

Nushagak ADFG Advisory Committee

Draft Meeting Minutes

January 21, 2014

Dillingham City Council Chambers

Minutes

I. Call to Order: 9:29 AM

II. Roll Call:

Present in chambers

Frank Woods – Dlg Chair,
Joe Chythlook - Dlg - Vice Chair
Dan Dunaway – Dlg Secretary
Lloyd (Tom) O'Connor – Dlg
Robert Heyano - Dlg
Kurt Armstrong - Dlg
Gary Kline - Alt.
Jon Forsling -Togiak by phone
Chris Carr - Portage - by phone

Absent

Robin Samuelson – Dlg excused
Travis Ball - Aleknagik excused bad weather

Joe Kazmirowicz - Ekwok
Glen Wysoki - Koliganek
Louie Alakayak - Manokotak

Peter Christopher - New Stuyahok - by phone
Mariano Floresta - Clark's Pt. - by phone

When it was clear there would be sufficient members for a quorum without them, J. Forsling (Togiak) and M. Floresta (Clarks Point) asked to be excused to attend other duties.

Quorum established with 9 members attending.

Other Agency staff in Attendance:

Susie Jenkins-Brito ADFG Boards
Craig Schwanke ADFG Sport Fish
Ted Krieg ADFG Subsistence
Sarah Evans ADFG Subsistence

Tim Sands ADFG Com Fish
Lem Butler ADFG Wildlife Cons. by phone.

Gayla Hoseth BBNA

Danielle Stickman BBNA

Dave Bendinger KDLG News
Suzanna Henry Spt. Togiak Refuge
Tevis Underwood, Togiak Refuge

Andy Aderman USFWS Togiak Refuge
Pat Walsh, Togiak Refuge.

Jim Woolington – Public

(Full attendance sheet on file in Dillingham ADF&G office)

III. Approve Agenda:

Robert H. moved to adopt, Joe C. 2nd: Friendly amendment added to include Peter C's request to add caribou and moose season extension topics to the agenda. **Carry unanimous.**

IV. Approve Minutes of September 17, 2013 meeting

Robert H. moved to adopt, Joe C 2nd:

Susie noted that the provided copy of the minutes were those presented to the Joint Boards in October 2013. **Carry unanimous.**

V. Introductions: All present briefly introduced themselves.

VI. Reports:

1) ADFG Wildlife Conservation Report, Lem Butler by phone:

Lem said a new area biologist had been hired for the Dillingham office and would be on site about mid February. Lem reviewed other personnel moves; Bruce Dale to Deputy Director, Lem currently wears several acting hats.

He also discussed the upcoming call for Region IV wildlife proposals and BOG schedule.

Reviewed the current situation for the soon to open 17A winter moose hunt including 2 moose bag limit, quota of 10 cows, weather considerations and logistics. Working closely with Togiak Refuge staff.

Lem reviewed the state actions recently denying requests to extend winter moose season in 17C. State viewed the alternatives of coming 17A opening and hunting opportunities for caribou on the Nushagak Peninsula. He expressed concerns for lack of current moose population data and recent harvest tallies might suggest declining trend. He recognized extremely poor travel and hunt conditions limit alternatives. He emphasized that moose surveys will be top priority for the new biologist.

Caribou - Lem said a new photo census technique had been used in summer 2013 to get an actual population estimate. The estimate has not been finalized but it appears Mulchatna herd has not grown and is about 30,000 animals; overall est. 19 calves/ 100 cows is ok, 27 bulls/ 100 cows ok but calf recruitment poor. Eastern portion of their range; only estimated to be 14 calves/100 cows and seems related to predation - probably brown bears.

Questions regarding new caribou registration hunt: Too early to know how well harvest reporting will go as season will remain open until March 15. Lem has not heard complaints; he wonders if some vendors provided sufficient explanations to hunters but is hopeful.

AC members asked what they could do to help ongoing predator control efforts. One issue is that part of the herd calves in GMU 19 where there is a different regulatory cycle. The problems of controlling brown bear numbers was discussed for a while: very difficult and controversial. Current seasons and harvest regulations are pretty liberal in GMU 17.

An AC member says mining exploration activities in the area are disrupting caribou and add to the problems from predation.

Peter C. New Stuyahok noted current dangerous travel conditions are limiting village efforts to hunt especially east, across the Nushagak River.

AC asked Lem if there were any proposals of special interest in the book. No really critical ones but we might want to consider the moose brow palm proposal (168). He said he doubted the hunt definition proposals would succeed.

2) USFWS Togiak Refuge report, Andy Aderman.

