

Middle Yukon Advisory Committee August 11, 2020

Teleconference

I. Call to Order: 3:05 pm by Chairman Percy Lolnitz

II. Roll Call

Members Present:

Galena; Fred Huntington, Dick Evans, Patrick Lumba(alt)

Koyukuk; Benedict Jones, Percy Lolnitz (alt), Tommy Kriska

Nulato; Arnold Demoski, Joe Turner, Michael (Micky) Stickman(alt)

Kaltag, Georgiana Madros, Earl Esmailka (alt)

Members Absent (Excused): Mark Huntington, Paddy Nollner (GAL), Van Madros (NUL), Patrick Madros Jr, Richard Burnham, Tommy Negalska (KAL)

Number Needed for Quorum on AC: 7

III. Fish and Game Staff Present: Sara Longson, Glenn Stout, Dorren Parker McNeil (DWC), Brooke McDavid (SUBS)

IV. Guests Present: Stephanie George (Louden Village Council) Charlie Green (Louden Village Chief), Sue Sam (Galena), Leo Lolnitz (Koyukuk Chief), Doug Patsy (Nulato), Fred Alexi (Kaltag), Al Barrette (Board of Game member). Sharron Hildabrant (Doyon)

The purpose of this teleconference was to have a discussion by the Middle Yukon Fish and Game Advisory Committee and anyone who wanted to participate in how to mitigate the risk of nonlocal hunters accessing the area during the 2020 hunting season.

Arnold; Doyon won't be issuing any permits for Doyon Land, And lands in Gana A' Yoo won't issue permits either for hunters for access. Doyon will have fliers posted at airports and on their websites.

Charlie Green; Signage is being made for all native lands that are high traffic areas to make hunters aware of where tribal lands are by youth helpers

Sharron Hildabrant; if you have any issues or concerns with the signage she will pass along the information to either

Micky; we used to do this years past for Doyon with GPS coordinates and game cams to post signs but that was several years ago and don't I have seen signs posted sense.

Tom; what I am hearing is that we need signage. We know where our lands are. If you are an outsider and don't see any up then....we need to expedite this, the season is coming. Covid 19 is spreading out there, we have a mix of local and residents and nonresidents going out there hunting, going up and down the river, is this going to happen this year? We are part of the decision making group, what are we doing

Leo; we shouldn't have any outside hunters coming in, no guiding in the subregion either to protect my people. Make this request on behalf of my people- the people coming in for the fishing industry really kicked up the cases in this state, and we need to ensure that doesn't happen here, and we are the ones that are going to have to be the ones to protecting our communities, it doesn't appear that the Governor or anyone in the government will help. They will take money from nonresident hunters but they won't help us out with funeral expenses. Concerned about food security, we can't live off of store food, especially the elders. Not our food. Need to write a strong letter to the Govener/ADF&G to stop the guide hunting. Need to get support of all of the chiefs in this area to help with this, all 5 of them, but am sure that all 43 chiefs in the TCC region would back us to keep these hunters out, since they will bring in the virus, and right now we are doing a good job of keeping that out. I don't want to see this to happen, not on my watch. We can go a long way if we stand together, we need to keep the virus out of here, out of our villages.

Doug; the department once sent a letter asking folks to stay away a couple years ago when the moose numbers were low; this would be a good year to send out another requesting that people not come here

Department; at this time the state isn't curtailing hunts, and due to the constitution of Alaska the department can't restrict hunter access for residents. We are at an all time low for drawing permits- only had 25 on Koyukuk area.

Question asked about ANILCA rights with subsistence preference-

Department; as far as ANILCA is, there was a request to close federal lands to FSB and that was deferred. At this point that probably won't happen at this time.

Question about current moose population; it was a hard winter and it seems like that the hunt this year should reflect this, concerned with not meeting subsistence needs, concerned that with the pandemic that food supplies will be interrupted and that more C&T foods will be needed, and our fishing was nonexistent this summer (fish runs was very poor for both summer and fall runs in the Yukon in 2020)

Department; data shows that the current population will be able to sustain the current level of harvest

Statement on High water mark is the boundary- below is state land and you cannot stop people from traveling, but can stop them accessing land if is private. If we work together then we can keep them from accessing the land- can access fuel in the station above ruby, we can keep the hunters from getting fuel in the villages. Anyone that they make contact with would have to quarantine for 14 days. How is this going to work for the checkstation?

