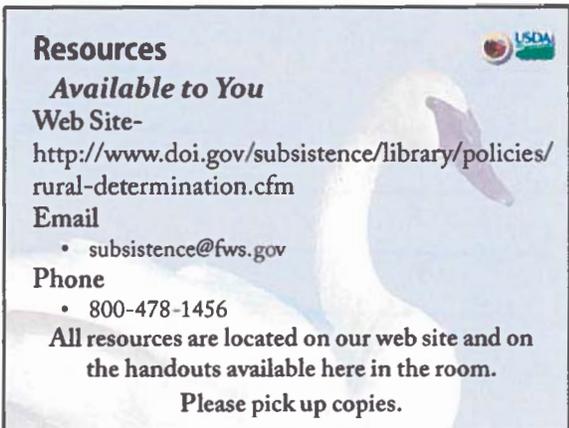
- subsistence@fws.gov

Phone

- 800-478-1456

All resources are located on our web site and on the handouts available here in the room.

Please pick up copies.



How you can Provide Comments 

Testimony –

- Regional Advisory Council meetings, for RAC consideration
- Public Hearings, to inform Federal Subsistence Board

Electronically - by email at subsistence@fws.gov

U.S. mail / hand deliver - to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Subsistence Management, 1011 Tudor Road-MS121, Anchorage, Alaska 99503

Hand Deliver - to Designated Federal Official, or Council Coordinator, attending any of Regional Advisory Council or Federal Subsistence Board public meetings



Thank You



Rural Determination Process Review Q&As

OVERVIEW

1. Why is the rural determination process review important to Alaskans?

Only residents of communities or areas determined to be rural by the Federal Subsistence Board are eligible to harvest fish and wildlife resources on Federal public lands under Federal subsistence regulations.

2. Why is the Federal Subsistence Board reviewing the rural determination Process?

On October 23, 2009, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar announced the initiation of a Departmental review of the Federal Subsistence Management Program in Alaska, and on August 31, 2010, Secretary Salazar, along with Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, made several recommendations to the Federal Subsistence Board to improve the program. One recommendation called for a review of the rural determination process and, if needed, regulatory change. The Federal Subsistence Board voted unanimously to initiate a review of the rural determination process (process review). In the meantime, the Board found that it was in the public interest to suspend the results of its May 7, 2007 rural determinations until after this current review of the rural determination process is complete and new rural determinations are made, or for 5 years, whichever comes first.

3. Who is participating in the process review and what roles are each playing?

The public is encouraged to participate in the rural determination process review by learning about the current process, commenting on it, and suggesting new ideas for a better, future process. The public is invited to testify in person at public hearings or provide written comments. The Regional Advisory Councils, Tribes, and Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act corporations may also provide comments or make recommendations to the Federal Subsistence Board. The Federal Subsistence Board will evaluate all the comments and present recommendations to the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture, who will decide the outcome of the process review.

4. What is the overall timeline?

The rural determination process review will occur between December 31, 2012 and the spring of 2015. The Federal Subsistence Board's goal is to conduct the new rural determinations review by February, 2017.

EXISTING RURAL DETERMINATION PROCESS

5. What is the existing process for determining rural communities (or non-rural areas)?

The Federal Subsistence Board uses the rural determination process described in the Final Rule published in the Federal Register on May 7, 2007. The Federal Subsistence Board considered all of the following in making rural determinations:

- **Population thresholds.** A community or area with a population below 2,500 will be

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

- **Rural characteristics.** The Board recognizes that population alone is not the only indicator of rural or nonrural status. Other characteristics the Board considers include, but are not limited to, the following: use of fish and wildlife; development and diversity of the economy; community infrastructure; transportation; and educational institutions.
- **Aggregation of communities.** The Board recognizes that communities and areas of Alaska are connected in diverse ways. Communities that are economically, socially, and communally integrated are considered in the aggregate in determining rural and nonrural status. The aggregation criteria are: 1) Do 30 percent or more of the working people commute from one community to another? 2) Do they share a common high school attendance area? and 3) Are the communities in proximity and road-accessible to one another?
- **Timelines.** The Board reviews rural determinations on a 10-year cycle, and out of cycle in special circumstances.
- **Information sources.** Current regulations state that population data from the most recent census conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau, as updated by the Alaska Department of Labor, shall be utilized in the rural determination process. The information collected and the reports generated during the decennial census vary between each census; as such, data used during the Board's rural determination may vary. These information sources as stated in regulations will continue to be the foundation of data used for rural determinations.

6. When were the most recent rural determinations made and what were they?

The Final Rule on the current rural determinations was published in the Federal Register on May 7, 2007. The Federal Subsistence Board determined all communities and areas to be rural except:

- (1) Anchorage, Municipality of;
- (2) Fairbanks North Star Borough;
- (3) Homer area—including Homer, Anchor Point, North Fork Road area, Kachemak City, and the Fritz Creek East area (not including Voznesenka);
- (4) Juneau area—including Juneau, West Juneau, and Douglas;
- (5) Kenai area—including Kenai, Soldotna, Sterling, Nikiski, Salamatof, Kalifonsky, Kasilof, and Clam Gulch;
- (6) Ketchikan area—including all parts of the road system connected to the City of Ketchikan including Saxman, Pennock Island and parts of Gravina Island;
- (7) Prudhoe Bay;
- (8) Seward area—including Seward and Moose Pass;
- (9) Valdez; and
- (10) Wasilla/Palmer area—including Wasilla, Palmer, Sutton, Big Lake, Houston, Point MacKenzie, and Bodenburg Butte.

**Note that all changes made by the Board in 2007, except for changing Adak's determi-

nation from non-rural to rural, have been put on hold by the Board pending the outcome of the process review and new rural determinations. (See Question #1 for more detail).

“PROCESS” REVIEW (CURRENTLY UNDERWAY)

7. Are there any legal considerations I should be aware of when making my comments?

Yes. All ideas on how to improve the rural determination process that are consistent with ANILCA Title VIII and 9th Circuit Court of Appeals case law associated with the definition of rural will be considered. In *Kenaitze v. State of Alaska*, 860 F.2d 312 (1988), the 9th Court provided useful guidance regarding the meaning of the term “rural” as it is used in Title VIII of ANILCA:

Regarding the definition of “rural,” the Court said, “The term rural is not difficult to understand; it is not a term of art. It is a standard word in the English language commonly understood to refer to areas of the country that are sparsely populated, where the economy centers on agriculture and ranching.”

Based on this definition, the Court struck down the State of Alaska’s approach to defining rural areas. The State’s definition of “rural” included only those areas dominated by subsistence fishing and hunting, while excluding areas dominated primarily by a cash economy even if a substantial portion of that area’s residents engaged in subsistence activities. In making this decision, the Court said that «Congress did not limit the benefits of [Title VIII] to areas dominated by a subsistence economy. Instead, it wrote broadly, giving the statutory priority to all subsistence users residing in rural areas.»

8. What is the timeline for the process review?

- The rural determination process review began on December 31, 2012, with the publication of a Federal Register Notice requesting comments.
- Between August 20 and October 17, 2013 the Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils will meet and formulate comments for the Federal Subsistence Board. Public hearings, conducted by the Federal Subsistence Board, will be held in conjunction with each of these meetings to gather public comments.
- The deadline to submit all comments is November 1, 2013.
- By April, 2014 the Federal Subsistence Board will draft recommendations for the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture on possible changes to the process.
- The Secretaries will then publish a proposed rule in the Federal Register, opening a comment period, and by the spring of 2015 will publish a final rule.

9. Where can I find the Federal Register Notice that asks for input into the process?

It is available online at <http://alaska.fws.gov/asm/rural.cfml> In addition, the public can call 1 (800) 478-1456 to request a hard copy.

10. When and where can I provide official input into the process review?

By November 1, 2013 comments must be received in any of the following ways:

- *Electronically*: sent to subsistence@fws.gov.
- *By hard copy*: U.S. mail or hand-delivery to: USFWS, Office of Subsistence Management, 1011 East Tudor Road, MS 121, Attn: Theo Matuskowitz, Anchorage, AK 99503– 6199,
- *Hand delivery* to the Designated Federal Official attending any of the Regional Advisory Council public meetings or Federal Subsistence Board public hearings, or
- *By testifying* at public hearings held in conjunction with the Fall 2013 Regional Advisory Council meetings and in a few additional communities. The hearing schedule can be found at <http://alaska.fws.gov/asm/deadline.cfm>

11. How can I make my comments most useful to the Board?

Comments, and rationale for those comments, should address the following components of the current rural determination process: population thresholds, rural characteristics, aggregation of communities, timelines and information sources. All ideas on how to improve the rural determination process consistent with ANILCA Title VIII and the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals case law associated with the definition of rural will be considered.

12. Will the fall of 2013 be the only time I can comment on the process review?

No. If the Secretaries decide to make changes to the rural determination process, a proposed rule will be published in the Federal Register followed by another open comment period.

13. What will the Board do with my comments?

After the November 1, 2013 comment deadline, the Federal Subsistence Board will review and analyze all the comments it received during the comment period. The Board will make recommendations to the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture on possible changes to improve the rural determination process.

14. Who can I contact if I have questions?

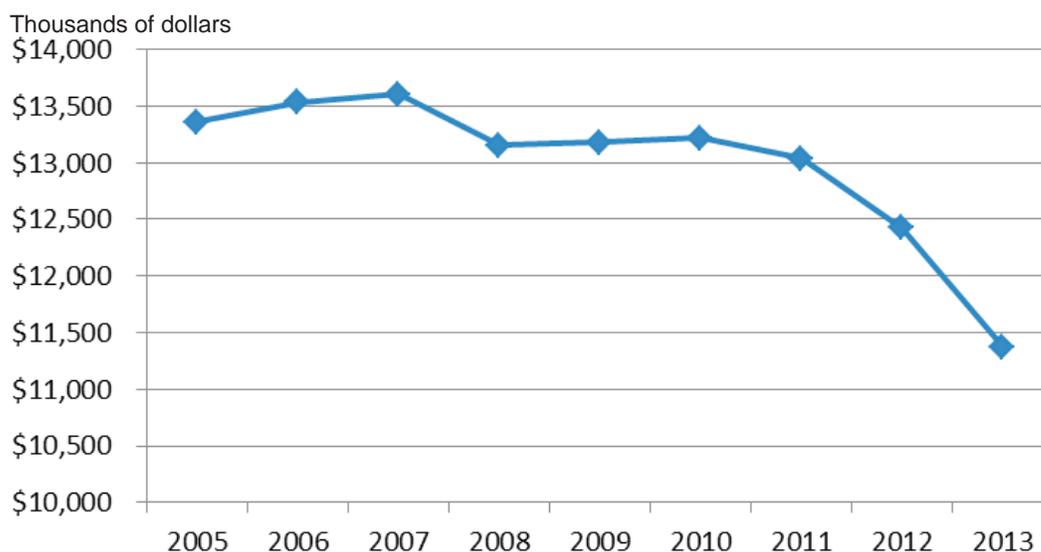
Individuals can call David Jenkins, Office of Subsistence Management, at 907-786-3688 or email david_jenkins@fws.gov

OFFICE OF SUBSISTENCE MANAGEMENT BRIEFINGS

Budget Update

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

TOTAL OSM BUDGET BY FISCAL YEAR



Staffing Update

Arrivals

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

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

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

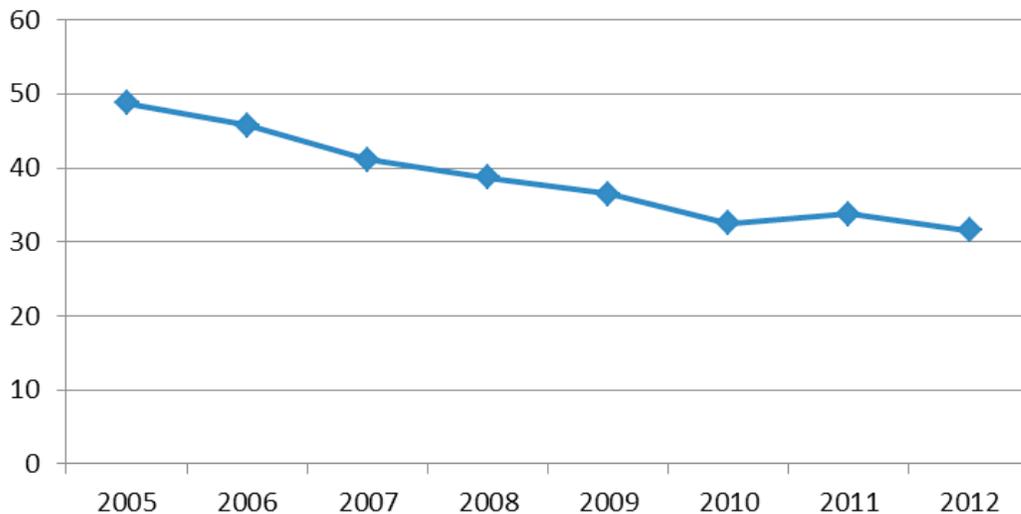
Departures

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

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

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

OSM STAFFING BY FISCAL YEAR



Tribal Consultation Update

The Tribal Consultation Implementation Guidelines are going through a final draft after the FSB reviewed them at the August work session. They will be re-presented to the Board for acceptance at their next work session. The Tribal Consultation workgroup consists of a varied group of Federal staff, Tribal members and members from Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) Corporations. Once the implementation guidelines have been accepted by the Board, the workgroup will focus its attention on crafting the ANCSA Consultation Policy and Implementation Guidelines.

Regulatory Cycle Update

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



IN REPLY REFER TO:

United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
Togiak National Wildlife Refuge
P.O. Box 270
Dillingham, Alaska 99576
Phone 907-842-1063
Fax 907-842-5402

INFORMATION BULLETIN - July 2013

Personnel Changes

In December 2012, Togiak Refuge Manager Paul Liedberg retired after 34 years of Federal Service and resides in Dillingham with his wife Maryanne. In late May Paul was replaced by Susanna Henry, who served as the Refuge Manager at Kofa National Wildlife Refuge near Yuma, Arizona.

The Roles of Alder and Salmon in Driving Aquatic Productivity Contact: Pat Walsh

In 2010, Togiak Refuge, the University of Illinois, the University of Washington, and ADF&G began a 4-year project to determine the relative role of salmon and alder in controlling productivity in lakes. Both salmon and alder contribute nutrients to lakes: salmon do so via decomposition of carcasses after spawning, and alder does so through nitrifying the soil, and by mobilizing soil nutrients which would otherwise be biologically inaccessible. This project will measure the contribution of nutrients from both sources by analyzing water samples from thirteen Refuge lakes over a four year period. The information that will come from this project will help salmon managers better understand the ecological consequences of harvest. Since 2010, we have installed water quality and quantity monitoring equipment at 13 lakes on Togiak Refuge. We collected and processed water samples in summer and fall 2010, 2011, 2012 and summer samples in 2013. Field work will be completed after we perform one more round of sampling in fall 2013. We have begun laboratory analysis for a battery of biological and chemical attributes. We monitored stream discharge in summer and fall at 26 streams entering the study lakes in order to estimate lake water budgets. We performed aerial sockeye salmon surveys at all study lakes and estimated run size in each. We updated an existing landcover map to refine our estimate of alder cover in the study area. A progress report is available.

