

**Upper Lynn Canal ADF&G Advisory Committee
16 February 2017
Haines, Alaska**

Call to Order at 4:30 pm by Tim McDonough

Roll Call:

Members	Present/ Absent/ Teleconference
Tim McDonough (TM) - Chair	P
Ryan Cook (RC) - Vice Chair	P
Derek Poinsette (DP) - Secretary	P
Darren Belisle (DB) - Skagway	T
Shannon Donahue (SD) - Haines	P
John Hagen (JH) - Haines	P
Daniel Hotch (DH) - Klukwan	P
Randy Jackson (RJ) - Haines	T
Kip Kermoian (KK) - Haines	P
Will Prisciandaro (WP) - Haines	P
Luke Rauscher (LR) - Skagway	A

Members Present: 10

Members Absent: 1

Number Needed for Quorum: 6

Quorum Present: Yes

Fish and Game Staff Present

Commercial Fish: Mark Sogge (Teleconference)

Sport Fish: Rich Chapell

Wildlife: Kevin White (Teleconference)

User Groups Present

Ben Kirkpatrick - Takshanuk Watershed Council

Previous Meeting Minutes

TM: 18 January minutes say 2016 instead of 2017.

RC moves to amend and approve 18 January minutes. WP 2nd. Passes unanimously.

Agenda

TM: We should remove Tier 3 from agenda. DP is going to state workshop in Juneau on 20 March.

DP moves to scratch the Tier 3 discussion item from the agenda. KK 2nd.

JH: Should have more public notice for a Tier 3 discussion.

Passes unanimously.

WP moves to approve amended agenda. SD 2nd. Passes unanimously.

Rich Chapell: ADFG is still discussing what measures will be taken to conserve king salmon. Should have a SE-wide plan by end of February.

BOF Proposal: 5-1/4" or Less Subsistence Net Mesh Restriction Through August 1

WP reads draft proposal.

Discussion regarding wording.

JH: Is restricting subsistence mesh size something that is in the ADFG management tool box?

Rich Chapell: There are no restrictions on subsistence mesh size.

MS: I'm not sure if that is a power that I have. I don't think it's ever been done.

Charlie Dewitt: Can we go smaller?

WP: 5-1/4" seems like a good compromise. That's what people already have.

DP: It might be a hardship on some subsistence fishermen.

WP: They can still fish bigger mesh sizes after August 1. I would like to see the river completely shut down until August 1. There's a bottleneck at 19 to 24-mile that opens early.

MS: River open 4-mile to above Wells Bridge until 19 June. 19-mile to Wells bridge will only be open 4 days a week after that.

DH: People in Klukwan met with MS regarding the restrictions. Tough to get everyone to buy into it. 90-95% are on board. I think the restrictions will be effective at conserving kings.

RJ: Can MS use night closures on the river?

MS: I don't think I have that ability. I don't think that kings necessarily move at night in the river. I have the power to open and close fishing, but I need a legal opinion to determine if I can restrict mesh size in a subsistence fishery.

KK moves to change wording of proposal: "The mesh restriction should reduce the catch of larger productive female spawners." DP 2nd. Passes unanimously.

RC moves to submit the proposal to BOF. KK 2nd. Passes unanimously.

Final Wording of the Proposal:

ACTIVITY THAT WOULD BE AFFECTED: Subsistence

MEETING PROPOSAL SUBMITTED FOR: Southeast and Yakutat Finfish and Shellfish

1. ALASKA ADMINISTRATIVE CODE NUMBER 5AAC: 5AAC 01.720 Lawful gear and gear specifications

2. What is the issue you would like the board to address and why: This proposal addresses the need for conservation of the Chilkat Chinook salmon population through the use of a maximum gillnet size restriction of 5 1/4" through August 1st in the District 15 Southeast Alaska subsistence fishery. Considering low returns of Chinook salmon to the Chilkat River system over the last 10 years, changing to maximum size of gillnets allowed to be fished in the Haines area subsistence fisheries could help curtail Chinook salmon from being caught in the subsistence fishery both in the salt water and Chilkat River. Prior to August 1 gillnets with a mesh size of 5 1/4" or less would still allow sockeye and pink salmon to be caught while allowing Chinook a better chance of bouncing off gillnets and reaching their spawning grounds. A mesh restriction should also reduce catches of larger, productive female spawners. After August 1st, most Chinook salmon have reached their spawning grounds; relaxing the mesh restriction off would allow users who are targeting chum and coho Salmon to use larger nets to more effectively catch those species. If this change is not adopted there could be Chinook salmon incidentally harvested at a time when the Chilkat River is seeing record low returns. This conservation measure is commensurate with other restrictions applied to Southeast Alaska commercial and sport fisheries by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

3. What solution do you recommend? In other words, if the board adopted your solution, what would the new regulation say?