Quick review of Nushagak Peninsula caribou herds and hunts. Not much new since fall meeting. Counted 926 animals in July, only 4 reported harvested this fall. Hunt reopened Dec 1 and remains open into March. A Nush Pen Caribou Planning Team meeting is scheduled tomorrow, 1-22-14 to discuss permit allocations to villages. Would like to take 176 animals including the 4 already reported. Composition surveys found 40 calves/100 cows and low 30's for bulls/100 cows. Looks good. In 2012-13 season 209 permits available, 179 issued, 147 hunted, 109 animals killed.

17A moose covered well by Lem of ADFG. 17C moose extension request was denied by State and then taken to Federal system. After Federal review, they decided to open Federally managed lands by permit only. Opening was to be announced any minute, awaiting some clarification and good maps, permits were to be available online for Federally qualified residents. Federal lands only.

AC commented that this is unprecedented in our area. This is how it is supposed to work when needed. There is considerable interest in how the hunt works out. There was a discussion whether a proposal should be written to make the winter bull hunt for Antlered bulls vs any bull.

3) ADFG Board Support Staff Report, Susie Brito

Brito reviewed actions of Oct 2013 workshop. Now AC members will serve July 1 thru June 30. How to implement this was discussed; whether to have elections in the spring or have elections in the winter with some 2.5 yr terms.

AC said we could have the spring meeting for BOG issue and hold elections while folks are still in town.

Other Joint Board actions: new AC for Bethel. Some concern for how to make AC's more effective - and affordable? - different systems work different places: multi community AC's in Bristol Bay but single community ACs in Alaska Pen / Aleutians due to logistics. AC members will receive a survey later in the year, by email or hard copy.

BOG is considering going to a 3 yr cycle ; soliciting AC input and Dept input. This issue WILL be addressed. No position from ADFG yet but longer cycle would be useful. Too often for wildlife issues, regulation changes have been made but not enough time has passed to evaluate the effect before the next round of Board meetings come around. This leads to place holder proposals which are not a good way to do business. Some comments that longer cycle might actually allow the BOG to be more responsive and effective.

Recent idea of going to a 5 year BOF cycle just came out of meeting in Kodiak and new to staff / public. AC has concerns for 5 yr cycle, might be better to keep 3 yr cycle but be more strict on limiting topics so topics might only come up every 6 yrs. Such ideas have been raised in the past but Board never enforced it.

Several AC members expressed concern for adequate funding for ACs and Board Process, how can we help assure you get funding? Also there can be problems when an area has a BOG and BOF meeting in the same winter - burdensome to AC and Boards staff: "whatever system is adopted please make every effort to avoid stacking BOG and BOF for an area."

No changes were made to nonsubsistence areas. Each AC will have a website this spring.

Comments to Interior BOG meeting due January 31. BOG Proposals for our area due May 1 2014. Nushagak AC should plan to meet early April. Brito requests members make sure she has current contact numbers and email addresses - she's having a hard time reaching some.

Break 10:45 to 11:05

4). Wildlife Troopers report, Fred Burk.

No real report. Didn't do as much moose season enforcement due to lots of search and rescues.

AC asked for Burk's observations of the new single hook rule. Troopers worked hard to get the word out and this was an education effort but word didn't seem to spread among anglers. There weren't many violations found but lots of anglers were unaware of the rule change. Most anglers asked Why the regulation especially after the king season was over.

One AC member agreed that word did not get around to the villages and lots of unaware people.

Burk said the way the commercial fishery ran in the Nushagak area there were few violations, especially with so few closed periods. Much different on the east side.

Burk discussed marking requirements on all subsistence nets including smelt nets. The smelt fishery was busier this year and hasn't been enforced much. There were a few nets that started to float away. Rumors of many confiscated nets were inaccurate.

VII. New Business

NOTE: These minutes reflect the order in which the AC addressed the proposals. Proposals were not reviewed in numerical order.

A. Proposals.

Comments for Interior Region BOG meeting due January 31. Comments for Statewide Regulations meetings due February 28. BOG Proposals for our area due May 1 2014.

New Stuyahok Representative Peter Christopher stated his village would like to see the fall Moose season extended from September 15 to September 20th in GMU's 17B and 17C. He also feels very strongly that the caribou season should be extended an additional two weeks in the spring time to allow for more local hunting opportunity and when the caribou are usually closer to their community.

MOTION: AC Draft New Moose Proposal Robert H moves, Joe C 2nd. Action: Carry 8-1

Description: AC will draft a proposal to extend the 17 B & C resident registration moose season until September 20 (instead of the current Sept. 15 closure date).