Cooperative Salmon Escapement Monitoring Projects Contact: Mark Lisac

In 2013 Togiak Refuge provided support to the Native Village of Kwinhagak (NVK) and ADF&G to operate salmon escapement monitoring projects (weirs) on the Kanektok (KRW) and Middle Fork Goodnews Rivers (MFGRW).

On the Middle Fork Goodnews River, ADF&G has monitored Chinook, chum and sockeye salmon escapement since 1980. Escapement goals and management of the commercial fishery

are based on salmon escapement at the weir. Togiak Refuge has worked with ADF&G since 1992 to include the coho salmon and Dolly Varden runs in the project operation. ADF&G, Togiak Refuge and the Office of Subsistence Management (OSM) fund the project operation. Since 2006 this weir project has also used an underwater video system which allows the weir to be opened to salmon passage more hours a day. Use of motion sensors and digital recording video can improve fish counting accuracy, especially during periods of high water and poor visibility. The MFGRW was fish tight on 24 June and will continue operation through most of September 2013.

On the Kanektok River, ADF&G, NVK and Togiak Refuge have worked cooperatively to monitor salmon and Dolly Varden runs since 2001. This project is currently funded by OSM and Coastal Villages Region Fund. Escapement goal ranges have not been established for the Kanektok River because the weir has not been operational for enough years. This weir began operation 25 June and will continue only until mid August.

Preliminary escapement counts to 28 July for the MFGRW and KRW 2013 are:

	Chinook	Sockeye	Chum	Coho	Pink	Dolly V.
MFGRW	1,039	22,382	24,433	12	405	4,327
KRW	3,144	123,991	39,255	343	494	20,666

Arctic Char Population Inventory Contact: Mark Lisac

Togiak Refuge is developing a multi-year study to inventory Arctic char populations throughout the Refuge. This species is confirmed to occur in 27 lakes and are likely to be found in many more. We will attempt to collect size, shape and genetic information from each lake population encountered. If you have any first hand knowledge of small or unique Arctic char populations and would be willing to share that information please contact Mark Lisac at the Refuge office.

Rainbow Trout Population Identification Contact: Pat Walsh

Togiak Refuge, ADF&G Sport Fish, and the Conservation Genetics Laboratory are working together to inventory populations and determine the genetic relationships between populations of rainbow trout throughout Togiak Refuge. Archived genetic material collected from previous investigations were inventoried and assessed for suitability in the current study. A collection plan for unsampled populations was completed and new tissue collections began in the Goodnews, Kanektok, Igushik, Snake, and Wood River watersheds in summer 2009. Collections continued in Ice Creek and the Osviak River in 2012. All collections are now complete, and genetic analysis is underway. A progress report is available.

Mulchatna Caribou Contact: Andy Aderman

Togiak Refuge assisted ADF&G with telemetry monitoring flights, radiocollar deployment, satellite data acquisition, data entry and database management. Primary calving areas in 2013 were near Lime Village (Unit 19A) and the mid-Nushagak River area (Unit 17C) similar to the past several years. Caribou were also observed calving in the southern Kilbuck Mountains (Unit 18). A photocensus was attempted on July 12, 2013. A composition survey is planned for early October.

Nushagak Peninsula Caribou Contact: Andy Aderman

During the 2012-2013 hunting seasons, 109 caribou were reported harvested. This was the third highest harvest since hunting began on this herd in 1995. Radio collars were deployed on four short-yearling females in early April. During late May 2013, 17 of 21 (81.0%) radiocollared adults ≥ 3 -years olds produced a calf. All 4 of the radiocollared 2-year olds produced a calf. A photocensus conducted on July 8, 2013 found a minimum of 926 caribou. A similar effort in 2012 found a minimum of 902 caribou. Seventy caribou permits total were made available in Manokotak, Dillingham, and Aleknagik for the fall hunt. A composition survey is planned for early October. The Nushagak Peninsula Caribou Planning Committee will meet in November or January to review population status and make recommendations regarding hunting.

Wolf Predation on Nushagak Peninsula Caribou Contact: Pat Walsh

Using radio telemetry, Togiak Refuge and ADF&G investigated the seasonality and duration of wolf use of the Nushagak Peninsula, in order to assess whether predation is a likely factor in driving population dynamics of Nushagak Peninsula caribou. From 2007 through 2012, we used GPS radio telemetry to track the movement of wolves from two packs located within 30 km of the Nushagak Peninsula. Field work was concluded in spring 2012, at which time collars were removed from wolves. One of the two packs used the Nushagak Peninsula approximately 36% of the year, spending less than 10% of its time on the Peninsula during winter months, and up to 70% during late summer. Over the course of the study, wolf use of the Nushagak Peninsula increased steadily, although overall wolf numbers remained relatively constant. During this same time, the Nushagak Peninsula caribou population increased from an estimated 579 to over 900. We conclude that wolf predation has not been the primary population driver for this caribou herd during the years of this study, but instead that the wolf population has responded to increased caribou abundance by shifting the amount of time it spends on the Peninsula. A progress report is available.

Moose Contact: Andy Aderman

A population survey in March 2013 found 30 moose total in the Kanektok and Arolik River drainages in southern Unit 18. The previous high count for these two drainages combined was 17 moose in 2012. The Moose Management Plan for Unit 17A was finalized in March 2013 with signing by the Bristol Bay Regional Advisory Council Chair. In May 2013, 14 of 22 radiocollared adult cows produced a minimum of 23 calves, or 105 calves:100 adult cows. Adult twinning rate was 64%. Seven of 14 radiocollared 2-year old cows produced a minimum of 8 calves, or 57 calves:100 2-year old cows.

Walrus Contact: Michael Winfree

Togiak National Wildlife Refuge has monitored Pacific walrus haulouts located on Refuge coastlines since 1985. In 2012, cameras programmed to take a photo every hour were used to monitor haulouts located at Cape Peirce and Hagemeister Island, while aerial surveys were conducted to monitor Cape Newenham. In 2012, there were 19 and 33 haulout events documented at Cape Peirce and Hagemeister Island, respectively. No walrus were observed at Cape Newenham during aerial surveys in 2012.

Seabirds Contact: Michael Swaim

Togiak National Wildlife Refuge has monitored seabird populations at Cape Peirce since 1980, making this one of the longest continuously studied seabird colonies in the state of Alaska. During this period, pelagic cormorant populations remained relatively constant, while black-legged kittiwakes and common murre populations have declined.

Eelgrass Monitoring Contact: Michael Swaim

Togiak Refuge has partnered with the USGS Alaska Science Center to map and inventory 23 eelgrass beds along the refuge coastline since 2007. Work will primarily be focused on the reacquisition of aerial imagery in Goodnews Bay and Togiak Bay in 2012 and 2013.

Water Temperature Monitoring Contact: Michael Swaim

Togiak Refuge has collected continuous water temperature measurements at 18 sites since 1990. The refuge will continue monitoring water temperature indefinitely, since these data provide important baseline information for a variety of biological and climate-related studies.

Quantifying River Discharge Contact: Michael Winfree

Togiak Refuge and the USFWS Water Resources Branch have worked cooperatively since 1999 to acquire baseline hydrologic data of the flow regime (magnitude, duration, timing, frequency, and rate of change) and water quality. A network of stream discharge gages collected stream flow data from 1999-2005 at 20 locations. A subset of five of these stations continued to collect data through fall 2009, after which three of the five stations were removed. We will continue indefinitely to monitor discharge in the Togiak and Kulukak Rivers. Each gage is instrumented with pressure sensors that measure water level every 15 minutes. Six discharge measurements occurred at each site from October 1, 2012 through July 31, 2013.

Salmon River Water Quality Contact: Michael Winfree

The Salmon River drainage, just south of Platinum, has been the site of a placer mine since the 1930's. Major production by the Goodnews Bay Mining Company stopped in 1976. The mine was sold to Hanson Industries in 1980, who in turn sold it to XS Platinum in 2007. In the summer of 2009, re-mining of the old tailings began. In September 2009, Togiak Refuge installed a continuous water-quality gage on the Salmon River. The gage monitors pH, turbidity, specific conductivity, dissolved oxygen, temperature, and depth. The gage runs continuously, taking a reading every 15 minutes. Baseline value estimates from April 1, 2010 through February 29, 2012 were: temperature = 2.4°C, specific conductivity = 78 μ S/cm at 25°C, pH=7.3, turbidity=4.6 NTU, dissolved oxygen= 12.9 mg/L. Baseline values will be further refined with the collection of more data.

Education and Outreach Contact: Terry Fuller

Togiak Refuge has an active education and outreach program including the Migratory Bird Calendar; National Wildlife Refuge Week; career fairs; production of Bristol Bay Field Notes (a new episode airs every Friday morning at 8:50 am on KDLG at 89.9 FM); and numerous teacher requested classroom presentations in 12 villages in the Southwest Region, Lower Kuskokwim, Dillingham City school districts and the Dillingham 7th Day Adventist School. Field trips with

area students for the 2012-2013 school year included bird walks, animal tracks and ID, archery, salmon life cycles, aquatic resources and bear safety. The refuge website is also a valuable education tool and is available at <http://togiak.fws.gov>. Togiak Refuge took the plunge into social media in 2013 and now has an active Facebook page which disseminates information on a daily basis. Also, the refuge partners with others to conduct three environmental education camps described below:

****Note on Science Camps for 2013:*** *As a part of funding cuts resulting from sequestration, Region 7 eliminated all funding for Science Camps for 2013. Togiak Refuge was able to still participate in the Southwest Alaska Science Academy through providing the use of equipment (boats and motors) and instructional time. Enough funding was put together to hold one of the other two camps. The Summer Outdoors Skills and River Ecology Float Camp will happen during August 2013 and is planned for the Middle Fork, Goodnews River. The Cape Peirce Marine Science and Yup'ik Culture Camp has been cancelled for 2013.*

Southwest Alaska Science Academy Contact: Terry Fuller

This past July (2012), Togiak Refuge helped with the 11th year of a summer camp aimed at teaching middle and high school students about fisheries science and the importance of salmon to our ecosystem. Students were selected from the Bristol Bay region. During the camp students worked in the field alongside fisheries professionals. Cooperators with the refuge on this project included the Bristol Bay Economic Development Corporation, Bristol Bay Science and Research Institute, University of Alaska, University of Washington School of Fisheries, the Dillingham City and Southwest Region school districts, and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

Cape Peirce Marine Science and Yup'ik Culture Camp Contact: Terry Fuller

Togiak Refuge holds a junior high Science camp at Cape Peirce that is designed to educate area students about seabirds, marine mammals and how field studies are conducted. It also introduces them to a variety of outdoor resource related topics and activities.

Due to poor weather conditions (and two attempts to reach Cape Peirce) the camp was abruptly moved to an alternate location (Lake Nunavaugaluk) during 2012. Some of the activities that the students participated in included wilderness survival skills (water, fire, shelter, first aid), catch and release angling, archery, identification of aquatic organisms and canoeing. Other topics that were discussed included Leave No Trace camping practices, bear safety, stewardship and careers with the USFWS. Traditional councils and school districts from throughout western Bristol Bay are cooperators with this camp.

Summer Outdoor Skills and River Ecology Float Camp Contact: Terry Fuller

The 2012 Float Camp took place on the Pungokepuk and Togiak Rivers. Students learned about river ecosystems and how to enjoy them safely and responsibly while taking part in a float trip. Students observed and learned about the many fish, wildlife and plant species found on refuge rivers and streams. Rafting skills, water safety, different angling methods (Catch and Release), Leave No Trace camping practices and bear safety were topics during the trip. Students also participated in other outdoor activities such as outdoor survival skills, identification of juvenile salmonid species and archery. Other topics of discussion included bear safety, Leave No Trace

camping practices and careers with the USFWS. On this particular camp students were also able to assist refuge staff with data collection for the water temperature monitoring. This camp helped students understand the biological diversity of riparian ecosystems and the importance of salmon as a nutrient source, while developing a deeper sense of stewardship for local natural resources. Traditional councils and school districts from western Bristol Bay are cooperators in this camp.

River Ranger Program Contact: Allen Miller

The Refuge River Ranger Program was conceived during the public use management planning process and was first implemented in 1991. The program serves many purposes. River Rangers are the main contact source for sport fishermen and local residents. Information distributed to the public includes Service policies, regulations, resource management practices, State sport fish regulations, bear safety, wilderness ethics, Leave-No-Trace camping, and information about private lands to prevent trespass. Rangers document public use occurring on the river along with the location and timing of activities, conflicts between users, and sport fish catch/harvest per unit effort. Rangers also assist Refuge and ADF&G staff at the Kanektok River and Middle Fork Goodnews River weirs, and assist Refuge staff with biological studies. In addition, Rangers patrol campsites for litter, monitor compliance of sport fishing guides, and offer assistance as needed.

Two River Rangers are stationed in the village of Togiak during summer 2013 and patrol the Togiak River several times each week. One of them was hired as a student intern through the Bristol Bay Native Association and the other position was filled by Pete Abraham who works for the refuge as a Refuge Information Technician during the rest of the year. Two River Rangers are stationed in the village of Quinhagak during summer 2013 and patrol the Kanektok River several times each week. Both are long time residents of Quinhagak. One Park Ranger stationed out of Dillingham patrols several refuge rivers including the Goodnews River using inflatable kayaks. Use of kayaks allows rangers to access the entire length of the rivers, which are inaccessible to power boats during most water levels.



United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Alaska Peninsula/Becharof NWR

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King Salmon, AK 99613

(907) 246-3339 (voice)

(907) 246-6696 (fax)

Agency Report to:

Bristol Bay Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

Public Meeting, Dillingham, Alaska

October 29-30, 2013

Alaska Peninsula/Becharof NWR Mammal Projects - 2013

Project: *Moose Composition and Trend Surveys Summary (GMUs 9C & 9E) 2012–2013*

We conducted moose composition surveys in southern GMU 9C and northern GMU 9E for 5 days during 28 November –10 December 2012. Dom Watts (biologist) and Jim Wittkop (pilot) located and evaluated moose using an Aviat Husky (A-1B). Composition surveys were conducted throughout primary moose habitats in southern 9C and northern 9E on the Bristol Bay side of the Aleutian Mountains from the Naknek River south to the north side of Aniakchak including most of the Park Border, Big Creek, Kejulik, Ugashik, Blue Mountain, Mother Goose, Flats A, Flats B, and Cinder River trend-areas. Effort was concentrated on primary moose habitats and known wintering areas in order to maximize sample size. We also evaluated and recorded moose that were randomly encountered in transit to and from primary survey areas.

