

Fairbanks Fish and Game Advisory Committee
1/12/2022 Meeting Minutes
Teleconference

I. Call to Order: Chair at 6:32PM

II. Roll Call:

	<u>CHAIR</u> Kirk Schwalm	<u>VICE-CHAIR</u> Mark Richards	<u>SECRETARY</u> Mark Oppe	Jeff Lucas	Gale Vick	Virgil Umphenour	Mike Tinker	John Wisniewski
Present	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Absent								
Abs/Excused								
	Levi Lewellyn	John Siegfried	Austin Smith	Warren Guichici	Bill Larry	Mike Kramer	Chuck Derrick	
Present		X	X		X		X	
Absent								
Abs/Excused	X			X		X		

III. Introduction of Guests: Peggy Keiper, Dianne & Lenny Jewkes, Serena Fitka (YRDFA), Mark Lindberg, Marv Hassebroek, Al Barrette (BOG), Stan Zuray, Dave Lorrington

Fish & Game Staff Present: Kyle Campbell, Klaus Wuttig, Tony Hollis, Mark Nelson, Christy Gleason, Deena Jallen, Trooper Potter, Jayde Ferguson, Fred West, Andrew Gryska, Nikki Potter

IV. Comments

Chair Comments: Hope all AC members had good holidays. SE BOF meeting is postponed due to COVID case counts.

Vice Chair: none

Trapping: none

Game: none

Fish: none

AC Member Comments: Mark Richards would like to comment on risk acknowledgment and waiver required for upcoming BOG meetings during new business.

Chuck Derrick spoke to DOT. Plans to upgrade Copper River bridge campground beginning in mid-late August this year, continuing late spring next year. Plans include new parking lot, upgraded campsites, toilets, bear-proof garbage. Dipnetter fee pays for these facilities, so there are concerns about increased cost due to improvements. Dipnetters are interested in Parks taking over this campground from DOT. Al Barrette suggested that DOT should donate this land to state parks since a variety of users besides dipnetters use this facility. Chuck Derrick plans to contact DOT to ask why this campground is still under their management.

Public Comments: none

V. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes: approval of Dec. 15, 2021 minutes by unanimous consent

VI. Approval of Agenda: approved as amended by unanimous consent

VII. Old Business: none

VIII. New Business:

Dept./AWT Update: Sgt. Potter reports that heavy snow has resulted in increased moose encounters. About half a dozen moose have been shot in DLP without any citations issued. AWT has put down a couple moose shot by members of the public in their yards due to DLP issues. Fortymile caribou hunt slowed down considerably due to road conditions during recent storms. There have been a couple reports of caribou running down the road and evidence suggesting caribou shot in the road; no citations have been issued. BLM does patrol the Steese, but probably not as much as AWT this time of year.

Tony Hollis reports that 20A moose survey has been completed, but took later into December than preferred due to weather conditions. This impacts ability to identify bulls due to lost antlers, skewing bull-cow ratio somewhat. Est. 14,000+ moose in 20A (within objective and slightly higher than last estimate from 2 years ago).

Bull-cow ratio was 24:100 (objective is 25:100). Counts through November appeared to be around 30:100, but dropped off in December. Calf to cow ratio was 29:100, but is unlikely to last due to weather. Harvest data is not all entered yet, so cannot be reported at this time; should be ready by next month. Deep snow and ice layer in the middle of the snow pack is having a definite impact on moose aggressiveness and calf mortality. Calf survival in Fairbanks area is likely to be bad in Fairbanks area. White Mountains seems to be less affected due to lack of rain there during

December storms. Monitoring of moose and caribou will continue throughout remainder of the winter to determine mortality rates. Affected area seems to stretch from Delta to Healy. Anticipate request for reauthorization of 20A antlerless hunts, but there is no plan to hold any cow hunts this year. Plan to also request reauthorization of 20B antlerless hunts and hold them in the Fairbanks Management Area and Richardson Highway corridor hunts. Current plan is to not hold a Minto Flats antlerless hunt in 2022. Hope to get out in a helicopter within the next month to assess conditions.