Discussion: Seek ADFG comment at next AC meeting before submitting by the May 1 deadline this spring. Several spoke in support. One member opposed as there is too much hunting pressure now, guides will want more opportunity, moose get rutty by then.

MOTION: AC Draft New Caribou Proposal Robert H moves, Joe C 2nd. Action: Carry 8-1

Description: AC to draft a proposal to extend the 17 B & C resident registration caribou season until March 30 (instead of the current Mar. 15 closure date).

Discussion: Seek ADFG comment at next AC meeting before submitting by the May 1 deadline this spring. The caribou season should be extended an additional two weeks in the spring to allow better hunting opportunity the caribou are closer river communities and when people need the meat. AC member has concerns given the preliminary indications from last summer census.

PROPOSAL 374 - Joe C. Moves, Robert 2nd ACTION: Carry 9-0

DESCRIPTION: Proposal 374 formerly ACR 12 at October Joint Board meeting. Modify the time period the Nushagak River single-hook regulation is in effect from year-round to May 1-July31.

AMENDMENT:

DISCUSSION: We want to only have the single-hook requirement during the king season May 1- July 31 for the Nushagak drainage. There is no need, no biological concern for other species other times of the year. Yes retain the long established bait, gear restrictions in the Nuyakuk R., upper Nushagak R above Harris Cr. and the middle section of the Mulchatna R. that are to protect rainbow trout. MAKE SURE intent of this regulation is clear: Anglers should still be able to use bait during the king season until their daily limit is taken as per 2013 season AND single hook restriction only during the king season to protect kings. Most villagers and many visiting anglers never heard of the restrictions and asked why, especially during silver season after kings.

Chris Carr departs meeting due to phone connection problems and interference w others on teleconference.

PROPOSAL 122 - Joe C. Moves, Dan 2nd ACTION: Carry 8-0

DESCRIPTION: Brown bear tag fee exemption.

AMENDMENT:

DISCUSSION: Current liberal seasons, bag and no tag works well out here. I like not having to get the tag.

PROPOSAL 132 - Joe C. Moves, Robert 2nd ACTION: Carry 8-0

DESCRIPTION: Hunting seasons and bag limits for moose in 17A; reauthorize winter moose hunt.

DISCUSSION: We worked hard this time last year to set this hunt up and its just getting going right now.

PROPOSAL 175 - Joe C. Moves, Robert 2nd ACTION: Carries as Amended 8-0

DESCRIPTION: Areas of jurisdiction for antlerless moose seasons.

AMENDMENT: Amend motion to include Nushagak AC as having jurisdiction in 9B.

DISCUSSION: Extended discussion whether we should be able to speak to hunts in 9B since Nushagak Communities regularly hunt there. Should some Kuskokwim ACs should be able to address portions of 17? What about King Cove and nearby communities, do they really actively use 9B or other subunits up at the north end? Other communities probably have similar concerns. Wording in proposal reflects what is in state statute - but no statute available for review. Some confusion on this proposal. Lets support how we think it should be.

Discussion whether to re-address proposal 132. Troopers prefer winter hunts for antlered bulls, easier for hunters, and enforcement, reduces potential for accidental take of cows. Long discussion. Concern that for now the new 17A winter hunt allows antlerless bulls, will there be problems? Nobody knows of problems and we should let Togiak AC take the lead on that issue. Let the soon to open season run, if there's a problem we have until May 1 to write a proposal.

Subcommittee Authorization:

MOTION: Robert moves, Gary 2nd.

ACTION: Carries 8-0

DESCRIPTION: AC chair will form a subcommittee authorized to act for the whole AC to complete deliberations and comments on remaining proposals and action items.

DISCUSSION: We are about to break for lunch, some of us have other obligations and may not be able to participate afterward. Subcommittee will be made up of those who can continue: Dan D, Kurt. A, Tom O. Frank W. Joe C. and Peter C.

Recess for lunch 12:25 to 1:43.

Resume Meeting.

Some members had to depart for other duties.

Subcommittee Members present:

Kurt Armstrong

Tom O'Connor

Dan Dunaway

Frank Woods

Joe Chythlook

Peter Christopher (by phone)

PROPOSALS 133 & 134 - Dan Moves, Tom 2nd

ACTION: Fail 0-6

DESCRIPTION: Bow hunter education requirements statewide or bear over bait.

AMENDMENT:

DISCUSSION: How hard is it to get bow certified, how long does it take? We have a few local bow hunters, we may have some instructors in Dillingham but what about all the other villages? This could be really onerous and hard to get programs in the bush. Would this spread to all other types of traditional hunting methods?