We observed a total of 438 moose with an overall bull:cow ratio of 48:100 and an overall calf:cow ratio of 15:100. Bull:cow ratios were slightly higher in 9E survey areas (54:100, $n = 242$) than in 9C survey areas (43:100, $n = 188$) but both were within or above ADF&G management objectives (i.e., 25 to ≥ 40 :100). Bull:cow ratios in 9C survey areas were similar to those reported for 9C during 2007–2008 (Butler 2010). Bull:cow ratios in the areas of 9E we surveyed (54:100) were considerably higher than those reported for 9E in 2005 (25:100) but were similar to those observed in 9E during 2002–2003 (46–74:100). As is commonly observed in GMU 9, calf recruitment was low throughout the areas we surveyed during 2012. Calf:cow ratios appeared to be slightly higher in 9C survey areas (18:100) than in 9E survey areas (11:100). Butler (2010) reported similar low calf:cow ratios in 9C during 2005–2008 (8–13:100) and in 9E during 2002–2005 (6–15:100). It is important to note that moose composition surveys are not designed to provide reliable estimates of moose abundance and should not be considered estimates of population size.

Poor weather and survey conditions (e.g., inadequate snow cover, high winds) frequently limit moose trend-area surveys in GMU 9 and autumn trend-areas are infrequently surveyed. During 2012, trend-area survey conditions were poor throughout most of GMU 9 prior to the 10 December cutoff with snow cover varying from light snow cover in southern 9C to large areas with no snow cover and bare ground showing throughout most of 9E. Consequently, autumn

trend-area surveys could not be conducted during 2012 due to poor snow conditions. Both, moose composition and trend-area surveys are scheduled for Winter 2013–2014.

Literature Cited:

Butler, L.G. 2010. Unit 9 moose management report. Pages 116–123 in P. Harper, editor. Moose management report of survey and inventory activities 1 July 2007–30 June 2009. Alaska Department of Fish & Game. Project 1.0. Juneau, Alaska, USA.

Project: Federal Subsistence Brown Bear Seasons for 2012-2013

There were no applications for permit for the fall and winter Federal subsistence brown bear hunting season in Unit 9E, that portion conducted on the Alaska Peninsula and Becharof National Wildlife Refuges, allows harvest of one brown bear (except cubs or sows with cubs) by Federal registration permit.

For more information on the Refuges' mammal programs, contact: Dom Watts, USFWS, Alaska Peninsula/Becharof NWR, PO Box 277, King Salmon, AK 99613. Phone: 907-246-1210; e-mail: dom_watts@fws.gov

Alaska Peninsula/Becharof NWR Bird Projects – 2013

Projects contributing to Regional or National Networks:

Inventory & Monitoring:

- Breeding Bird Survey, 8 June 2013 Lake Camp to Kvichak Bay
- Alaska Landbird Monitoring Survey (ALMS)/Off-road Point Count (ORPC): two ALMS blocks completed (Lower Ugashik Lake [#14880, 11-14 June] and South King Salmon River [#14637, 15-18 June]). This is the second visit to each of these blocks which were established in 2011. Completed a 13 point ORPC along the Kanatak Trail to include some higher elevation areas. (Refuge specific progress report available)

Outreach:

- International Migratory Bird Day/North American Migration Count (11 May 2013, 6,795 birds of 69 species), 15 people counting in the field
- Festival - Shorebird Identification: More than just Mudpokers! 21 July at 10:30 AM (2 hours after high tide), five parties of eight participants
- Christmas Bird Count (16 December 2012, 858 birds of 15 species/species groups), six people counting in the field and three at three feeders

Local Projects Completed :Inventory & Monitoring

Project: Tundra Swan Population Estimate, August 2013

Refuge staff conducted a tundra swan population survey in August 2013. The area sampled covers the Bristol Bay lowlands from the Kvichak River to Port Moller. Fifty plots (approximately 7.5 miles x 6 miles) were surveyed from 5 – 16 August using the Refuge Found, Refuge pilot, and two observers. Due to sampling issues identified during the 2008 surveys and subsequent analysis, a new sample frame was defined and a simple random sample was selected. Currently the data have been digitized and distances from the transect line have been determined.

We plan to use Distance Analysis (Buckland et al. 2001; Distance 6.0 Release 2) to obtain a population estimate for the Northern Alaska Peninsula. The information will be available in a Refuge report early next year.

Project: Spring Ptarmigan Density Estimate, Alaska Peninsula, May - June 2013

Land managers, sport and subsistence hunters, climate change scientist, and predators all have an interest in willow ptarmigan populations. In 2011 the Alaska Peninsula/Becharof NWR (Refuge) embarked on a project to examine at minimum, relative abundance of willow ptarmigan across the lowlands of the Alaska Peninsula from the Naknek River to Port Moller. Recommendations from members of Boreal Partners in Flight (BPIF) lead the Principle Investigators to switch from point transect surveys to line transect surveys and in 2012 we conducted 13 line transect surveys from the Naknek River drainage to Ugashik to test this method. In 2013 we implemented the line transect survey, but reduced our area of interest to the area from the Naknek River to the Upper Ugashik Lake area.

Starting on 1 May through 1 June 2013 we conducted 18 line transect surveys from nine general locations. Survey areas were located at accessible airstrips south of King Salmon or along accessible roads. Eight surveys were located randomly while the others followed the path of surveys conducted in 2012 or were located to avoid large obstacles (e.g., uncrossable rivers, large lakes) in the field. Surveys began shortly after sunrise, unless fog prevented seeing ptarmigan. All surveys but one were approximately four km in length. Each ptarmigan sighting was recorded including distance from observer (visuals measured with a range finder, aural observations estimated within ranges), azimuth, number of birds, and several descriptors of behavior, habitat, detection criteria, and molt. Other species of birds were also tallied without further information.

We used ArcGIS 10.0 to plot each ptarmigan location and calculate distance from the transect line. We then used Distance Analysis (Buckland et al. 2001; Distance 6.0 Release 2) to obtain a density estimate of 0.27 (95% CL 0.21 – 0.35) male ptarmigan / hectare (about one ptarmigan per 9 acres). In 2012 our sample of 13 transects (most of which were different areas than in 2013) resulted in an estimate of 0.15 (95% CL 0.09 – 0.26) male ptarmigan / hectare (about one ptarmigan per 16 acres). Because we could not obtain a random sample in either year due to serious logistical challenges, the estimate applies only to the areas around the eight accessible areas visited. Further analysis of ptarmigan use of land cover types and incidental species is ongoing.

The Refuge plans to incorporate the ptarmigan survey using this method into its Wildlife Inventory and Monitoring Plan with surveys occurring every odd spring to avoid logistical conflicts with spring bear season. Lessons learned in 2013 will be applied also to try to increase the sample of transects to 20 – 24. The final results will be presented in a progress report available from the Refuge.

Literature Cited:

Buckland, S.T., D.R. Anderson, K.P. Burnham, J.L. Laake, D.L. Borchers, and L. Thomas. Introduction to Distance Sampling. Oxford University Press Inc., New York.

Project: Testing a Reconyx Camera to Collect Shorebird Abundance with regard to Tide and Season

In 2011 the Ecological Services branch of USFWS Region 7 (Alaska) prepared part of the Bristol Bay Watershed Assessment that was subsequently presented to the Environmental Protection Agency. This action was in response to a request from Bristol Bay Native organizations to assess the impact of heavy metal mining in the upper Kvichak and Nushagak drainages, especially to salmon resources and to species that were heavily dependent on Marine Derived Nutrients. One group that was identified was shorebirds. To better quantify shorebird use patterns along the Bristol Bay marine coast, the Alaska Peninsula/Becharof NWR is testing the value of using a Reconyx camera to collect shorebird abundance data with regard to tide and season. We located just one camera on the bank of Kvichak Bay near Naknek, Alaska on 30 April. The camera is scheduled to take one photo every 15 minutes from 0400 to 2245; camera SD cards are changed approximately every two weeks. We are still collecting data and plan to do so through early November or until shore ice begins accumulating. Wildlife Intern Johnson began preliminary screening of images in July. The resolution of the images is quite poor. We are able to make out a general impression of shorebird and gull abundance from the photos in addition to the level of the tide. We are quantifying the abundance of birds using the following categories: 1-10, 10-50, 50-100, 100-500, >500. The final results will be presented in a progress report available from the Refuge.

Project: *Pilot Study: Establishing baseline Owl species presence and abundance, King Salmon, Alaska*

During the winter of 2013 staff from the Alaska Peninsula/Becharof NWR and Katmai National Park and Preserve collaborated to conduct road-based surveys of boreal forests owls from Lake Camp (Katmai National Park) to King Salmon. This is the second year of surveys and this year's main objective was to test a new survey protocol which included a five minute silent listening period followed by playback of two species: northern saw-whet owl and boreal owl. We also modified the route slightly to include only 10 stops, began surveys 60 min. after sunset, and followed condition recommendations of Andres (2001). We completed five surveys from February to May with the first survey being a listening only survey. Over the course of all surveys, we made one detection each of boreal owl and of northern saw-whet owl (both on 10 May) and eight detections of great-horned owl (over multiple surveys). We plan to repeat surveys in winter 2014 using this protocol. The final results will be presented in a progress report available from the Refuge or Park.

Local Projects Completed: Outreach and Monitoring

Project: *Cavity Nesting Bird Workshop and Nest Box Monitoring*

On 20 April, USFWS staff and volunteers engaged 11 kids and five parents in a workshop about cavity nesting birds. The day started with a presentation informing the participants about the biology of tree swallows and chickadees and their use of artificial nesting cavities. Then the participants put together boxes that were pre-cut and drilled by Maintenance Worker Payne. Each child participant departed with their box and was encouraged to monitor the box using the protocol available at Cornell's Nest Watch webpage (<http://nestwatch.org/>).

During the summer, Refuge staff monitored boxes on the Refuge compound in King Salmon and at employee housing units; and for the sixth year contributed these data to Nest Watch. Seven boxes were monitored, but only six were active. Tree swallow nests began fledging around 7 July and continued through 18 July; mean first egg date (1 June) was one day ahead of the six

year mean (2 June). A total of 34 eggs were laid, 33 young hatched, and 31 young fledged resulting in a hatch rate of 97% a fledge rate of 94% and a nest success of 91%.

Literature Cited:

Andres, B. 2001. Suggestions for Breeding Owl Surveys in Alaska. Boreal Partners in Flight Working Group. Anchorage, Alaska.

For more information on the Refuges' bird programs, contact: Susan Savage, USFWS, Alaska Peninsula/Becharof NWR, PO Box 277, King Salmon, AK 99613. Phone: 907-246-1205; e-mail: susan_savage@fws.gov

Alaska Peninsula/Becharof NWR Visitor Services Programs – 2013

Project: *King Salmon Science and Culture Camp*

Congressional sequestration this year has had widespread negative impacts on our programs including the Refuge's visitor services programs. We aim to hold one science and culture camp each year for students of the Alaska Peninsula, and are typically given regional funding to help. This year, all such funding for Alaskan refuges was cut. We received generous help from a volunteer with Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges. Dr. Chuck Iliff raised \$5,380 from BBEDC and Icicle Seafoods—not enough to hold camp in Becharof NWR, but enough to try a camp based in King Salmon.

The King Salmon Science and Culture Camp was successful by many measures. We hosted 12 students, 5 from Bristol Bay Borough and 7 from Lake and Peninsula Borough, and 2 Lake and Pen teachers. We were able to provide food and lodging, and local transportation (Lake and Pen School District paid for their students to travel to King Salmon). The University of Alaska, Fairbanks, paid for tuition for students to earn two college credits for the course. Katmai National Park partnered with us to provide transportation to Brooks Camp for a day trip.

Ten USFWS employees (nearly all of our staff) participated as instructors or assistants, joined by 4 USFWS volunteers and several NPS employees. Camp began on a Sunday evening and ended on a Friday night. The days were long, with early morning as well as evening sessions, to make sure we had enough instruction time for the two college credits. Class topics covered included: aquatics, photography, biological illustration, invasive species, plants, fungi, bears, salmon, local history, local Native cultures, geology, GPS and compass navigation, caribou, large mammal research, bird identification and banding, observation skills, archaeology, and ecology.

Our hope is to continue raising funds through the Friends for next year's camp, which we aim to hold in its traditional location on the north shore of Becharof Lake. The two versions of camp each have strengths. We are interested in alternating the two, providing two different experiences for students and helping to reduce the financial burden of hosting the camps. We are keen to find additional partners who see the value of combining traditional and cultural knowledge with science to spark interest in the young people of the region.

For More information on the Refuges' Visitor Services Programs contact Julia Pinnix, Visitor Services Manager, Alaska Peninsula and Becharof National Wildlife Refuges P.O. Box 277, King Salmon, AK, 99613; (907) 246-1211, Julia_Pinnix@fws.gov.



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DIANE CHUNG, SUPERINTENDENT 246-2120

Program Updates

Katmai National Park and Preserve

Aniakchak National Monument

Alagnak Wild River

Southwest Area Inventory and Monitoring Network

SUBSISTENCE DIVISION, MARY MCBURNEY 235-7891

Aniakchak National Monument Subsistence Resource Commission

- The Aniakchak Subsistence Resource Commission has a complete roster of members with no vacant seats. Scott Anderson of Port Heiden and Ronald Lind of Anchorage/Chignik Lake were appointed to the SRC by the Governor and the Bristol Bay Regional Advisory Council appointed Don Lind of Chignik Lake.
- The SRC met February 11, 2013 by teleconference and conducted the first official commission meeting since March 2008. The SRC received briefings on a variety of issues and held elections for officers. Alvin Boskofsky was elected Chair, Harry Kalmakoff Vice Chair, and Colleen Jones Secretary. The officers are elected for one year terms.
- The fall SRC meeting was held September 10 in Chignik Lake. The agenda included status reports on area fisheries and wildlife populations by park and ADF&G staff and an update on the Federal Subsistence Board tribal consultation policy. The SRC reviewed WP14-01 and voted unanimously to oppose the proposal, which would have required metal identification tags on traps and snares and additional reporting requirements for trappers statewide.
- The next meeting of the Aniakchak SRC is scheduled for January 30, 2014 in Port Heiden.

