

Seward Fish & Game Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes of November 14, 2013

tCall to order at 6:04 pm by Chairman McCracken at the City of Seward Council Chambers.

II. Roll Call:

Members Present: Jim McCracken, Jeanette Hanneman, Jim Herbert, Bob White, John Flood, W.C. Casey, Diane Dubuc. Ezra Campbell, Trent Foldager, Arne Hatch, Robin Collman. McCracken offered introduction of the Committee members to any in the audience who were not familiar with individuals.

Quorum present: 12 members present, 8 required.

Members Excused: Mark Clemens

Members Absent: Matt Hall, Jim Hubbard,

User groups present: Sport and Commercial Fish, Hunting, Conservation, Wildlife viewing, Guiding, non consumptive users, personal use

III. Approval of Agenda: [Motion–Casey; Dubuc] no objection

IV. Approval of minutes from of November 7, 2013. [Motion - Casey; Hatch] were approved with minor edits - no objections

V. Agency Staff Present: Jeff Selinger, Jason Herreman

VI. Public Present: Benjamin Pister, Wolfgang Kurtz, Heidi Zemach

VII. Correspondence: none

VIII. Citizen's comments on F&G matters: none

IX. Presentations:

W.C Casey attended a meeting with Chamber of Commerce personnel, Dan Bosch and others concerning placing salmon smolt in a net pen in the Lagoon. The Chamber initiated this dialogue. The fish would be held for two weeks and then released to enter the bay. F&G supports the concept and would provide food for the smolt. The first step to be handled by grad students lined up by Bosch is to understand the hydrology of the basin. Members suggested the SW area was deepest and is the likely site for the pens. Others worried that there might not be adequate water flow to keep densely packed smolt with enough oxygen. Collman felt that if approved, the project would have low impact. The AC will stay tuned to this project and generally tasked Casey with being our representative.

Seward Fish & Game Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes of November 14, 2013

Jeff Selinger and Jason gave an overview of the Game Harvests on the peninsula and specifically Unit 7.

Species	Peninsula	Unit 7
Goats	61	24
Sheep	7	4
Caribou	18	?
Wolves	55-60	6
Marten	130	90
Beaver	70	15
Lynx	400	23
Otter	32	5
Wolverine	21	7
Black bear	422	141
Brown bear	45 hunting+24 non hunting	12-hunting
Moose	151 [Unit15C = 97]	2

With the new regulations for black bears there is a limit of 3/year and also more liberal baiting regulations. This has not produced an increased harvest. Actually the overall black bear harvest is down about a third from last year. White said the large number of brown bears dominating baiting stations has resulted in a decrease in bear baiting in our area. Overall the peninsula harvest of black bears on bait was 9% and in Unit 7 14%.

McCracken talked about the much higher harvest of moose in Unit 7 in the past. He asked how we might enhance the habitat to bolster the moose population. Selinger said the main habitat in Unit 7 was spruce forest and riparian areas with moose concentrated in the latter. Miners burned substantial portions in the early 1900's and hunted predators harder and that may have lead to larger moose populations. Selinger said his philosophy and the Board of Game was focused on offering opportunity to hunters even if the odds of success was very low. There was a comment that more moose were killed by vehicles than taken by hunters. White reiterated his belief that cow and calf loss to brown bears was the reason for the depressed numbers and that would not change until brown bears were at much lower levels.

Audience member Pister asked for clarification on moose regulations and the Kenai Peninsula moose season [8/20 – 9/20]. He also had some questions on predators and snowfall as limiting factors.

X. Old Business: none

XI. New Business:

Seward Fish & Game Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes of November 14, 2013

The committee discussed Game proposals to be considered at the March 14-18, 2014.

Proposal 147: [Collman/Hanneman]

Motion failed 0-9-2

We heard that these species are hardy enough that they could survive winters in SE AK and hence become an invasive species creating problems for other bird species that could include diseases. These diseases might be introduced inadvertently even by captive birds. We know that individuals in the community have owned and possibly still own African Finches. Selinger said that F&G would grandfather in these pets by permit or other means but not allow their breeding or replacement when they die.

Proposal 148: [Collman/Campbell]

Motion failed 0-9-2

We consider hamsters as a possible invasive species that might have unintended negative consequences if escaped animals could establish themselves in the wild. We do not believe they should be sold or possessed. Hanneman suggests the incorrect family name is used in the proposal.

Proposal 149: [Collman/Hanneman]

Supports 7-3-1

Took some time to understand just what the Department was asking for. We try to protect our borders as much as possible but know that there is still the possibility of negative organisms like moose ticks and other diseases getting into Alaska populations. We believe a positive vote on this proposal allows F&G better abilities to deal with rat infested vessels in a timely manner. Those opposed felt there was no reason to allow a rat infested vessel anywhere close to shore.

Vice-Chair Dubuc departed. A quorum is still present.

Proposal 175: [White/Herbert]

Support as amended (see below) 6-3-1

We understand this is a proposal from F&G at the Board of Game's request to establish a structure for future decisions. McCracken does not like it, stating that we view our citizens as using many of the adjacent areas in the historic past and that we have valuable knowledge and interest in those areas.

Amend the proposal that we should have a say in antlerless moose hunts in Units 16 B (Kalgin Island), 6D, and 15 A,B, and C. [Herbert/Hatch]

Casey would like to vote the whole of 175 down as he believes each AC should vote on what is important to its members and those they represent. He feels we do not abuse the system by taking positions on matters not relevant to us. Hatch said we represent many groups of hunters in our area and should be able to give input in many areas. Foldager did not like the idea that we would be limited in our discussions and should be able to give input on what we felt was important to us. Similar comment came from White.