Tom; have strong concerns from the hunters coming from Fairbanks in boats. There is no testing requirements. Worried about going to the checkstation with all of those nonlocals. Concerned about my elders and myself.

Arnold; we should not be put at risk because people want to come here and get a trophy, and we don't want nonlocals going through the check station who may be infected. We have some serious concerns, and this is an emergency to us. Unsure of what kind of system that you have in place to run the check station. I can sign up to issue harvest tickets for Koyukuk so we don't have to do them at the check station

Stephanie George; agrees with closing hunting to nonlocal and nonresident hunters, testing is not an option, and we are having issues with testing to get our schools, and if those coming in to this area who don't depend on this food like we do, then economic standpoint should not be looked at when the health of our communities is at stake. Other business have had to shut down because of this panemic, why not the guides

Benedict Jones; drawing permits- there are 25 issued- were they issued to residents or nonresidents. The fall hunters take the 50" bulls, last year I didn't get a moose because they didn't start moving until after the season was over. Habitat is changing too in the upper Koyukuk.

Department; 20 go to AK residents and 4 to nonresidents for the Koyukuk CUA. Have a protocol in place for the check stations, all staff will be wearing PPE, limiting the number of people coming up the bank, barriers to ensure social distancing, all staff will be tested before they travel. The bulk of what we are doing is already in place at other ADF&G offices and has shown to be effective. The protocol will be sent out to all members so that they can look at what we are doing. The department does not have the authority to restrict access to hunters on the river, but will be practicing social distancing so no staff will transfer it to other hunters coming into the check station. The departments authority is over biological concern of animals, and this sounds like something outside of the Department/Boards authority.

Participant; We are trying to keep the Covid 19 out of our homes and our villages, it seems to be a loosing battle, doesn't seem like you have any control at the check station, we need to get this word out there, we are fortunate that this meeting is happening. Thank you for your suggestions, we are talking about human life all along the river system, so we appreciate the help even though it is outside of your experience.

Doug; we could draft a letter to the community of Ruby to see if they can make the gas station closed to make it so that nonlocals can't get fuel

Arnold; thought the state would have a plan to protect us but it sounds like they didn't. We need something in place to protect us, get paperwork/permits online so they don't have to go through the check station, Jamie Murundaie (Doyon) is online and is willing to order more signs- calling in from Fairbanks, and understand the need for signs, notify people where they are and who's land it is.

Tom; Resolution to the board, anytime you write the board it will take them 2 years to make any sort of decision, we need to deal with the governor, the chiefs, TCC, any high up personal that we have to protect us on the Yukon, because there is not enough time for the BOG to deal, and we need our higher ups helping or no one will listen. We are all in this together. We are not concerned with moose population, we are worried about the virus getting into our communities. We used to just deal with the

area biologist and now we have to talk to all of these other people and it is frustrating and maybe we should just manage the moose ourselves

Percy; that was always what we wanted, we wanted to govern ourselves, and thank you Stefanie for all your hard work, seems to have heard from all of the communities, but don't want to talk to be talking, we need action and quick action, we need something happening today to start the ball rolling by tomorrow. Fred had good points on tribal jurisdiction, Glenn I hope you are willing to help us and understand you have your own grounds but we do need help, and the refuge managers do have a lot of power, and well educated with talking to the higher ups, Leo brought up good point about the chiefs and TCC to work together, Doug brought up a good point about closing the gas station above ruby

Dick Evens; just lost my brother and we don't need any more of that. Those signs that we posted in the galena area, the signs are all yellow and they are going to be hard to see once the leaves start turning, they should be made white in the future

Leo; the pandemic should supersede the department needing a biological concern to change hunting seasons to protect my people, more concerned about my peoples safety

Department; the state has emergency authorities for a set of criteria, if you wanted to write a letter, you may want to focus on the emergency component and not the biological concern. A big challenge will be explaining why the local hunters should hunt but the resident nonlocals can't and not step on the current laws (Department offered to assist AC several times over the course of the meeting in drafting letters as well as getting them sent off to the appropriate people/groups).