Resident Zone Community Visits

- Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve Superintendent Diane Chung visited the five Aniakchak NM resident zone communities (Chignik Lake, Chignik Lagoon, Chignik Bay, Port Heiden and Meshik) between September 10 and 12 to meet with tribal and community leaders, get acquainted with the communities and learn about issues concerning subsistence and resource management in the monument and preserve. She was accompanied by Chief of Resources Troy Hamon and Subsistence Program Manager Mary McBurney and sponsored a movie night in

Chignik Lake and Port Heiden to show the new NPS film, *The Ends of the Earth: Alaska's Wild Peninsula*. Diane also met with local teachers and visited elementary and secondary students at the Chignik Lake and Meshik Schools.

NATURAL RESOURCES DIVISION, TROY HAMON 246-2121

Brown Bear Surveys

- The Natural Resource staff this past summer concentrated on studying the bear population of Katmai National Park and Preserve and Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve. In April and May, den surveys were performed in Katmai and in June, sedge meadow surveys were conducted on the coastal areas of both Katmai and Aniakchak. After the start of the salmon runs, the focus turned to stream surveys. These were scheduled to happen in both units but due to aviation problems, not as much work was completed as planned. Monitoring of the bear population in the Moraine and Funnel Creek areas in the Katmai Preserve occurred during the first part of August. Data from all the surveys will be compiled and analyzed during the winter months and a summary report will be ready for the next RAC meeting in February 2014.

Moose Surveys

- The fall wildlife surveys will focus on moose populations in Katmai National Park and Preserve and Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve and begin after the fall registration hunt in ANMP. These surveys will occur between October and December and the data collected will be used to determine the composition, density and movement of the moose population. The survey information will be included in the ANMP hunt concession environmental assessment to be released in 2014.

CULTURAL RESOURCES DIVISION, DALE VINSON 644-3632

The DEER Study

- The DEER study is a collaborative research project between the Katmai National Park & Preserve and UAF that explores the history and legacies of reindeer herding within the Alaska Peninsula from 1904–1950, and the migration of Inupiat to the central Alaska Peninsula in the 1910s. UAF professor Patrick Platett, who oversees the project, and project manager Amber Lincoln are working with residents of Port Heiden, Egegik, Pilot Point, Ugashik, and to the north, South Naknek, King Salmon, Levelock, Igiugig and Koknanok to record their traditional knowledge and visit old reindeer herding camps and corrals. The project explores reindeer economics, cross-cultural relations, and perceptions of the environment, as well as how people creatively exploit changing circumstances to make their lives go well. Current information concerning the project can be found at the DEER Study website: <http://www.uaf.edu/deer/>.

Brooks River Ethnographic Survey

- Katmai initiated an ethnographic study to determine how installing a bridge across Brooks River might affect ethnographic values related to traditional Alaska Native use of the Brooks River. Dr. Patricia Partnow interviewed residents of South Naknek, King Salmon, Naknek and other communities to

determine who fished, hunted and camped at Brooks River and which landscape features were associated with traditional use. The study results show that many people and families harvested redfish at Brooks River as part of their traditional use of resources throughout the Naknek drainage.

The Chignik Meshik Archeological Survey

- Katmai coordinated a collaborative archeological survey focused on the Chignik and Meshik River valleys within Aniakchak National Monument and the Alaska Peninsula National Wildlife Refuge. UAF, Antioch University, the NPS and the USFW cooperated with the tribal councils of Port Heiden and Chignik Lake. The goals of the survey included refining understanding of the timing and nature of volcanic events and whether people lived in the central Alaska Peninsula before the massive eruption that formed the Aniakchak crater around 3,500 years ago. An important aspect of the research includes how volcanic eruptions affected salmon runs that supported numerous large Alaska Native villages. The survey investigated more than 27 new archeological sites documenting the capacity of the central Alaska Peninsula to support thriving human populations.

CONCESSIONS MANAGEMENT, LISA FOX 644-3644

Aniakchak National Preserve Concessions

- The concessions program in the Aniakchak National Preserve is managed by the same staff that administers concessions in Katmai National Preserve. The NPS manages commercial services that are consistent with each park unit’s enabling legislation and in a manner that is complementary to the NPS mission and visitor service objectives. The NPS currently authorizes the following three hunt guide operations within the Aniakchak National Preserve to provide high-quality hunting guide services. These private businesses operate under the concession contracting authorities and procedures outlined in the Concessions Management Improvement Act of 1998 (P.L. 105-391), as implemented in Title 36 of the Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) Part 51.

Cinder River Lodge Alaska, LLC

Mr. & Mrs. Kronberger
 P.O. Box 772133
 Eagle River, AK 99577

Katmai Guide Service

Mr. Joe Klutsch
 P.O. Box 313
 King Salmon, AK 99613

King Guiding Service

Mr. Jay King
 P.O. Box 344
 King Salmon, AK 99613

Katmai National Preserve Concessions

- Two concession contracts have been awarded to provide guided hunting services in Katmai National Preserve. Alaska Wild Wind Adventures was awarded the guided hunt concession for the Sugarloaf guide area and Alaska’s Extreme Hunting was assigned the concession for the Moraine guide area.

Alaska Wild Wind Adventures

Mr. Cabot John Pitts
 3195 North Lemming Circle
 Wasilla, AK 99654

Alaska’s Extreme Hunting

Mr. Donald Willis
 42514 182nd Avenue S.E.
 Enumclaw, WA 98022

RANGER SERVICES, NEAL LABRIE 246-2127

Katmai Redfish

- In 2012, Katmai National Park clarified the process in the park compendium by which local qualified residents of King Salmon, Naknek and South Naknek could participate in the traditional take of redfish as outlined in the State of Alaska Subsistence Fishing Regulations. Letters were mailed to all three village councils explaining the defined protocol and their role in making the necessary determinations of eligibility for their local residents.

There has been no response or communications from the three village councils since the spring 2012 RAC meeting and the NPS has completed the work it can do to provide for harvesting redfish. The next step is for the village councils to determine a system for identifying who is eligible. The park does not recommend one approach over another (i.e., an annual reviewed list, permit cards, ID cards, etc.), but requires a consistent method for identifying people authorized to harvest redfish when rangers make contacts in the field.

In the absence of a means for identifying eligible redfish harvesters, should rangers make contacts with people taking redfish by nets, they will take the names of the people involved and attempt phone calls to verify authorization.

SOUTHWEST AREA INVENTORY AND MONITORING NETWORK,
MICHAEL SHEPHARD 644-3681

Lichen Inventory

- In July, cooperators from Oregon State University, Universität Graz (Austria), University of Bergen (Norway) and the National Park Service conducted a lichen inventory in Katmai National Park and Preserve. Lichens contribute broadly to the floristic richness in northern ecosystems. In addition, they are sensitive to environmental conditions, including airborne pollutants, and so are good indicators of ecosystem health. The six-member team collected lichens in the forests and on outcrops near Lake Brooks and Lake Coville, in the alpine near Hammersly Lake, Mirror Lake, and Contact Creek, and on low ridges and in riparian areas near the western boundary of the park, among other locales. New populations of a globally-endangered lichen, *Erioderma pedicillatum*, were found at two locations. The team will inventory sites in Lake Clark National Park and Preserve in 2014. Complete species lists and a final report will be available in 2015.

Brown Bear Monitoring

- The NPS pilot tested a new method for monitoring brown bear dens in a 1,160-mi² area in central Katmai in Spring of 2013. The survey consisted of a three-visit occupancy design where 40 grid cells (190 mi² total) were surveyed by pilot-observer teams. Den monitoring was conducted at each grid cell between two and three times during bear emergence in May. Results will be available in Spring of 2014.



Resource Management News

Summer 2013 Projects



A bear fishing at the mouth of the Brooks River. Photo courtesy of MJ Peters.

Each summer, National Park staff working in Katmai National Park and Preserve, Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve and the Alagnak Wild River, spend time in the field to study, inventory and monitor cultural and natural resources. Summer is the time to do it: rivers are flowing, wildlife is active and study sites are accessible. With more than 4.73 million acres between the three park units, this is a busy time of year.

Resource Management falls under three main groups: cultural resources, natural resources, and inventory & monitoring. The cultural resource program focuses on the human history of this region, including archeology and anthropology. The natural resource program studies biological and physical resources, such as wildlife, fish, plants, wilderness, and backcountry resources. The third group, inventory and monitoring, is part of a National Park Service effort to understand the status of the park's significant natural resources. The Southwest Alaska

Network (SWAN) Inventory and Monitoring Program cooperates with the park to conduct various surveys to understand how park resources may change over time.

We hope that you enjoy reading about the many projects occurring in these remarkable parklands. See you in the field!

Research Permits

In addition to work conducted by NPS staff, external researchers come to conduct studies. In 2012, 40 research permits were issued for work conducted in Alagnak, Aniakchak, and Katmai. Some of the projects being studied include investigations of the ongoing volcanism in the area, geological formations, climate change, fish ecology, plant health, and contaminant accumulation. The diversity of work helps to answer local management questions as well as those of greater interest to science. The parks are a vibrant living laboratory.

Katmai National Park & Preserve, Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve and Alagnak Wild River

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Cultural Resource Projects

Cultural Inventories



Panorama of a prehistoric village on the north side of the Meshik River.

Chignik – Meshik Rivers Region Cultural Resource Inventory

Katmai completed the final season of archeological field surveys of the Chignik – Meshik Rivers Region with the goal of constructing a cultural chronology and landscape history of the area affected by the Aniakchak eruption and other volcanic events. This project is a cooperative effort between the NPS, the University of Alaska Museum of the North and Antioch University New England that located a surprising number of

large villages and very old archeological components. 2013 will be the final year of the project, primarily geared towards laboratory and data analysis, cataloging and reporting. The results of the research were presented at the 2013 Alaska Anthropological Association meetings and additional presentations will be included in final visits to the local communities.

Ethnography



Elders and Youth at Igiugig's Culture Camp on Kukaklek Lake, October 2012. Left to right, front row: Mary Ann Olympic, Annie Wilson, Kaleb Hill, Dolly Ann Zharoff, Fewnia Zharoff, Mike Andrew, Dalia Andrew, George Wilson. Second row: Patrick Plattet, Karl Hill, Tate Gooden, Tess Hostetter, Blaise Decker, Kannon Lee, AlexAnna Salmon. Photo by Amber Lincoln.

Reindeer Herding Studies

Katmai cooperated with the University of Alaska's Department of Anthropology to work with elders in Igiugig, King Salmon and South Naknek who provided oral histories about their experiences herding reindeer. Reindeer herding camps were documented near Lake Camp and at Smelt Creek near King Salmon. Igiugig elders and students shared knowledge with researchers at a Culture camp at Kukaklek Lake. The project organized a symposium on Reindeer Herding at the 2013 Alaska Anthropological Association meeting which included reindeer herding reports from the Seward Peninsula, Port Heiden, Igiugig and as far away as Norway.

Archeology

Archeological Survey, Testing and Evaluation of Amalik Bay National Historic Landmark

Archeological investigations of archeological sites in Amalik Bay will continue. Little is known about the very long archeological record in this ecologically productive bay. Data will be recovered to evaluate known sites. New sites will be recorded and mapped.

Collections Management: The South Aniakchak Bay Village Archeological Excavation

In 2013 the Katmai Curator will begin processing, cataloging, and rehousing the over 160,000 archeological artifacts recovered during the South Aniakchak Bay Village archeological excavation. The project was conducted from 2004 to 2007 in cooperation with Dr. Bryan Hoffman, professor at Hamlin University.

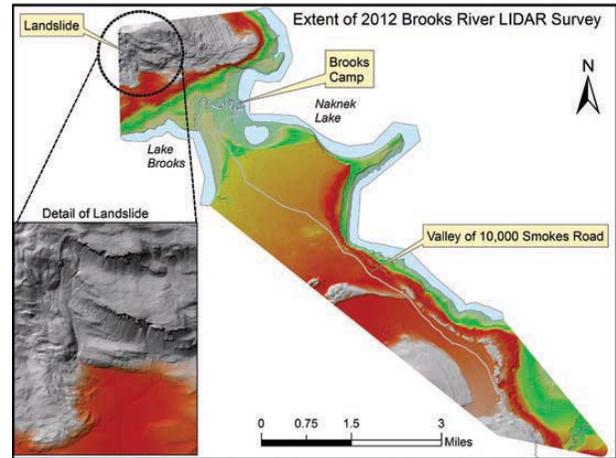
Cultural Resource Projects

Brooks Camp LIDAR Survey

In summer 2012 Katmai conducted an aerial LIDAR survey of Brooks Camp and the northwest end of the Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes Road. LIDAR (Light Detection and Ranging) produces a detailed three-dimensional model of the landscape by receiving reflections from millions of airborne laser pulses. The high number of pulses emitted as aircraft passes over the terrain enables LIDAR to penetrate vegetation layers to map the ground surface. The goal of the Brooks Camp LIDAR survey was to accurately map archeological features and time-sensitive landscape features to improve understanding of the Brooks River archeological record. The high precision terrain model produced by LIDAR also forms a precise base for GIS, engineering and design applications.

LIDAR reveals the bedrock outcrops, beach ridges and terraces shaped by retreating glaciers, the receding waters of greater Naknek Lake and down-cutting of Brooks River. LIDAR provides some surprising details despite areas of dense fallen spruce trees. Bear trails lead to Brooks Camp from miles away. Previously unknown Alaska Native house ruins appear. Beach ridges can be seen in forests where they are invisible to the on-the-ground observer. The LIDAR coverage catches the edge of a great land slide on the southern slope of Dumpling Mountain.

The following images show the area of new development at the Valley Road Administrative Area. Archeologists working in the area used GPS (Geographic Positioning Systems) to place their test pits. The

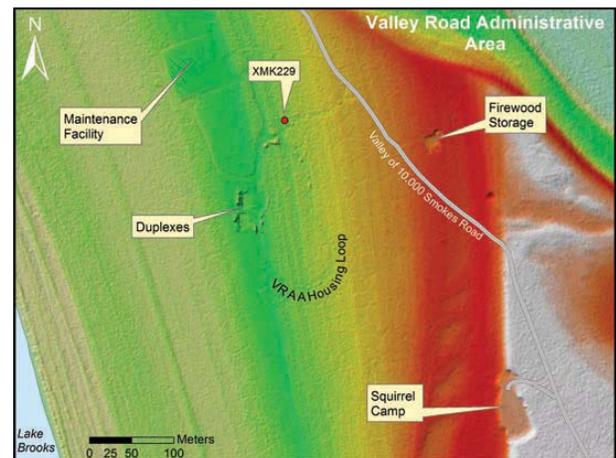


The LIDAR coverage includes a 10.8 mile by 3 mile swath from the southern crest of Dumpling Mountain to near Margot Creek. LIDAR caught the edge of an ancient landslide now hidden by vegetation.

forest was so dense and featureless that the archeologists used GPS to navigate and avoid getting lost. The “bare earth” image provided by LIDAR show that the Valley Road Administrative Area was once submerged with beach ridges representing shorelines as the water gradually receded. A small archeological site was found on the shore of the ancient lake.