Seward Fish & Game Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes of November 14, 2013

Some feared this would be a precedent for restricting the input of AC's on other matters to specific local issues. Hatch sees input possible by any AC but believes for the Board to act on antlerless hunts it must have the support of the local AC specifically involved with the hunt in question. He and others expressed sympathy for local jurisdiction and the folks most impacted.

Amendment passed 9-1-0

Discussion on the main motion as amended: Similar to above but focus was on the historic involvement by Seward area hunters and the knowledge Seward hunters have of adjacent areas. The idea of cow hunting was not endorsed by some of the opponents.

Proposal 175 as amended final vote: carried 6-3-1

Proposal 126: [Collman/Campbell] Failed 3-5-2

Information was presented on the surveys done to get the populations in this area to make decisions to carefully manage the population. The key was protection of habitat from severe over browsing in the winter. Heard about the Homer antlerless hunt that takes out resident moose before the winter moose move in. Understand that the Skilak cow hunt has been permanently eliminated after not being used for a long period of time. McCracken takes the Billy Miller philosophy that it is not good to kill cows. Those in favor felt habitat protection was the main factor, those opposed felt moose populations should not be compromised by cow or calf kills.

Proposal 174: [Hanneman/Collman] Failed 0-9-1

Hanneman had done extensive research on this proposal. She stated that the group submitting the proposal had a constitutional right to take raptors in Alaska even though they were non residents. She felt the Alaska Falconry Association had done an excellent job of addressing each major point put forth by the proposers and had offered a legitimate, conservative solution to the Board of Game. The new regulation if adopted should exclude aliens as there is a fear of exporting raptors to other countries. Under an open borders concept, people from the lower 48 could bring their birds here to hunt.

Collman and Hanneman said all of the species mentioned in the proposal are found in the lower 48 though the Gyrfalcons very rarely. Collman fears that this is the target bird for people from Outside. Hanneman would like to see a provision that any raptors taken would not be part of a captive breeding program. These programs exist in the lower 48 for most raptor species used in falconry.

McCracken felt the proposal was incomplete as it did not follow the format prescribed by Board Support and left many sections blank. It will cost the F&G more money to administer this additional program and in keeping with other permits and licenses, the non residents should pay higher fees than residents.

Seward Fish & Game Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes of November 14, 2013

The Board must very clearly specify the numbers of each raptor species per year, the number of permits or birds/person, and exactly how the permits will be issued, for example by lottery.

Proposal 172: [White/Campbell] failed 0-7-3

White feels snares are a good management tool. Paw snares in his opinion are selective for black bears and not brown bears except possibly brown bear cubs. A conscientious trapper will run his gear every day. The Seward AC majority voted in favor of black bear snaring in 2010. Abstentions either did not feel qualified to vote on the matter or had voted against the measure in the past.

Break from 22010-22020

Proposal 173: [White/Hanneman] failed 1-4-5

At issue was the constitutional issue of “take” in terms of wild game. White suggested it could go as far as “cause to disturb” an animal as an over zealous photographer harassing wildlife. There was worry that over zealous law enforcement might abuse provisions of this archery regulation. There was a comment that the proposer wanted to get away from the concept of a nick that was non-lethal terminating a hunt. Or an animal being struck by a projectile that drew no blood being counted in your bag limit. An opinion was expressed that over eager guides might push a client to take an unadvisable shot that resulted in this sort of “take”.

Proposal 130: [Casey/Hatch] supported 6-4-0

Those against did not like the idea of killing cows and detracting from the breeding population at all. Those in favor saw the population of 15C as the healthiest on the peninsula [3300 according to Selinger]. This is in the upper half of the intensive management population guidelines. Selinger felt the population could handle it and reminded us that no calves or cows with calves could be shot. As mentioned in previous discussion, the resident animals are usually taken before the winter migrants move into the Homer bench from the hills. The 2012 harvest was 19 animals. It seems a carefully managed system, but the concept of providing an opportunity to hunt on the peninsula seems to underlie decision making. We also expressed concerns for the damage caused by heavy over browsing if the herd was too large and concentrated.

Proposal 131 [White/Hatch] supported 8-2-0

Though managed by the Palmer office, the Seward AC represents citizens who have hunted Kalgin Island. We know it is extremely dense vegetation and difficult for counting moose as well as hunting. There are no moose predators on the island and it is estimated that a healthy long term population for the island is 40-50 animals. Given hunting conditions and the size of the current population, we feel the current liberal harvest is acceptable. Those opposed generally feel cow hunts are unwise.

Seward Fish & Game Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes of November 14, 2013

Proposal 166: [Campbell/White} failed 0-10-0

We looked at the definition of “transporter” and understood under current interpretation that it includes receiving compensation above basic trip expenses. We were worried about the role of private boats or lodges in the proposed language. In general we were content with the status quo and its enforcement. We heard a comment that Homer AC had voted this down when it heard from the proposer that they did not fully understand the definition of transporter.

The Seward AC voted 10-0-0 to authorize Dianne Dubuc to represent us at the December Board of Fish meeting. Notice has been passed along to Sherry Wright ahead of the filing of these minutes.

Next Meeting: The next scheduled Seward AC meeting was to be January 16, 2014 at 1900 hours to review the outcomes of the Board of Fish meetings and conduct the election of AC members. It was subsequently moved to January 15 to accommodate the travel plans of Sherry Wright. Those with terms expiring at the end of December 2013 are Jim McCracken, Jim Hubbard, Robin Collman, W.C. Casey, and Ezra Campbell. Notice of elections will be sent to the public at least two weeks before the January meeting.

Thanks to Jeanette for the snacks.

Meeting adjourned at 8:48 pm. [Casey, Campbell]]

Draft Minutes created November 16, 2013
Corrected and Final January 16, 2014
J. Herbert, Secretary