5 AAC 01.720 Lawful gear and gear specifications

(5) District 15 in all salt waters and fresh waters, including Chilkat Inlet, Chilkat River, Chilkoot Inlet, and Lutak Inlet, the maximum allowable gillnet mesh size is 5 1/4" prior to August 1st.

BOG Proposal #143: Reauthorize antlerless moose hunting seasons in Unit 1C

TM reads the proposal:

PROPOSAL 143 - 5 AAC 85.045(1). Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose. Reauthorize the antlerless moose hunting seasons in Unit 1C as follows:

Unit 1(C), Berners Bay Sept. 15—Oct. 15

1 moose by drawing permit only; up to 30 permits may be issued

...

Unit 1(C), that portion west of Excursion Inlet and north of Icy Passage:

1 moose per regulatory year; Sept. 15—Oct. 15

1 antlerless moose by drawing permit only; up to 100 permits may be issued; Nov. 10—Dec. 10

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?

Berners Bay: The Berners Bay (Unit 1C) strategic moose management plan calls for a post-hunt population of 90 moose based on the area's estimated carrying capacity. The Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) has been successful at maintaining the Berners Bay population close to the post-hunt population objective by implementing both bull and cow hunts.

From 1998–2006 the number of drawing permits for Berners Bay moose ranged from ten bull and ten antlerless permits to seven bull permits and no antlerless permits. The average annual harvest of bulls during that period was seven moose, and in years when antlerless permits were issued, the annual harvest averaged four cow moose. Although ADF&G has had authorization to issue a total of 30 permits each year, over the past ten years no more than 20 total permits have been issued during a single year. As a result of several severe winters and resulting population declines, no Berners Bay moose permits were issued from 2007–2013.

The number of drawing permits issued annually for Berners Bay is based on the number of moose observed during winter aerial surveys. The mean number of moose seen during aerial surveys conducted from 1990–2006 was 77 (range: 59–108). As a result of a series of severe winters from 2006–2009 and associated population declines, the number of moose observed during surveys from 2007–2009 ranged from 33–62. Surveys in 2010 and 2011 found 73 moose including ten calves each year. Under ideal survey conditions in 2012, 102 moose were observed, including 21 bulls, 81 cows, and 14 calves. Adjusted for sightability based on collared moose, the 2012 population was estimated at 113 +/- 11 moose. Under less ideal conditions in 2013, 73 moose were observed, including 18 bulls, 47 cows, and eight calves. Adjusted for sightability, the 2013 population estimate was 90 +/- 13 moose. During the most recent survey in January 2014 a total of 105 moose were observed, including 22 bulls, 52 cows, 24 calves, and seven unknown. Based on this survey, the population was estimated to be 109 +/- 6 moose. The Berners Bay population has slowly increased and now exceeds ADF&G's population and bull:cow management objectives.

Five bull permits were issued in 2014 and 2015. ADF&G would like to retain the ability to implement an antlerless moose hunt should the population or habitat conditions warrant this type of management.

Gustavus: The Gustavus moose population (Unit 1C) rapidly expanded from just a few animals in the 1980s and early 1990s to a peak of about 400 animals in 2003. In 2002 ADF&G estimated the density of moose on the Gustavus Forelands winter range exceeded five moose per km² despite only a small proportion of the area consisting of productive (abundant willow) winter habitat. In response to concerns about moose damaging the winter habitat, ADF&G initiated spring browse surveys in 1999 and determined that an unsustainable level (85% - 95%) of the current annual growth of willow twigs had been consumed by moose.

To conserve winter habitat ADF&G requested the Board of Game authorize an antlerless moose hunt, and the first antlerless hunt was held in the fall of 2000. From 2002–2008 hunters harvested between 11 and 67 antlerless moose annually, depending on the number of permits issued. No hunt was held in fall 2007 due to high moose mortality during the previous winter, and no antlerless hunts have been held since 2009.

The objective of antlerless moose hunts in Gustavus is to maintain the moose population using the winter range to levels commensurate with habitat capability. Based on aerial surveys corrected for sightability and annual browse surveys, management of the population using antlerless hunts has been successful. In 2013, under favorable survey conditions 186 moose (25 bulls, 121 cows, and 40 calves) were observed. The population estimate corrected for sightability was 323 +/- 87 moose. Under poor late winter survey conditions in March 2014 91 (24 cows, 12 calves, and 55 unknown) moose were seen yielding a sightability corrected population estimate of 244 +/- 98 moose. Due to exceptionally mild winter weather, at the time of this survey a number of radiocollared moose had already transitioned to forested summer range outside the survey area. There was little snow cover during the winter of 2014–15, so no survey was attempted.