Aerial view of the area east of Brooks Lake with mixed spruce/hardwood forest. Vegetation obscures most landscape features. Archeological site XMK229 was discovered as a result of systematic testing on a 10 meter grid superimposed on the project area.



Bare Earth Shaded Relief view showing ancient shorelines and new facilities east of Brooks Lake. Archeological site XMK229 was located by systematic shovel testing on a 10 meter grid.

Natural Resource Projects

Bears and the Brooks Camp Experience



Bear 409 with her three spring cubs in 2012. 409 was first identified at the Brooks River as a subadult in 1999. This is her third known litter of cubs. We hope to see her back with three healthy yearlings this summer! NPS photo.

Observational Monitoring of Bear and Human Use

Long-term observational monitoring of bear and human use of Brooks River began in 2000 and will continue in 2013. Sampling includes recording bear use of river zones to the individual bear level. The detailed individual bear identification records that have been maintained have allowed researchers to recognize many of the bears that frequent Brooks River across study seasons and years. In 2012 there were 49 different bears identified regularly using the river during July, and 57 bears identified regularly using the river during the fall (each seasonal count includes some bears that were recognized in both seasons).

2012 was an interesting year at Brooks River. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) spent June and July at Brooks River documenting the bears and some of their behaviors and day-to-day activities. They will be using this footage for a documentary that is scheduled for release in 2013. Visitors were delighted as four different sows showed up during the summer with cubs of the year (referred to as COY by researchers) that were born the winter of 2011-2012. This is an increase from the previous year. 2012 was also the year of the bear cam. The bears at Brooks River can now be watched 24 hours a day anywhere in the world by visiting <http://explore.org/#!/live-cams/player/brown-bear-salmon-cam-brooks-falls>.



Visitors enjoy an "extended bear viewing opportunity" on the lower Brooks River platform during a bridge closure. NPS photo.

Brooks River bridge surveys

Bear jams are a part of the visitor experience at Brooks Camp. Visitors to Brooks Camp must cross the Brooks River on a floating bridge to access viewing platforms. At times the bridge is closed to the visitors as bears utilize the river near the bridge. This study documented the frequency and duration of these bridge closures, as well as the number of

visitors affected. During the hours sampled in July 2012, the bridge was open a total of 2,926 minutes (56%) and closed 2,264 minutes (44%). The comparable data in September 2012 was 1,730 minutes open (54%) and 1,450 closed (46%). Most closures were less than 10 minutes and there were more closures per day in September than July.

Collecting data on bear-human interactions at Brooks Camp

Twenty-three years of bear-human interaction data has been collected at Katmai. Data is being analyzed to see what changes are occurring. Early results have shown a decrease in bear-human interactions since the building of the elevated walkway to the Brooks Falls platform in 2000. There has also been a significant decrease in the number of interactions in the Brooks Camp campground area. Efforts to facilitate visitor traffic in areas around the floating bridge on the Brooks River have marked significant increases in the number of bear-human interactions. Data is still being analyzed at this time with hopes of publishing results by the end of the year.

Natural Resource Projects

Wildlife projects

Golden-crowned sparrow migration

This summer, Katmai will be teaming up with the Point Reyes Bird Observatory (PRBO) to study migration routes of the golden-crowned sparrow. In 2012, PRBO placed geolocators on 30 sparrows; 6 of the 9 recaptured birds travelled to Katmai! This spring we hope to place 20 geolocators on golden-crowned sparrows in Katmai to see if the birds fly back to Point Reyes during fall migration. The goal is to see if the birds are using the same migration path south and if so, identify obstacles along the route that might impact the population.

American Dippers study

American Dippers are great indicators of ecosystem health and are found in many of Katmai's streams and rivers. Populations of this species can be greatly affected by changes in the habitat, such as logging, mining, and changes in water chemistry. The Natural Resource staff will be doing a baseline study to determine population numbers in the streams and rivers of the Katmai Preserve. The information gathered can be used in the future to monitor changes in the population and the natural habitat.



Many song birds, like this golden-crowned sparrow, travel thousands of miles each year between breeding and wintering grounds. Photo courtesy of Roy Wood.



Wildlife biologist John Campbell takes a break after setting up cameras at Swikshak Lagoon in May 2012. NPS photo.

Investigating bear use using time-lapse photography

An ongoing project looking at bear activity patterns of seasonal foraging sites through the use of time-lapse photography has provided new insight into bear use on the Katmai Coast. In 2010 and 2011, cameras were installed overlooking lower Alagoshak Creek in Katmai Bay. Unlike previously studied sites where salmon streams were the focal point for bear activity, bear use of the lower Alagoshak Creek area was focused on the surrounding sedge meadows.

Camera data from Geographic Harbor collected in 2007 to 2009, showed peak bear use in mid-August, consistent with the timing of the local salmon run. Also, a

distinct decrease in bear use was observed in 2008 compared with the other two years. This decrease is consistent with an observed decrease in pink salmon numbers in even years. Preliminary analysis of the Katmai Bay photos shows consistent bear use throughout the 2010 season (June to September); however, a decrease in bear use was observed in August and September of 2011. If this decrease is a result of bears moving to salmon streams, it may shed light on the importance of sedge meadows to bears in years with smaller salmon runs.

Cameras will be reinstalled at Katmai Bay this May for further investigation. Cameras will also be installed for a second year at Swikshak Lagoon.

Bear and Human use studies

A long-term monitoring study looking at bear and human use of the Moraine and Funnel Creek areas in Katmai National Preserve will continue in 2013. During August, data is collected on age and sex composition of the bears in addition to data on specific habitats that bears and humans utilize. Researchers were not able to perform this study in 2012, but are anxious to get back and see how many bears are using the area. In 2011, researchers observed the highest number of bears in the area in over ten years of monitoring, counting up to 33 bears at one time!

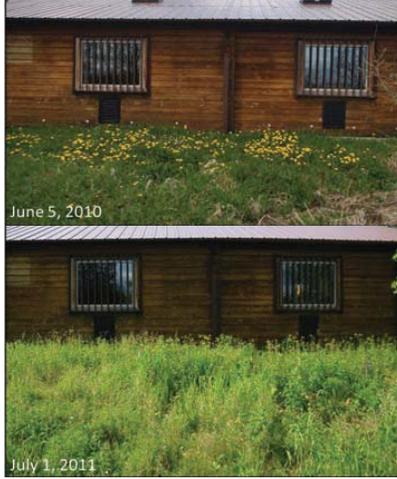
To compliment this long-term dataset, park biologists will expand data collection to several bear and visitor use areas on the coast. Hallo Bay, Swikshak Lagoon, Kukak Bay and Geographic Harbor are popular bear viewing areas we hope to visit this summer.



Bear viewing and photography are popular activities on the Katmai Coast, where bears can be seen fishing for salmon, grazing in sedge meadows and digging for clams. NPS photo.

Natural Resource Projects

Exotic Plant Management Team



Repeated manual treatments and reseeding efforts at the Brooks Camp cultural site have shifted the plant composition from primarily dandelion to mostly native species. NPS photos.

Invasive plants put the complex balance of plant and animal communities in Alaskan national parks at risk. Invasive plants are not native to an area, display rapid growth, and spread with little or no human assistance. They are a concern because they threaten the genetic integrity of native flora through hybridization, can out-compete native plant species for limited resources, and can change the structure and function of ecosystems. Establishment of invasive plants can also result in loss of habitat and food sources for native insects, birds, fish, and mammals.

Since 2005, Katmai has worked to inventory and control non-native plant species. A total of 20 invasive plant species have been documented on park lands with an additional 11 species growing on nearby lands. Many of these species are still restricted to disturbed

areas, such as the trails at Brooks Camp, so the Exotic Plant Management Team (EPMT) works to control these infestations and prevent them from moving into more remote areas of the park.

Katmai remains one of the most pristine parks with regards to invasive plant species, and it hopes to retain that distinction. The EPMT conducts outreach events to raise public awareness. Prevention is another critical component to the program's success. Boot brushes have been installed at key locations to reduce the risk of seeds being transported to new areas on footwear. Heavy equipment leaving for Brooks Camp undergoes cleaning and inspection. Finally, the team vigilantly searches during the growing season for new species.

Marine Debris

Cleanup at Hallo Bay

This summer, Katmai is excited to have the support of the GYRE project to conduct a beach cleanup at Hallo Bay! GYRE, a collaborative effort between the Alaska SeaLife Center and the Anchorage Museum, will promote awareness about the issue of marine debris through science and art. In June, scientists and artists will board the R/V Norseman for a week-long expedition to investigate the effects of marine debris on remote Alaskan beaches. Along the way, the GYRE team will join Katmai staff in a beach cleanup. Marine debris is an ongoing problem along the Katmai Coast, but removal is difficult without boat-based support to transport debris to landfills. We look forward to working with GYRE and the R/V Norseman to clean up Hallo Bay!

Marine Debris surveys

In March 2011, an earthquake in the Pacific Ocean created a tsunami that inundated coastal cities and villages near Sendai, Japan. As the water receded, material from land was washed into the Pacific Ocean. While most of the debris sank, an estimated 1.5 million tons was left afloat following ocean currents toward North America. In 2012, in response to concerns of increasing amounts of marine debris, Katmai began surveys at four beaches. The first year of surveys documented plastics as the most numerous type of debris, followed by processed lumber. These surveys will be used as a baseline to detect future change. Although tsunami debris has already been confirmed on Alaskan beaches, the bulk of debris is expected to reach North America over the next few years.



Ranger Sean McNeil investigates a washed up mass of rope and fishing line during marine debris surveys at Hallo Bay, June 2012. NPS photo.

Report suspicious marine debris

If you are on the Katmai or Aniakchak coasts and see unusually large amounts of debris or any hazardous materials, please contact the park at (907) 246-3305. Suspected Japanese tsunami debris can also be reported to disasterdebris@noaa.gov. Please include a description of the debris, its location, and photos.

Natural Resource Projects

Academic partners

Katmai is recognized as a 'living laboratory' and studies by outside researchers can provide valuable insight into our park's natural and cultural resources. Since 2010, Katmai's natural resource division has partnered with the University of Calgary's Biological Sciences department. Ella Bowles, a PhD student, and Stevi Vanderzwan, an MS student, have been investigating adaptation in aquatic environments. Ella shares their research and findings below:

Adaptive divergence to new freshwater environments in Katmai National Park and Preserve and Aniakchak National Preserve, using the threespine stickleback

Our projects address different aspects of adaptation to new environments, and provide information on freshwater systems of Katmai National Park and Preserve and Aniakchak National Preserve. We currently have two main projects in the park, my (Ella's) PhD, and Stevi Vanderzwan's MS. Both of us are working on threespine stickleback (*Gasterosteus aculeatus*), and both of our projects are possible because of the unique system that Katmai provides. We are interested in the process of adaptation and change over time, and in Katmai there are a system of aged lakes (dated using isotopes), and a series of water-bodies that have been mapped fairly extensively. For these lakes, we know roughly how connected they are to one another and to the ocean, and the distribution of fish species (i.e., predators and prey) within. In addition, the threespine stickleback is a fish that is ancestrally present in the marine environment, but post-glacially has moved into the lakes that formed after the last glacial recession (over the last 15,000 years). After moving into these lakes, they have evolved in different ways, likely adapting to the specific conditions of their particular environments. Together, this is an incredibly unique natural laboratory for studying the process of evolution.



Bob Peterson, Nellie Yee and Ella Bowles process fish samples for genetic and morphometric analysis at Fure's cabin in the Bay of Islands, Naknek Lake. Photo courtesy of Ella Bowles.



MJ Peters and Ella Bowles carry in a seine full of threespine sticklebacks at Meshik Lake in Aniakchak National Preserve. These fish will be used for genetic and morphometric analysis. Photo courtesy of Ella Bowles.

My project has three main parts. First, I am mapping the genetic differences between eleven different study sites in the park so that I can understand how long populations have been separated, and how much they still interbreed with one another. My results so far show me what I expected, with populations that are no longer connected to the ancestral environment being more differentiated than those that are. I have much analysis yet to complete, but this is an interesting start. The second part of my thesis is to look at genetic patterns that have allowed these populations to differentiate. To do this, I am sampling pieces from the whole genome (the complete genetic code for the species). This part is in progress, and I don't quite have these results yet. In the third part of my thesis, I am breeding live fish that I brought back to the University of Calgary to determine what the genetic measures of differentiation mean at a practical level— that is, if populations look really different, can they still make healthy offspring. Breeding is well in progress now, and I have many baby fish from each of three populations that I have brought back to the lab, as well as some from crosses made between very different populations. The genetics isn't done for this part yet, and is to come later in the year. My project is well-underway, and results thus far are pretty exciting.

Our projects are complimentary. Stevi is mapping how the populations have changed morphologically/phenotypically (e.g., shape, or different features of their bodies), with respect to the biology of the local environment. She will then tie this back to specific genetic markers that we know underlie certain phenotypes. Stevi's sites are more extensive, and she'll be analyzing fish from many lakes on the Alaska Peninsula, as well as Lake Iliamna. This will provide a very complete picture of how this little fish has evolved in the region.

Natural Resource Projects

Internships at Katmai

Each summer, Katmai provides internship opportunities to students and young adults interested in biological research and resource conservation. Interns assist with a variety of natural resource projects. Since the late 1990s, one to two students from Northwestern University have joined Katmai National Park natural resource staff each summer, as part of a field school internship program. In 2012, Martha Jane Peters (MJ) spent 7 weeks at Katmai as part of this program, and is happy to share her experience:

After my freshman year of college at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, I had the incredible opportunity to intern at Katmai National Park and Preserve. I worked with Carissa Turner, the park's coastal biologist, primarily on a research project investigating bear use of feeding areas throughout remote areas of the park. I used the program ArcMap Geographic Information Systems to pinpoint bears in over 5,000 photos taken by a time-lapse photography unit in Katmai Bay. The data from this project has been, and continues to be, analyzed in order to show patterns of bear use in areas of concentrated food resources. Data from previous years has been comprehensively analyzed and presented, and so far the results are compelling. I hope that my photo scoring will contribute to the further success of the project.

The internship experience at Katmai National Park is truly unique, especially given the park's small and remote nature. Instead of spending all my days in the office, I was truly fortunate to be able to participate in almost weekly fieldwork, flying in floatplanes and small bush planes to areas of the park rarely experienced by visitors. I even got to spend a night in Aniakchak National Preserve, the least visited of all the National Park units, assisting with fisheries research. Additionally, a few of my weekends were spent at Brooks Camp, the center of visitor activity in the park, where I conducted bridge surveys. These weekends were a superb perk of the internship experience, as I had the opportunity to indulge in brown bear viewing in both peak seasons, July and September.