Leo; This is really an emergency because we know what is here but we don't know what is coming in from the more urban hunters where the virus currently is.

Arnold; we needed a biological reason to shut these hunts down, I think human life is way more important then biological reason. We called this meeting to see what we can do and what the state could do to help us and it doesn't appear that we are getting any help from the state. If the virus enters our communities through hunters coming into the area then the state is going to we are being put in risk and we are doing so much to stay safe and you are sending all of these hunters down to our villages

Leo; the state is leaving itself wide open to getting sued, and they should think long and hard about this

Arnold; We will fight the state hard if we have to

Percy; Members are not addressing your concerns to anyone specifically, we should address it to the commissioner and the governor, and they are who you need to focus on because when you say the state then it is too broad.

Tom; solution on what to do; is it too late for the state (you don't have a lot of hunters for koyuku), is there any way you move the hunters to a different date, put them toward the end spread us apart would help us, but understand it is sort of late in the game for that

Department; that is a good question, not sure I know the answer, it will be looked into it

Suzie Sam; louden tribal council- we did poll tribal council and we are in support of what Leo said earlier, but we are working on what we can do as a community to keep the outside hunters out, and in discussion with the city, we are discussing if we want to sell them gas or other things to keep the

community safe, council is in favor of keeping the outside hunters out of our community because of the virus

Charlie wanted to relay to Doyon they talked about the signs, the small signs aren't going to work- need to be at least 2 feet by 2 feet and the signs that we did with the youth workers are 4x4

Micky- there was a case in Galena but they got it shut down pretty quick and it never traveled out of that community. We have spent a lot of time and effort to stay safe. they shut the fall chum season, and a lot of people rely on that run, and with that option gone from our harvest, it is going to make the moose harvest even more important

Leo supports writing letter to governor and commissioner about keeping the hunters, ban all sport hunting, guide hunting for this area, maybe it can happen next year, but the pandemic should trump this hunting in this area

Tom; really thinking about how to separate the locals from the nonlocal hunters, is there any other way that Glenn can help us/ could he do two check stations on separate sides of rivers one for locals and one for nonlocals to reduce any interactions

Department; let me think about that, good question, will look into it maybe can figure out how to do that

Fred; there is a native allotment on the other side of the river, but there is that island right there

Make a copy of the minutes and send them with the letter that gets sent to the commissioner/governor (the minutes were not done at the time that the letter was drafted and sent).

Percy; Is there any action that we need to take stemming from the discussion we just had. Can we move on it now?

Leo; Make a motion to have Suzie to draft a letter to the commissioner and governor to ban nonlocal hunters out of this area for this hunting season or however long Covid is around along with the minutes from this meeting

2nd offered

Further discussion; Would like it to say nonlocals- Keep it open to tribal members - You got to be careful on how you say it if you want local hunters only - Can we include tribal members that live elsewhere - We can get to that when we get to that, just say nonlocals right now – MYAC would support it and write it as well as the chiefs are doing

Supported unanimously from AC

The department offered assistance in drafting and distributing the letter, and also offered any other assistance that could be needed.

Arnold; help get word out in our communities you can get your licenses and permits in our communities and not at the check station

Department clarified that you can get a hunting license and RM834 (the Yukon River Permit) over the internet, but you have to get the RM832 (Koyukuk CUA Permit) at check station or in Hughes or Huslia.

Clarification asked and given

Arnold; would like to issue in Nulato, Department will look into it to see if it can be issued, still have the requirement for stopping at the check station, but will look into it and get back to you.

Percy; will be a vendor this year in Koyukuk.

Leo; would like to thank everyone for participating and think we got some work done

Tom; make sure that everyone is on this, make sure this doesn't fall through the cracks, would like a follow-up meeting

Meeting scheduled for August 20, 2020

Meeting adjourned at approximately 4:45pm