PROPOSAL 151 – No Motion

ACTION: - No Action, - need more info.

DESCRIPTION: Migratory bird hunting guide services.

AMENDMENT:

DISCUSSION: This proposal was discussed, whether there was enough local activity to address, what is the real problem? We might be supportive if we had more information.

PROPOSAL 155 - Dan Moves, Tom 2nd

ACTION: Fail 0-6

DESCRIPTION: Modify definition of possession limit for migratory birds.

AMENDMENT:

DISCUSSION: STRONGLY Opposed, we don't want to be prevented from the practice of accumulating our food supply when it's available. Too restrictive and invasive. Goes against the traditions of subsistence out here. I like to shoot a few ducks for the freezer then eat them through the winter. Biologist Lem didn't seem to know if there is a biological issue. If this was a problem wouldn't the waterfowl biologists seek to change the regulations.

PROPOSAL 152 – Dan Moves, Tom 2nd

ACTION: Carry As Amended 6-0

DESCRIPTION: Definitions Modify definition of edible meat for waterfowl.

AMENDMENT: to require salvage of leg meat and breast meat.

DISCUSSION: Would this require we salvage wing meat and backs of teal? I can support salvaging the leg meat, especially of large birds like swans. I support leg meat but not pelvis bone, I cut meat off pelvis along with the leg meat. We could support with amended language.

PROPOSALS 153 & 154 – Dan Moves, Tom 2nd

ACTION: NO Action

DESCRIPTION: Definitions of hindquarter of waterfowl / modify definition of trophy & salvage.

AMENDMENT:

DISCUSSION: We should take no action based on what we did in 152. Current wanton waste regulations are sufficient. The person who wrote all these is a chronic proposer.

PROPOSAL 168 – Tom Moves, Joe 2nd

ACTION: Fails 0-6

DESCRIPTION: Definitions, Establish a definition of brow Palm for moose.

AMENDMENT:

DISCUSSION: Troopers want a definition of brow palm apparently encounter problems with brow tine only. It can be clear in the field when antlers are in hand but very hard in words. ADFG doesn't have final comments but there is a lot of variability in antler configurations, brow palm is hard to explain. AC, could be very messy if definition is poor or unclear. There is a LOT of differences in antlers. I'm opposed until a better explanation of the problem and better definition of a palm can be provided.

PROPOSAL 173 Tom Moves, Joe 2nd

ACTION: Fails 0-6

DESCRIPTION: Definitions. Modify the definition for bag limit and define mortally wounded.

AMENDMENT:

DISCUSSION: Too vague. How certain can a hunter be of mortally wounded if the animal runs off? Seems like it would be very hard to enforce. I've found caribou that might have run a mile or more before they died. Sometimes it's a problem if people herd shoot or use small rifles. It's good ethics to try hard to recover wounded animals but if you can't find it how do you know it died?

PROPOSAL 172 Tom Moves, Joe 2nd

ACTION: Fails 0-6

DESCRIPTION: Definitions. Remove black bears from furbearer classification.

AMENDMENT:

DISCUSSION: Aren't some areas trying to reduce bear predation on moose? Opposed current regulation is fine.

PROPOSAL 137 - Tom Moves, Joe 2nd

ACTION: Fails 0-6

DESCRIPTION: Definitions: Establish definition for subsistence hunting.....

AMENDMENT:

DISCUSSION: We should oppose; there is a clear and sufficient definition of subsistence already. State human population has doubled since about 1989. Currently all state residents have subsistence opportunity. Seems like proposers are using a state proposal and system trying to address federal regulations. Are they confusing state and federal regulations?

******END of Proposal Review.**

Susie Brito Statewide BOG meeting is March 14-18 in Anchorage. Statewide Fin Fish BOF meeting starts March 17.

Board of Game Meeting Cycle Motion: Tom Moves, Dan 2nd ACTION: Carry 6-0 (On the condition that BOG and BOF don't conflict and meet the same year on one area.)

DESCRIPTION: Allow Board of Game to address areas on a 3 year cycle.

AMENDMENT:

DISCUSSION: Probably good to go to a 3 year cycle given the discussion earlier. The one condition is that BOG and BOF don't conflict. Having both in the same year is really burdensome to AC members and staff. [See discussion in these minutes, last paragraph **3) ADFG Board Support Staff report**].

VII. Old Business

A. Before the next meeting is called Susie will poll the members to find a best date. This meeting was hard for some members to attend. Next meeting should be early to mid April before herring.

B: Representation at Board meetings.

The Nushagak AC chair will represent the AC at the meeting.

Adjourn 2:45 PM