MJ explores the Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes during a weekend break. Photo courtesy of MJ Peters.



MJ took advantage of limited time at Katmai with several hiking trips into the Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes, including a hike up to the Katmai caldera. Photo courtesy of MJ Peters.

The best part about interning at Katmai National Park is definitely the opportunity to experience one of the most remote and spectacular wilderness areas in the country. When I was not working, I made every effort to take trips around the park, especially backpacking trips in the Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes. There, I spent nights in the Baked Mountain Huts, hiked to the volcano, Novarupta, which created the ash-covered valley when it erupted 100 years ago, and even climbed to the rim of Mount Katmai's caldera, one of the most spectacular sights I have ever seen. Most park visitors rarely make backpacking trips into the Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes, but as an intern I had time to visit the valley on three separate weekends. Interning at Katmai National Park was an incredible way to experience a beautiful and remote part of the country and gain relevant educational and professional experiences.

Working and volunteering in Katmai National Park

Every year, Katmai hires seasonal staff as Biological Science Technicians, Park Rangers and Maintenance Workers. All of our jobs are posted on the Federal Government's employment website at www.usajobs.gov between December and February.

Internship opportunities with Katmai's Exotic Plant Management Team and Visitor Services are recruited through the Student Conservation Association (www.sca.org).

Volunteer opportunities with the Federal government are posted on www.volunteer.gov.

Southwest Alaska Network Projects

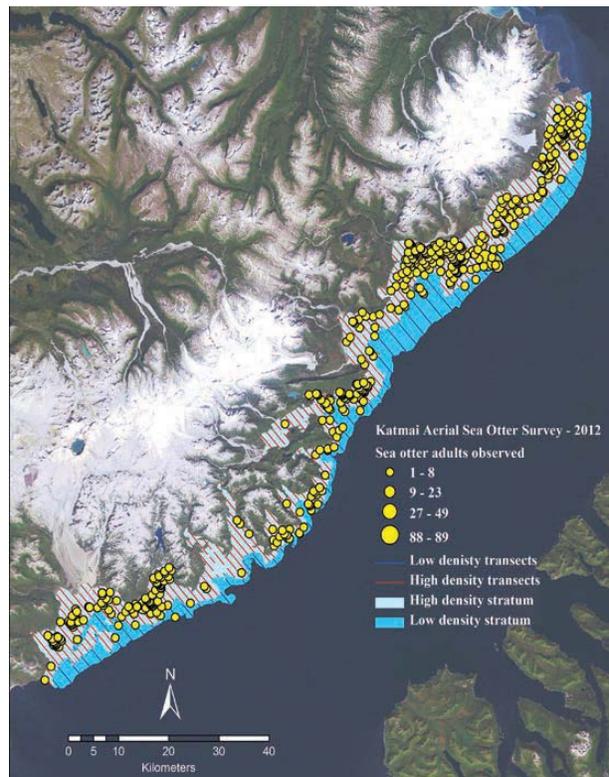
The Southwest Alaska Network (SWAN) is one of 32 Inventory and Monitoring programs across the National Park Service. This national strategy is an effort to understand what natural resources exist within the park units (inventory) and the condition of those natural resources (monitoring). A major role of the National Park Service Inventory and Monitoring (I&M) Program is to provide broad-based natural resource information necessary to make scientifically sound management decisions. The SWAN Inventory and Monitoring Program comprises five Alaskan park units: Katmai National Park and Preserve,

Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve, Alagnak Wild River, Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, and Kenai Fjords National Park. These parks were grouped into a single network because they share similar ecological characteristics, such as marine coastal habitats and large runs of anadromous fish. The network has chosen specific vital signs (key biological, physical, and chemical indicators) in six resource areas for long-term monitoring to assess the condition of park ecosystems.

Investigating sea otter abundance along the Katmai Coast

Sea otters (*Enhydra lutris*) are important mammalian members of the nearshore community throughout the north Pacific, and are the only marine mammal that relies exclusively on shallow or intertidal macro-invertebrates as prey. Sea otters were selected as a vital sign because they are a textbook example of “keystone” carnivore. By consuming ‘grazers,’ the animals that feed on kelp, sea otters dramatically change the structure and complexity of their ecological community resulting in communities characterized by diverse and abundant algae and relatively few large grazing invertebrates such as urchins. Other well documented sea otter mediated predation effects include reduced biomass and size distributions of many large and conspicuous invertebrates, such as clams, mussels, urchins, and crabs. Sea otters tend to be relatively sedentary in comparison to other marine mammals; eat large amounts of food; have an incidence of disease that is correlated with contaminants; and have broad appeal to the public. In September 2005, the western Alaska stock of sea otters, which includes Katmai National Park and Preserve, was federally listed as threatened. One of the major components to sea otter monitoring in the nearshore is estimating the abundance, distribution and density of sea otters through aerial surveys. We employ a small two-passenger floatplane to conduct these aerial surveys.

A sea otter aerial survey was completed in Katmai National Park and Preserve during August 2012. This was the second aerial survey completed since 2008 along the Katmai coast. Survey methodology followed the Bodkin and Udevitz (1999) method which accounts for imperfect detection. The survey took just under three days to complete. Preliminary analysis estimates the current sea otter population for Katmai to be 8632 individuals, with an overall density of 5.95/km². The 2012 population estimate is higher than that of 2008 (7095 individuals, 4.89/km²). Sea otters were not uniformly distributed along the coastline. Higher concentrations of sea otters were found near Swikshak, Kukak Bay, and Dakavak Bay. Approximately 96% of observed otters were in the high density stratum, defined as the 0m to 40m depth contour and minimum distances from shore, while only about 4% of sea otters were observed in the low density stratum, which is defined as the area within the 40m to 100m depth contour. In 2008, 98% were observed in high density stratum while only 2% were observed in low. Another survey is tentatively scheduled for 2015.



An aerial survey of sea otter abundance was conducted along the coastline of Katmai National Park and Preserve during August, 2012.

Salmon nearshore ecology study

This summer, a pilot study will be initiated to gather baseline information on juvenile salmon use of three nearshore habitat types (eelgrass, kelp and non-vegetated) along the coast of Katmai. Additionally, this project will produce an inventory of fish species using the selected habitat types, information that is lacking and of interest to park managers. This project is funded by the Ocean Alaska Science and Learning Center.

Southwest Alaska Network Projects

Vegetation Monitoring: tracking changes in phenology across southwest Alaska



Progression of green-up from the start of season (April 29) to the growing season peak (August 20) at a site in Katmai National Park and Preserve, 2011. The photos are from a time-lapse camera installed at a remote weather station near Contact Creek.

'Phenology is nature's calendar' (USA National Phenology Network) Phenology, or the timing of biological events (e.g., spring leaf-out dates for trees), is sensitive to changes in climate. Globally, leaf-out and flowering dates are occurring earlier in the spring, and fall colors are turning later, due to warming. In southwest Alaska, the SWAN is using a combination of remote time-lapse cameras and satellite data (Normalized Difference Vegetation Index, or NDVI) to track variation in growing season length. Cameras were installed at two remote weather stations in Katmai in 2010. Four photos are collected daily at 1-hour intervals around high noon. The cameras are downloaded every fall and the daily images are analyzed to estimate the timing of

green-up (start of the growing season) and leaf-fall (end of the growing season) at each site. A similar approach is taken at the landscape scale, where NDVI data collected by the Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer (MODIS) sensor are also being used by SWAN to estimate the timing of green-up and leaf-fall. As NDVI, an indicator of vegetation productivity, increases in the spring and declines in the fall, it provides an approximation of when the growing season starts and ends. Together, these data provide an estimate of when forage and cover become available to nesting birds and wildlife, and whether some years produce a greater flush of vegetation than others.

Weather and Climate

Climate is considered the most important factor influencing ecosystems. Because global climate models indicate that climate change and variability will be greatest at high latitudes, climate monitoring in Alaska is critical to understanding the changing conditions of park ecosystems. Potential effects in SWAN park units include a reduced snowpack, earlier lake ice break-up, warmer winters, and wetter summers. These changes may affect the distribution, abundance, growth, and productivity of plants and animals.

SWAN installed four weather stations in Katmai (Pfaff Mine, Coville, Contact Creek, and Fourpeaked) during the 2008 and 2009 field seasons. These weather stations record weather observations in locations characteristic of the diverse landscape and topography within the park. This information will support real-time needs, identify natural

variability in weather patterns and long-term climate trends, and help interpret ecosystem changes.

Weather stations are serviced annually in June when sensors are replaced based on their maintenance schedule. Each weather station is checked for stability and function as severe winters and large wildlife can take their toll on the site infrastructure and operational capacity. In 2012 the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration established a US Climate Reference Network (USCRN) station at Contact Creek. The primary goal of USCRN is to provide long-term uniform temperature and precipitation observations that can be linked to long-term historical observations to help explain current and future climate change. The SWAN Contact Creek weather station will remain co-located with the USCRN until September 2013 and then be relocated to another location in 2014.



The newly established US Climate Reference Network (USCRN) station located near Contact Creek. The station is named "AK King Salmon 42 SE" and current weather observations can be viewed at <http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/crn/station.htm?stationid=1788>. NPS Photo.

Southwest Alaska Network Projects

Brown Bear aerial surveys

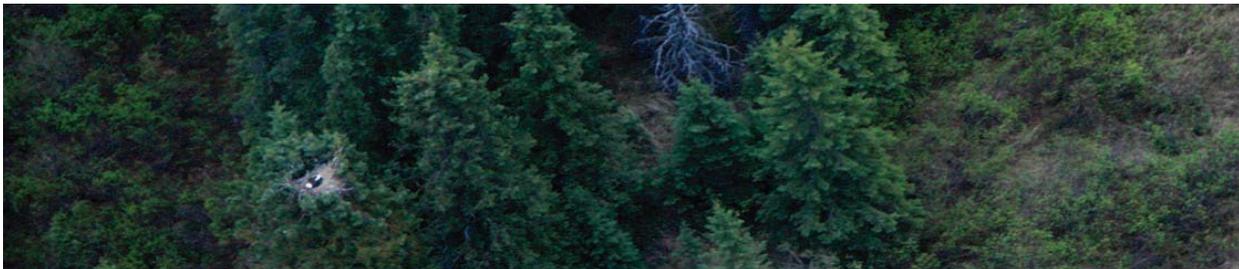
In 2012, Katmai and SWAN staff worked together on two different aerial studies to quantify the number of bears in Katmai. One of these was an experimental method tracking emergence from dens from late-April through May. Although the study was not fully implemented due to logistical issues, the results show promise so investigators will survey again during the spring of 2013. The den survey was followed by a standard line-transect aerial bear survey in late-May. A hard/late winter and deep snow seemed to keep the bears in their dens longer which is consistent with what was seen in other parts of the state. This was good for the den survey, but prevented a good count on the second survey since a lot of the bears didn't emerge until after leaf out which makes it hard to see them.

A third survey type was conducted by Katmai biologists and consisted of stream surveys in the Preserve which were performed in August and September. These involve counting all the bears that are using river/stream corridors and lake shores that time of year. Although these surveys don't provide an actual count of the population, they do provide a minimum count and allow managers to detect trends. Because data from the stream surveys has been so useful, efforts will be expanded to cover more of the park and a similar method has been developed for the sedge meadows on the coast. Stream and sedge meadow surveys will also be flown at Aniakchak in 2013.



Wildlife work in Alaska's vast parks often requires use of small bush planes and surveys can take many days to complete. When possible, surveyors will try to make use of several planes at a time to take advantage of good weather and daylight. In this photo, pilots Alan Gilliland and Curtis Cebulski take a break during bear den surveys, April 2012. NPS photo by Tammy Wilson.

Eagle nest surveys



The white heads and tails of nesting bald eagles stand out against Katmai's green landscape and help biologists spot them from the air. NPS photo by Tammy Wilson.

Bald eagles are abundant in southwest Alaska, and nest throughout Katmai National Park. Nests are large stick structures, typically located on large supporting branches near the tops of trees, or rarely on cliff ledges. Prior to nesting in early spring, adults line nests with dry grass and lichen. Eggs are laid in late April through early May. Both parents contribute to egg incubation and chick care. Chicks fledge in early August and leave the nesting territory shortly thereafter.

In 2011, Southwest Alaska Network and Katmai National Park and Preserve staff resumed nesting bald eagle surveys in the Naknek basin. We timed surveys so that we could see the eagles incubating eggs on

nests before cottonwoods produced nest-hiding leaves. From the air, the white heads and tails, and shiny black bodies of incubating bald eagles are easy to spot. We used the park plane to fly around the shoreline of the major lakes, and both banks of major rivers looking for nests. The presence or absence of incubating eagles were noted at each nest found during surveys.

During both survey years, we found 73 nests in the study area; 59% were occupied by a nesting pair in 2011 and 58% in 2012. In 2013, we will modify our flight protocol by visiting all nests late in the summer to monitor the proportion of nests likely to fledge chicks.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Katmai National Park & Preserve
Aniakchak National Monument & Preserve
Alagnak Wild River
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EXPERIENCE YOUR AMERICA



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

This is the third issue of Resource Management News produced by the Division of Natural Resources.

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The National Park Service cares for the special places saved by the American people so that all may experience our heritage.

Katmai National Park & Preserve, Aniakchak National Monument & Preserve, and Alagnak Wild River

Katmai National Park was originally established as a monument in 1918 to preserve the Valley of Ten Thousand Smokes, created by the 1912 eruption of Novarupta. Since its creation, Katmai has undergone many expansions to preserve and protect the resources within this region. In 1931, the monument was expanded to protect brown bear, moose and other wildlife. In 1942, islands within five miles of the shoreline in the Shelikof Strait were added to protect marine mammals resting on the islands. The boundary was expanded in 1969 to include all of Naknek Lake. Another 1.4 million acres were added in 1978 to the monument to protect brown bear habitat and watersheds vital to red salmon spawning. In 1980, the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) redesignated 3.7 million acres as Katmai National Park. ANILCA also

designated 308,000 acres as Katmai National Preserve.

Aniakchak National Monument and Preserve was established in 1978 to preserve the Aniakchak caldera and its associated landscape, including the Aniakchak River and other lakes and streams, in their natural state. It was also created to assure continuation of the natural process of biological succession; and to protect brown bears, moose, caribou, sea lions, seals, and other marine mammals, geese, swans, and other waterfowl. The area is one of the least visited areas in the National Park System because of poor weather conditions typically hindering access.

Alagnak Wild River was established in 1980 through ANILCA to preserve the free-flowing condition of the river.