Severe winters from 2006 through 2009 reduced calf survival, but since then calf survival has returned to 21% to 37%. Even during severe winters survival of adult females remained high at about 89%. Given the improved survival rate of calves during successive mild winters and stable cow survival, the potential exists for the Gustavus moose population to rapidly increase.

The Gustavus moose population is currently at a level ADF&G believes is appropriate for the available winter habitat. However, we believe it is important to retain the ability to implement antlerless hunts should the population increase to a level that is detrimental to the habitat.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F16-116)

DP moves to support the proposal. KK 2nd.

Stuart Dewitt (Audience): Has heard bad things about cow hunts around the State. We should never allow antlerless moose hunts in small populations.

RC: Bad winters can reduce moose numbers.

DP: This reauthorization is just a bookkeeping thing. ADFG is required to reauthorize all antlerless hunts periodically. This does not mean that there will be an actual hunt.

RC: It is a bookkeeping, but it is not a good tool for ADFG to use. We should not support it.

SD: ADFG took the Gustavus cow hunt too far and now there are hardly any moose there.

DB: Allowing F&G to take a couple of cows is better than allowing the habitat to be degraded. Don't want to tie the hands of F&G.

Charlie Dewitt (Audience): We should not allow a cow hunt.

SD: Reauthorizing doesn't necessarily mean it will be used.

KK: In Gustavus, moose were starving due to habitat degradation. ADFG is aware enough now not to misuse this tool.

CD: The Haines moose herd crashed after the cow hunts in the past. We should just let Mother Nature be.

TM: We need to decide if we trust F&G with this tool.

RJ moves that we table this proposal until KK can get a F&G wildlife biologist on the phone. KK 2nd.

Letter Supporting Haines Sportsman's Association Request for Sport Fishing Closure

CD: Would like to see the AC close the sport fishing for king salmon from Point Couverdan north. Juneau sport fishermen take a lot of kings down there.

RC: I think the Juneau king salmon derby is canceled.

CD: We should also reduce the bag limit to one king out in Icy Strait and Elfin Cove area. Haines Sportsmen's Association has written a letter.

TM: AC could support the letter.

RJ: Can we support the letter over email?

CD: People in Juneau are against closing down the sport fishery because of economic impacts.

TM is going to send a draft letter of support to be voted on by the AC via email. Letter was approved as written below:

*Office of the Commissioner
Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game
Sam Cotton
dfg.commissioner@alaska.gov
Feb. 20, 2017*

Dear Commissioner,

At our most recent meeting Feb. 16th, the Upper Lynn Canal Fish and Game Advisory Committee discussed the Haines Sportsman's Association request for closure of Chinook salmon fishing north of Point Couverden and unanimously agreed to support their request for this action. Our AC is actively involved in looking for solutions to continually declining Chinook salmon runs in the Chilkat Valley and feel every possible measure needs to be employed at this critical time in the decline of that stock.

*Sincerely,
Tim McDonough
Chair, Upper Lynn Canal Fish and Game Advisory Committee*

BOG Proposal: Antlerless Hunts Continued

KK returns with Kevin White of ADFG on the phone.

KW: Have been researching moose for ADFG since 2002. The cow hunt reauthorization is a bookkeeping item. There are no plans for a cow hunt in Berner's Bay. This will allow F&G to keep this tool in the box. Any proposed antlerless hunts will come before the AC's for discussion. ADFG is much better about using cow hunts as a management tool than in the past. We have a lot more data on the effects of past cow hunts.

Kevin White describes past management actions and effects on moose populations.

CD: After listening to the biologist, I think the AC should support the proposal.

TM calls for a vote. Passes unanimously.

DB: What happened to Skagway trapping issue? The municipality has done nothing.

TM: Will send a note to board support. Will try to follow up again.

RJ: We need to put it back on the agenda.

Ben Kirkpatrick: In addition to the king salmon marine survival issue, we should not forget about the freshwater habitat. Would like to meet with F&G biologists and some board members before the next meeting to gather information on habitat issues.

DP and RC volunteer to have a meeting with Rich Chapell, Brian Elliot, and Ben Kirkpatrick.

Charlie Dewitt: Is this violation of the open meetings act?

RC: We are just gathering information to present at the next AC meeting.

CD: I'm worried that not all parties will be represented if it is not a public meeting. Not every one gets the same information. Everyone on the board should have access to the same information at the same time.

TM: We will put the meeting on the next agenda.

Next Meeting: 30 MAR 2017 at 5:00 P

Adjournment: 630 P

Minutes Recorded By: Derek Poinsette

Minutes Approved By: _____

Date: _____