Kirk Schwalm asked about increased predation with ice layer in the snow. Tony Hollis believes that predation may be balanced out somewhat by feeding on dead moose.

Al Barrette asked about condition of calves prior to snow storms if there is already significant mortality. Tony Hollis states that he has not seen these conditions before with quantity of rain in December and significant snowfall in such a short period of time. Conditions are unprecedented and higher density moose populations already have smaller calves that may be more susceptible to harsh winter conditions.

John Wisniewski asked about potential reduction of potlatch moose if cow hunts are not being held. Tony Hollis states that potlatch harvest will not be affected.

Virgil Umphenour states that mountain ridges appear to be clear of snow, but that wolf predation on sheep in deeper snow below the ridgelines is likely to be significant. Tony Hollis is worried about effects of mid-winter rain on sheep. High winds on ridge tops may have helped sheep, but rain may have caused ice crust on the ridges. Sheep mortality will be unknown until survey is completed in July.

Update on new UAF class & initiatives from Peggy Keiper: UAF is currently offering an 8 week course called “Huntology” including business, economic impacts, ethics, science/conservation. Certificate in sport management is currently offered online, with plans to do the same with Huntology. So far, the class seems to be successful in changing perspectives on all aspects of hunting (business, conservation, science, etc.). Kirk Schwalm believes that this type of course could be beneficial for increased hunter recruitment.

Mark Lindberg reports that there has been a surprising amount of resistance to this program from UAF. They expect to come back to groups like the AC for continued support and advocacy for this program. Al Barrette asked where the pushback from the university has come from and how ethics are being defined. Peggy Keiper reports that most pushback has come from other faculty members, not from administration. This may be simply due to university politics; not necessarily anti-hunting sentiment. Ethics aspects of the program are the focus of the philosophy faculty members.

Tony Hollis appreciates this program and the faculty for teaching what hunting is about and helping to train the next generation of wildlife biologists, who are predominantly not hunters.

Chuck Derrick asked about how this program addresses difference between sport

hunting and subsistence. Business aspects of the program address state and federal legal issues. It would be helpful to have someone from the subsistence community involved in the program to help present that aspect of hunting. Austin Smith asked about the possibility of Huntology being a required part of the biology curriculum. With the current budget situation and faculty reductions, this may be difficult in the current environment. Mark Lindberg hopes to restart the podcast that they have done in the past on business, philosophy, and science of hunting. They'd welcome input from the community on this.

Fisheries issues update from Gale Vick: Suggested fisheries subcommittee meeting dates leading up to BOF meetings. Next subcommittee meeting is currently scheduled for Feb. 7th. New BOF vacancy also needs to be discussed. Meetings with legislators have not worked out for the past year, but it may be able to happen during the upcoming session.

Serena Fitka (YRDFA) reported on concerns about current status of Yukon River salmon. She believes there is room for collaboration with the Fairbanks AC on issues of mutual concern including bycatch, genetic sampling in Area M, and hatchery output. Also shared reports that healthy chum and kings have been caught in November under the ice. This seems to be more frequent now than in the past.

Christy Gleason reports that Yukon River sonar project ends earlier in the year, and assessment of fall chum and coho runs after that rely on local reports. Past reports seem to indicate small numbers of fish caught under the ice in December, but they are always interested in hearing reports from local users.

Fall chum were counted into early December, with report being published in later December. No escapement goals were met in Yukon drainage, with subsistence harvest well below historic averages.

Deena Jallen reported that Tanana River escapement report has not yet been published. Chena and Salcha reports have also not yet been published.