National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Lake Clark National Park & Preserve

240 W. 5th Ave. Suite 236
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(907) 644-3626 ph.
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MARGARET GOODRO, SUPERINTENDENT 644-3627

Program Updates

Lake Clark National Park and Preserve

Southwest Area Inventory and Monitoring Network

SUBSISTENCE DIVISION, MARY MCBURNEY 235-7891

Lake Clark National Park Subsistence Resource Commission

- The Lake Clark Subsistence Resource Commission is scheduled to meet in Nondalton on October 3. A report of official SRC actions will be provided at the Bristol Bay RAC meeting in Dillingham. The February 21, 2013 SRC meeting was cancelled for lack of a quorum.

Nondalton Subsistence Meeting

- Subsistence Program Manager Mary McBurney, Chief Ranger Lee Fink and Alaska State Trooper Travis Lons conducted a community meeting in Nondalton on June 9 to discuss recent changes to State fishing regulations by the Board of Fisheries regarding chumming in freshwaters, including Sixmile Lake and the Newhalen River. Residents expressed concern that subsistence users processing salmon at their fish camps and discarding fish waste into the water would be cited for chumming under the new regulation. Trooper Lons explained the regulatory change and suggested that the local community or tribe submit a proposal to the BOF to exempt fish waste produced by subsistence fish camps.

NATURAL RESOURCES DIVISION, JEFF SHEARER 644-3629

Wolf Survey and Dietary Analysis

- Since 2009, Lake Clark National Park and Preserve (LACL), in cooperation with the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA), has been studying the movements, home range size, predation rates, diets, and pack size of wolves within the park and preserve. The information gained during this short time has been extraordinary. All packs studied have inhabited territories greater than 2,000 square kilometers (772 square miles), a territory size greater than previously documented in studies of wolves in Alaska. Many sub-adult wolves that were reared within the park and preserve have displayed a strong tendency to disperse to areas outside LACL. Dispersal distances were documented as far away as Bethel and the Togiak Peninsula. Diet analysis by UAA has shown a great deal of variation among wolf packs. Some packs that have salmon streams within their territory consume a

large amount of salmon during the summer and fall. Other packs, even though salmon were available, displayed a preference for terrestrial mammals, primarily moose. Diet analysis even showed variation among pack members. Two male wolves from the same pack that were captured multiple times over two years showed dietary differences. During winter months the males were documented traveling together and preying upon Dall's sheep. During the following summer, one male shifted his diet to salmon while the other male continued to prey upon Dall's sheep. A final report summarizing the results of this multi-year study will be available shortly.

Juvenile Sockeye Salmon Study

- In August, field work on the third and final year of a collaborative U.S. Geological Survey / Lake Clark National Park and Preserve juvenile sockeye salmon project was completed. The project is comparing the distribution of juvenile sockeye salmon and least cisco in Lake Clark, Kijik Lake, Little Lake Clark, and Sixmile Lake to examine whether climate and environmental variables, such as water clarity, may influence salmon distribution and growth. Sockeye salmon are the primary subsistence fish and least cisco are the primary competitor for food with juvenile sockeye salmon in the Lake Clark system. The study is using a variety of techniques, including satellite imagery to evaluate water clarity, nighttime sonar to assess fish distribution, and previously collected otoliths (fish ear bones) to compare growth of sockeye salmon over time. Otoliths collected as early as the 1970s by the University of Washington are being used for this project. A final report will be available in 2014.

Newhalen River Counting Tower

- The counting tower on the Newhalen River operated between June 30 and August 7 and documented an escapement of 230,844 sockeye for 2013. The final count is approximately 60 percent of the historic average escapement since 2000. This year's run peaked twice; with the first topping out around July 13 (approximately 11 days earlier than the historic cumulative count) and the second peaking around July 24 (consistent with the historic cumulative count).

Telaquana River Weir

- The Telaquana Weir Project is part of a larger study to estimate the total abundance of sockeye salmon in the upper Kuskowim River drainage. This summer was the fourth year for counting sockeye on the Telaquana River. Park staff at the Telaquana weir counted an escapement of 28,166 salmon between July 4 and August 7. The 2013 run was three to 14 days earlier than previous years.

CULTURAL RESOURCES DIVISION, JEANNE SCHAAF 644-3640

Gathering of Elders

- Lake Clark National Park, in partnership with the Nondalton Tribal Council, convened an Elders Gathering in Nondalton on May 30 and 31, 2013. Thirty elders representing seven communities met in Nondalton to celebrate their Dena'ina and Yupik heritages and share their traditional knowledge and stories. The gathering included a traditional Dena'ina healing ceremony and discussions about

handing down traditions and knowledge to the younger generations, and the cultural importance of respect. The first evening included a community potluck, a performance by the Nondalton Dena'ina dance group and giving gifts to the elders made by Nondalton community members. Facilitators helped the elders develop a plan for sharing traditional knowledge and practices with the younger generations, and strengthening community connections to ongoing traditional practices such as putting up fish and going to fish camp.

Dena'inaq' Huch'ulyeshi: The Dena'ina Way of Living

- The park ethnography program has worked with the Anchorage Museum for the past several years to plan the first major exhibition on Dena'ina Athabascan people, history and culture. *Dena'inaq' Huch'ulyeshi: The Dena'ina Way of Living* opened on September 15 and will be on display at the Anchorage Museum through January 12, 2014. Park staff worked with Museum curators to identify exhibit-quality Dena'ina cultural objects in private ownership; record the history, meaning, and context of those objects and artifacts, and arrange for their loan for inclusion in the exhibit.

Hardenberg Bay Archaeological Site

- Park archeologists investigated an archeological site in Hardenburg Bay at “The Point” adjacent to NPS facilities and housing. This site is unusual in that the artifacts recovered are of obsidian, a black glassy material that is very rarely found in this area. Archeologists discovered that the obsidian was traded or carried from *Batza Tena*, a source in interior Alaska, hundreds of miles from the site around 1,500 years ago.

Kayak Point Archaeological Site

- Archeologists also investigated a site at Kayak Point, a popular camping location on the north shore of Kontrashibuna Lake, near the lake outlet. This site dates to 2,500 years ago and suggests that this was a campsite used along a travel corridor, possibly between Lake Clark and Iliamna Lake.

Lake Clark History Publication

- Park historian John Branson is producing a history of Lake Clark that will be released in late 2014. The history will examine the settlement of Lake Clark beginning in the late nineteenth century and continuing on into the mid-twentieth century and explore the development of the first three Euroamerican-Dena'ina villages on Lake Clark—Portage Creek, Kasna Creek, and Tanalian Point-Port Alsworth—and the migration of Dena'ina people from historic Kijik to Old Nondalton.

CONCESSIONS MANAGEMENT, LISA FOX 644-3644

Lake Clark National Preserve Hunting Prospectus

- Concessions management staff will be developing a prospectus for guided hunting services in Lake Clark National Preserve over the winter and plan to publish a request for proposals in May of 2014. People interested in being added to the prospectus mailing list may contact Lisa Fox at 644-3644 or email her at lisa_fox@nps.gov.

SOUTHWEST ALASKA INVENTORY AND MONITORING NETWORK

MICHAEL SHEPHARD 644-3681

Water Quality

- Adequate water quality and quantity are important for maintaining healthy biological communities in aquatic ecosystems. During the 2013 field season, the Southwest Alaska Inventory and Monitoring Network monitored water quality and quantity parameters in lakes and lake outlets throughout Lake Clark and Katmai National Parks and Preserves. Network staff measured temperature, pH, dissolved oxygen, specific conductivity, and water clarity at 100 lake sites between July and September. Lake temperatures at various depths were monitored hourly, year round at six sites. This data will be used to support an interagency research project, with the goal of estimating past, present, and future surface water temperatures of lakes in western Alaska.

The Network also measured two core water quantity parameters, discharge and stage, at the outlets to Lake Clark and Naknek Lake. Discharge, or the amount of water passing a fixed location, was also measured at the outlet to Lake Brooks. Stage, the height of the water surface at a location on a stream or river, was measured hourly at the outlets to Naknek Lake and Lake Brooks, and daily via tape-down measurements at Hardenburg Bay on Lake Clark. The stage and discharge data will be used to refine rating curves for estimating daily lake discharge.



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR SEAN PARNELL

Department of Fish and Game

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RECEIVED

MAY 23 2013

May 20, 2013

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

Dear Tim, 

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sincerely,
/S/

Douglas Vincent-Lang
Director

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

Federal Subsistence Board

Work Session

June 18, 2013

Briefing Paper Regarding Alaska Board of Game Letter (Chairman Spraker) to Federal Subsistence Board (Chairman Towarak): Dated: April 26, 2013

Chairman Spraker's letter encourages the Board to begin the process of modifying the application of the Federal Subsistence Board's predator management policy. He also suggests that each federal agency apply the policy consistently.

The Federal subsistence program was established in a final rule effective on July 1, 1992 with regulations 36 CFR 242 and 50 CFR 100 published in the Federal Register 57 FR 22940; May 29, 1992. The Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture established the Board and these regulations assigned it specific responsibilities. These authorities are fully listed in Subpart B __.10, which read in part:

The Secretary of the Interior and Secretary of Agriculture hereby establish a Federal Subsistence Board and assign it responsibility for administering the subsistence taking and uses of fish and wildlife on public lands, and the related promulgation and signature authority for regulations in subparts C and D of this part.

Preceding publication of these regulations the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture completed an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) which considered numerous topics. Some topics were not analyzed and thus not included within the program. The Final EIS, Volume I, Chapter I, Section G *Issues Not Addressed In This EIS* says:

Issue: Should predators be controlled and vegetation manipulated to increase wildlife populations? Concerns were expressed about the role and habitat manipulations projects and predator control program in the FSMP and the impacts of those actions on subsistence species. Habitat manipulation projects and predator control programs are the responsibility of each land management agency and are beyond the scope of this document. Each such project or program is subject to both NEPA documentation and ANILCA Section 810 Compliance.

After much public discussion in the early 2000s the Board adopted a concise policy statement in accordance with the aforementioned regulations and programmatic EIS. See *Predator Management Policy Federal Subsistence Board*. Among other things the policy reiterates that,

Predator control and habitat management are the responsibly of and remain within the authority of the individual management agencies.

In summary, The Secretaries' programmatic EIS and the Board's regulations did not include this aspect of wildlife management in the program. The EIS specifically left this task to the individual agencies and stated that they remained subject to both National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation and ANILCA §810 evaluation. Any agency undertaking either of these activities need to complete both NEPA compliance (either and EA or EIS) and an ANILCA §810 evaluation. The powers and duties of the Board, listed in §__.10 (d) do not include predator management nor habitat manipulation and the Board is not delegated the authority to modify this section (Subpart B) of these regulations. The Secretaries have retained authority to approve changes to Subpart A and B regulations.

As to each agency's application of law, regulation and policy agencies are required to act in a manner consistent with their agency's mandates and other federal law. Agency mandates often differ as described in a letter from the Secretary of the Interior to the Eastern Interior Subsistence Regional Advisory Council in December 2006.

Attachments:

- Letter; Chairman Spraker to Chairman Towarak; April 26, 2013
- *Predator Management Policy Federal Subsistence Board*, Adopted May 20, 2004
- Letter: Acting Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife and Parks to Chairman Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence Regional Advisory Council Gerald Nicholia, December 19, 2006



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240



DEC 19 2006

Mr. Gerald Nicholia, Chair
Eastern Interior Alaska Subsistence
Regional Advisory Council
101 12th Avenue, Room 110
Fairbanks, Alaska 99701

Dear Mr. Nicholia:

Thank you for your letter of September 22, 2006, to Secretary Dirk Kempthorne requesting that the process to implement an intensive management program with the State of Alaska, Department of Fish and Game on Federal public lands within the Eastern Interior Region of Alaska, be started immediately. I have been asked to respond to you directly.

I take the responsibility, as mandated in the Alaska National Interests Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), of protecting the opportunity for continued subsistence uses in Alaska seriously; as well as that of conserving the nation's fish and wildlife and other natural resources on Alaska's Federal public lands, as directed by ANILCA and other Federal statutes. Each of the Department of the Interior (DOI) land management agencies within your region manage the resources entrusted to them according to these statutory mandates and the implementing regulations and policies. Consistent with these mandates, the DOI agencies will address your concerns.

I understand that staff from the Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) gave presentations to your council at its October 2006 meeting in Delta Junction. They explained the legal requirements and policy guidelines each agency follows when considering requests for intensive management, including predator control. In addition, your council was provided written responses from the Refuge Managers of the Arctic, Yukon Flats, and Tetlin National Wildlife Refuges to your request to the Service Regional Director to initiate studies leading to control of predators of moose and caribou on these refuges.

Each DOI land management agency has differing legal requirements and policy guidelines regarding intensive management, including predator control, which are summarized below:

Mr. Gerald Nicholia

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Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

The BLM manages its Alaska lands primarily under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 and ANILCA. While the agency manages land uses and habitat on its lands, management of fish and wildlife on BLM lands is conducted by the State of Alaska, consistent with the traditional role of the State in managing resident species of fish and wildlife. Essentially, predator control activities by the State of Alaska may take place on BLM lands, as long as they do not conflict with on-going or anticipated BLM authorized actions. The BLM views predator control as a State function and the agency neither supports nor condemns the predator control methods approved by the Alaska Board of Game.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service)

The Service manages the national wildlife refuges in Alaska under the mandates of ANILCA and the Refuge Administration Act. There is nothing in ANILCA, or other applicable federal laws, regulations and policies, nor in the refuge comprehensive conservation plans, which specifically precludes predator control on national wildlife refuges in Alaska. However, these laws, regulations and policies do require comprehensive analyses prior to considering a predator control program to ensure that the action is both appropriate and biologically justified. The following are some of the general prerequisites for considering predator control on Alaska refuges.

Foremost, management actions must be biologically justified and used in a prudent and ecologically sound manner to conform to the agency's Policy on Maintaining the Biological Integrity, Diversity, and Environmental Health of the National Wildlife Refuge System (System). This policy requires that the agency 1) *identify the refuge purpose(s), legislative responsibilities, refuge role within the ecosystem, and System mission*; 2) *assess the current status of biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health through baseline... surveys and studies...*; 3) *assess historic conditions and compare them to the current condition ... This will provide a benchmark... for the relative intactness of ecosystem functions and processes; and 4) consider the refuge's importance to refuge, ecosystem, national and international landscape scales of biological integrity, diversity, and environmental health....* A thorough evaluation must be given to substantiate intended benefits of the control efforts, and alternatives to direct control must be evaluated, attempted, and exhausted as a practical means of achieving management objectives.

Because predator control of wolves and/or bears on national wildlife refuges is highly controversial, it would be considered a major Federal action subject to National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements which would include preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS) or, at a minimum, an environmental assessment

Mr. Gerald Nicholia

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(EA). As part of an EIS or EA, the Service would evaluate predator control in the context of the purposes of the refuge and in consideration of the biological integrity policy. Additionally, the agency would evaluate the effects of the proposed predator control on subsistence uses and needs, as required by Section 810 of ANILCA. Section 810 requirements would be incorporated into the NEPA process and documents.

In addition, if predator control is proposed to be carried out on a refuge by an agency or others not acting as agents of the Service, the refuge manager must find the proposed control program to be consistent with the Service compatibility regulations implementing the Refuge Administration Act. These regulations require that permitted uses of the refuge be compatible with the purposes of the refuge, the mission of the national wildlife refuge system, and the resource management objectives identified in the refuge comprehensive conservation plans.

Be assured that the Service is giving serious consideration to the concerns you have raised relating to the effects of predation on subsistence uses. By copy of this letter I am requesting that the Service's staff in Alaska to explore available options to conduct the studies necessary to fully evaluate the need for and potential benefits of predator reductions to refuge resources and subsistence users, as well as alternatives to direct agency-conducted reduction of predators. In this evaluation, the Service will closely coordinate and, where possible, cooperate with the State of Alaska in its efforts to provide sustainable, harvestable surpluses for subsistence use.

National Park Service (NPS)

The NPS lands in Alaska are managed according to ANILCA and the underlying 1916 Organic Act, which established and continues to guide NPS management. The ANILCA, per sections 802(1), 808(6) and 815(1)(3), established a standard of "conservation of healthy populations" for wildlife management in Alaska's parks, monuments, and preserves. The legislative history to ANILCA clearly expresses congressional intent in regards to intensive management, including predator control. On page 171 of Senate Report 96-413, November 1979, it states:

In authorizing subsistence uses within National Parks, Monuments, Preserves, and National recreation Areas, it is the intent of the Committee that certain traditional National Park Service management values be maintained. It is contrary to the National Park Service concept to manipulate habitat or populations to achieve maximum utility of natural resources. Rather, the National Park System concept requires implementation of management policies which strive to maintain the natural abundance, behavior, diversity, and ecological integrity of native animals as part of their ecosystem, and the Committee intends that that concept be maintained... Accordingly, the Committee does not expect the National Park Service to engage in habitat manipulation or control of other species for the purpose of maintaining subsistence uses within the National Park System units.

Mr. Gerald Nicholia

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The same report goes on to state (pages 232-233):

The Committee recognizes that the management policies and legal authorities of the National Park System and the National Wildlife Refuge System may require different interpretations and application of the "healthy population" concept consistent with management objectives of each system. Accordingly, the Committee recognizes that the policies and legal authorities of the managing agencies will determine the nature and degree of management program affecting ecological relationships, population dynamics, and manipulations of the components of the ecosystem.

As you can see, the Congress understood and expected that the policies of the NPS were to play a significant role in interpreting how the mandate for "conservation of healthy populations" is carried out.

One of the first major actions the Secretary completed was a long and thorough review of draft NPS management policies. On August 31, 2006, the Secretary was satisfied that the policies were appropriate and struck the correct balance for NPS guidance. Those policies contain several sections (in Chapter 4) that relate to your request. In all, those sections direct the NPS to, in a manner consistent with ANILCA and its Senate history, maintain the natural population fluctuations and processes that influence the dynamics of individual plant and animal populations within their ecosystems. Section 4.4.3, *Harvest of Plants and Animals by the Public*, directly deals with the issues you have raised. Among other things, that section states: *The (National Park) Service does not engage in activities to reduce the number of native species for the purpose of increasing the number of harvest species (i.e. predator control), nor does the (National Park) Service permit others to do so on land managed by the National Park Service.*

To summarize, undertaking intensive management practices, including predator control activities as conducted by the State of Alaska, is not allowed on NPS lands.

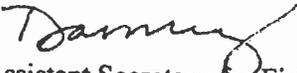
I hope this brief summary of the DOI agencies' legal frameworks for considering predator control on their respective lands is helpful to your council's understanding of the constraints they must conform to in addressing your concerns. I would encourage your council to continue to work closely with the Federal agencies and the State in developing management options to ameliorate, to the extent possible, the adverse effects of predation on wildlife resources utilized by subsistence users. In addition to seeking predator reduction programs on Federal lands which are consistent with the legal and policy mandates of the land managing agencies, opportunities for predator management on lands under State jurisdiction should be explored, as appropriate. Additionally, the council may be able to encourage increased harvests of predators by local residents under current State hunting and trapping regulations where applicable.

Mr. Gerald Nicholia

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In closing, I support and applaud your efforts to ensure that subsistence uses and way of life in Alaska are protected. I appreciate your council's continuing contribution to the Federal Subsistence Program and your diligence in representing the interests of subsistence users in your region. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me at (202) 208-5347.

Sincerely,


Acting Assistant Secretary for Fish
and Wildlife and Parks

**PREDATOR MANAGEMENT POLICY
FEDERAL SUBSISTENCE BOARD**

Adopted by the Federal Subsistence Board on
May 20, 2004

The Federal Subsistence Board recognizes that predators are an important component of Alaska's dynamic ecosystems, beneficial to maintaining balance, health, and diversity within associated wildlife populations and habitats. Furthermore, the Board recognizes the traditional Alaska Native cultural beliefs and values associated with wolves, bears and other predatory species, and the impact that predators can have on ungulate populations valued by subsistence users. In addition, the Board recognizes that predator control may be an appropriate management tool on some Federal public lands for restoring prey populations to provide for subsistence needs where predation has reduced or held prey populations at levels significantly below historical levels of abundance.

As authorized by the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture [50 CFR Part 100.10 (USDI) and 36 CFR Part 242.10 (USDA)], the Board administers the subsistence taking and uses of fish and wildlife on Federal public lands through regulations that provide for the non-wasteful harvest of fish and wildlife by Federally qualified rural residents, consistent with the maintenance of healthy populations of harvested resources. Such subsistence taking and uses are "... *for direct personal or family consumption ...*" (Section 803 of ANILCA). Wildlife management activities on Federal public lands other than the subsistence take and use of fish and wildlife, such as predator control and habitat management, are the responsibility of and remain within the authority of the individual land management agencies.

Accordingly, the Board will:

- A** Consider all Federal proposals to regulate seasons and dates, methods and means, harvest limits, and customary & traditional use determinations for the subsistence take of fish and wildlife. The Board will ensure that the effect of its decisions is to provide for subsistence take and use of the subject species. The Board will also take into account approved population objectives, management plans, customary and traditional uses, and recognized principles of fish and wildlife management.
- B** Direct the Office of Subsistence Management to provide proponents of predator control proposals (all Federal proposals that specifically indicate that the reason for the proposed regulation(s) is to reduce the predator population to benefit prey populations), with procedures for submitting the proposal to the appropriate agency. Where predators have been determined to be a major contributing factor in the significant reduction of ungulate populations important for subsistence use, or in the chronic suppression of such populations at low densities, the Board will endorse timely, affirmative and effective action consistent with each respective agency's policies and management objectives, to reduce predator populations and

allow affected ungulate populations to recover. The Board will monitor actions taken by the agency to address such concerns, and will provide appropriate support where necessary to ensure the continuation of subsistence harvest opportunities.

Ensure that the appropriate Regional Council(s) is informed of predator control proposals by having them printed in the Proposal Booklet and presented to the Council at the next appropriate Council meeting, along with other rejected proposals that address concerns which are outside the authorities of the Federal Subsistence Board.

Winter 2014 Regional Advisory Council Meeting Calendar

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

Meeting dates and locations are subject to change.

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

Fall 2014 Regional Advisory Council Meeting Calendar

August–October 2014 current as of 10/18/13

Meeting dates and locations are subject to change.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	
Aug. 17	Aug. 18 WINDOW OPENS	NS—TBD			Aug. 21	Aug. 22	Aug. 23
Aug. 24	Aug. 25	Aug. 26	Aug. 27	Aug. 28	Aug. 29	Aug. 30	
Aug. 31	Sept. 1 HOLIDAY	Sept. 2	Sept. 3	Sept. 4	Sept. 5	Sept. 6	
Sept. 7	Sept. 8	Sept. 9	Sept. 10	Sept. 11	Sept. 12	Sept. 13	
		KA—King Cove/Cold Bay					
Sept. 14	Sept. 15	Sept. 16	Sept. 17	Sept. 18	Sept. 19	Sept. 20	
		SE—Sitka					
Sept. 21	Sept. 22	Sept. 23	Sept. 24	Sept. 25	Sept. 26	Sept. 27	
Sept. 28	Sept. 29 End of Fiscal Year	Sept. 30	Oct. 1	Oct. 2	Oct. 3	Oct. 4	
	No Meetings This Week						
Oct. 5	Oct. 6	Oct. 7	Oct. 8	Oct. 9	Oct. 10	Oct. 11	
			NWA—TBD				
Oct. 12	Oct. 13	Oct. 14	Oct. 15	Oct. 16	Oct. 17 WINDOW CLOSES	Oct. 18	

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

Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

CHARTER

- 1. Committee's Official Designation.** The Council's official designation is the Bristol Bay Subsistence Regional Advisory Council (Council).
- 2. Authority.** The Council is reestablished by virtue of the authority set out in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (16 U.S.C. 3115 (1988)) Title VIII, and under the authority of the Secretary of the Interior, in furtherance of 16 U.S.C. 410hh-2. The Council is established in accordance with the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), as amended, 5 U.S.C., Appendix 2.
- 3. Objectives and Scope of Activities.** The objective of the Council is to provide a forum for the residents of the region with personal knowledge of local conditions and resource requirements to have a meaningful role in the subsistence management of fish and wildlife on Federal lands and waters in the region.
- 4. Description of Duties.** The Council possesses the authority to perform the following duties:
 - a. Recommend the initiation of, review, and evaluate proposals for regulations, policies, management plans, and other matters relating to subsistence uses of fish and wildlife on public-lands-within the region.
 - b. Provide a forum for the expression of opinions and recommendations by persons interested in any matter related to the subsistence uses of fish and wildlife on public lands within the region.
 - c. Encourage local and regional participation in the decision making process affecting the taking of fish and wildlife on the public lands within the region for subsistence uses.
 - d. Prepare an annual report to the Secretary containing the following:
 - (1) An identification of current and anticipated subsistence uses of fish and wildlife populations within the region.
 - (2) An evaluation of current and anticipated subsistence needs for fish and wildlife populations within the region.

- (3) A recommended strategy for the management of fish and wildlife populations within the region to accommodate such subsistence uses and needs; and
 - (4) Recommendations concerning policies, standards, guidelines and regulations to implement the strategy.
- e. Appoint three members to the Lake Clark National Park and three members to the Aniakchak National Monument Subsistence Resource Commissions, in accordance with Section 808 of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA).
 - f. Make recommendations on determinations of customary and traditional use of subsistence resources.
 - g. Make recommendations on determinations of rural status.
 - h. Provide recommendations on the establishment and membership of Federal local advisory committees.
5. **Agency or Official to Whom the Council Reports.** The Council reports to the Federal Subsistence Board Chair, who is appointed by the Secretary of the Interior with the concurrence of the Secretary of Agriculture.
6. **Support.** The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will provide administrative support for the activities of the Council through the Office of Subsistence Management.
7. **Estimated Annual Operating Costs and Staff Years.** The annual operating costs associated with supporting the Council's functions are estimated to be \$125,000, including all direct and indirect expenses and .75 staff years.
8. **Designated Federal Officer.** The DFO is the Subsistence Council Coordinator for the region or such other Federal employee as may be designated by the Assistant Regional Director - Subsistence, Region 7, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The DFO is a full-time Federal employee appointed in accordance with Agency procedures. The DFO will:
- Approve or call all of the Council and subcommittee meetings;
 - Prepare and approve all meeting agendas;
 - Attend all Council and subcommittee meetings;
 - Adjourn any meeting when the DFO determines adjournment to be in the public interest; and
 - Chair meetings when directed to do so by the official to whom the advisory committee reports.

9. Estimated Number and Frequency of Meetings. The Council will meet 1-2 times per year, and at such times as designated by the Federal Subsistence Board Chair or the DFO.

10. Duration. Continuing.

11. Termination. The Council is subject to biennial review and will terminate 2 years from the date the charter is filed, unless prior to that date, the Charter is renewed in accordance with the provisions of Section 14 of the FACA. The Council will not meet or take any action without a valid current charter.

12. Membership and Designation. The Council's membership is composed of representative members as follows:

Ten members who are knowledgeable and experienced in matters relating to subsistence uses of fish and wildlife and who are residents of the region represented by the Council. To ensure that each Council represents a diversity of interests, the Federal Subsistence Board in their nomination recommendations to the Secretary will strive to ensure that seven of the members (70 percent) represent subsistence interests within the region and three of the members (30 percent) represent commercial and sport interests within the region. The portion of membership representing commercial and sport interests must include, where possible, at least one representative from the sport community and one representative from the commercial community.

The Secretary of the Interior will appoint members based on the recommendations from the Federal Subsistence Board and with the concurrence of the Secretary of Agriculture.

Members will be appointed for 3-year terms. A vacancy on the Council will be filled in the same manner in which the original appointment was made. Members serve at the discretion of the Secretary.

Council members will elect a Chair, a Vice-Chair, and a Secretary for a 1-year term.

Members of the Council will serve without compensation. However, while away from their homes or regular places of business, Council and subcommittee members engaged in Council, or subcommittee business, approved by the DFO, may be allowed travel expenses, including per diem in lieu of subsistence, in the same manner as persons employed intermittently in Government service under Section 5703 of Title 5 of the United States Code.

13. Ethics Responsibilities of Members. No Council or subcommittee member may participate in any specific party matter in which the member has a direct financial interest in a lease, license, permit, contract, claim, agreement, or related litigation with the Department.

- 14. **Subcommittees.** Subject to the DFO's approval, subcommittees may be formed for the purposes of compiling information or conducting research. However, such subcommittees must act only under the direction of the DFO and must report their recommendations to the full Council for consideration. Subcommittees must not provide advice or work products directly to the Agency. The Council Chair, with the approval of the DFO, will appoint subcommittee members. Subcommittees will meet as necessary to accomplish their assignments, subject to the approval of the DFO and the availability of resources.

- 15. **Recordkeeping.** Records of the Council, and formally and informally established subcommittees of the Council, shall be handled in accordance with General Records Schedule 26, Item 2, or other approved Agency records disposition schedule. These records shall be available for public inspection and copying, subject to the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. 552.

//Signed//

Secretary of the Interior

DEC - 2 2011

Date Signed

DEC 03 2011

Date Filed