Ichthyophonus project update from Fred West: Fish become infected in the ocean, with stress levels as fish travel upriver causing more significant infection of major organs and potential for premature death. Current project is attempting to identify reasons for discrepancies between fish counts at Pilot Station and Eagle sonars. Ichthyophonus seems to be a potential contributing factor, with roughly 40-50% prevalence in both Canadian and Alaskan stocks in all mesh size gear. 2021 infection intensity seems to be higher than in the past. Goal is to establish a long-term ichthyophonus monitoring program that will be continuously funded in collaboration with Yukon River stakeholders. Short-term sacrifice of chinook to conduct study of ichthyophonus is considered worthwhile to protect the resource in the long term. Sampling will take place over 3 years at Pilot Station, Rapids, and Eagle. After initial 3 years it is anticipated to be continued only at the test fishery at Pilot Station. This project is necessary now in spite of low run sizes because

ichthyophonus is cyclical and may not be as prevalent when run sizes begin to recover.

Comments from Virgil Umphenour and Al Barrette regarding how observable ichthyophonus is (in organs vs. filets). Virgil Umphenour has never seen fish with pus pockets caused by ichthyophonus in the Tanana. This suggests that those fish do not make it that far.

Al Barrette asked about mesh sizes historically used for sampling. Fred West stated that ichthyophonus was observed in all mesh sizes, but that 2021 prevalence in small mesh gear was unusual.

Questions from Kirk Schwalm and Al Barrette regarding other factors contributing to fish mortality and relationship between ichthyophonus and increased mortality. This is difficult to quantify due to other variables including water levels, water temperature, etc.

Jayde Ferguson stated that this is a long-term chronic disease and that stresses of migration make fish more vulnerable. Infection level/number of parasites probably play a major part in mortality in combination with other stressors.

Gale Vick asked about treatment for ichthyophonus. Jayde Ferguson stated that there is no treatment for it, but that increased knowledge of its effects will help to make better informed management decisions and possible predictions about run sizes.

Stan Zuray provided some historical perspective and answered questions on ichthyophonus research on the Yukon since the 1990s. Anecdotal estimate is that 70% of female chinook were infected in the early 1990s, coinciding with the beginning of the decline of chinook salmon. Fish wheels catch all sizes of fish, and evidence from fish wheels seems conclusive that larger fish are more affected by ichthyophonus and that females are more affected than males, likely due to extra stress of carrying eggs.

Chuck Derrick asked about the possibility of tagging healthy fish vs. infected fish. Fred West stated that this is not possible since the only way to determine infection is to cut the fish open.

Discussion of meeting venues & scheduling for AC and subcommittee

meetings: Kirk Schwalm is supportive of continued hybrid meetings, but in-person meetings in the Fairbanks ADF&G conference room are not ideal due to small space. Kyle Campbell has looked into possible new meeting locations including National Guard armory, Pioneer Park Blue Room, Noel Wien Library conference room, Big Dipper conference room, and JP Jones Center. Gale Vick states that the Feb. fish subcommittee meeting can be virtual to avoid the need to book a venue. Game subcommittee meeting tentatively scheduled for Jan. 31 at JP Jones Center.

Discussion of mitigation measures at statewide BOG meeting: BOG is requiring advance signup and release to testify at the statewide meeting. Mark Richards thinks it is odd that the BOF is cancelling meetings, but the BOG is

continuing only with in-person meetings requiring liability waivers. This is most likely to impact people who would otherwise attend from more remote areas who may be unwilling to take this risk. Kyle Campbell reports that language related to attendance at the BOG was developed for all BOG and BOF meetings this year. Board members chose not to allow remote testimony. He has heard comments from other ACs and the public regarding remote testimony. Gale Vick believes both boards should be accommodating remote testimony during these meetings, especially in smaller communities like Cordova or Ketchikan, without chastising people who choose to testify remotely. Mark Richards questioned mitigation measures for statewide meetings, including masking and testing requirements. Kyle Campbell gave an overview of mitigation measures and contingencies for board members or board support staff testing positive.

Preliminary discussion of BOG statewide proposals for subcommittee: to be addressed at subcommittee meeting

Preliminary discussion of BOF Hatchery Committee comments for subcommittee: to be addressed at subcommittee meeting

Preliminary discussion of BOF & BOG call for 2022-2023 proposals: to be addressed at next AC meeting

Other:

IX. Adjourn: Chair at 9:53PM

Minutes Recorded by Mark Oppe
Minutes Approved By: _____
Date: _____