

East POW AC Fish & Game Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes 2.11.2023-Thorne Bay

Call to Order: 3:10 pm by Kurt Whitehead

Roll Call:

East POW AC Members	Officer	Designation	Present	Absent	Expiration
Perry Olson	Chair	Coffman Cove		x (excused)	June 2024
William Pattison	Vice Chair	Whale Pass	x (phone)		June 2024
Kurt Whitehead	Secretary		x		June 2025
Kris Anderson			x (online)		June 2025
Jim Beard			x (online)		June 2023
Matt Beck			x		June 2023
Della Colburn		Kasaan	x (phone)		June 2025
Dave Egelston				x (excused)	June 2025
Amy Jennings			x		June 2025
Kim Redmond		Thorne Bay	x		June 2023
Doug Rhodes				x (excused)	June 2024
Dave Roberts				x	June 2025
John Ryan		Hollis	x		June 2024
Ray Slayton				x (excused)	June 2024
Dick Stewart			x (online)		June 2023

15 total Members, 10 are present

Number needed for a quorum: 8

ADFG Staff Present:

Craig Schwanke ADFG sport fish biologist

Guests present: Beverly Bennett (online), Lee Burger, Ben Taylor, Skip Escoffon

Approval of Agenda:

Approved the agenda for 2.11.23.

Moved and seconded to approve.

Vote:

Unanimous approval

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes:

Already done by Chair Perry Olson.

Reports:

Chair: None

ADFG: Craig Schwanke gave an update on the new fishing regs for non resident anglers of lingcod: 1 annual and a slot limit of 30" to 40". Record number of fishing licenses issued since 2020 so the increase in fishing pressure has driven the increased harvest of lingcod. ADFG has also seen an increase harvest of pelagic rockfish. The bag limit will remain 5 per day per angler for now.

Will Pattison: Report on the BOG meetings: Will represented the East POW, Kurt represented the Klawock AC, Mike Douville represented the Craig AC, Mike Kampnich and Elijah Winrod represented POW and everyone did a great job. Discussed a few of the new regs that were passed such as Zarembo Is. draw permit, the split waterfowl season in SE AK, 2 goat limit of Unit 1 for residents, extended hunting season for wolves on Unit 2, etc. ADFG did a great job representing our concerns about wolves on POW. The state wolf hunting season is now aligned with the federal hunting season. Sept. 1-the end of the wolf trapping season. Online quiz required for goat hunters prior to hunting to help educate hunters on sexing goats. Zarembo elk hunt via drawing permit passed.

Kurt Whitehead: Report on BOG, Seasonal Residents and Wolf Letter: Kurt met with 23 legislators and/or their aides on Feb. 1 & 2 about the seasonal resident issue we have in SE AK and POW and urged everyone to email or call all the legislators of SE AK and let them know how you feel. The sea otter management plan proposal was discussed at length by the board of game. Another proposal that passed was a two deer limit for non residents in GMU 4. This is a big deal at the upcoming subsistence meetings as there are several deer proposals at those meetings.

Public Comments: None

Elections:

No election was held since Della Colburn wants to remain as the Kasaan representative.

Old Business:

Moved by Will Pattison and seconded by Matt Beck to support the following wolf letter.

Discussion:

Matt Beck: It's important to support it and get it sent off to our congressional delegation.

Kurt Whitehead: There's nothing in the letter that is detrimental and most importantly it gives the congressional delegation a list of the many PoW supporters. We might not agree with every sentence in the letter but there's nothing that is bad. It supports our logic that we do not want the wolf listed under the ESA.

Matt: How much longer do we have to get supporters for the letter?

Kurt: We need to wrap it up sooner rather than later and give it to our delegates so they have time to contact USFWS.

Vote:

Unanimous approval 10-0 to support the wolf letter.

Wolf ESA Letter

The Klawock, AK Fish and Game Advisory Council is grateful for this opportunity to participate in the public process about resource management in our state.

On July 15, 2020, the Center for Biological Diversity, Alaska Rainforest Defenders and Defenders of Wildlife petitioned the Secretary of Interior/US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFW) to list the Alexander Archipelago (AA) Wolf in Southeast Alaska as threatened or endangered under the U.S. Endangered Species Act. The first petition to list the AA wolf was filed in 1993. The second was filed in 2011. The third and current one was filed in 2020 also requests that critical habitat be designated for AA wolves in Southeast Alaska. The document can be found at www.biologicaldiversity.org and www.doi.gov. We would like to state that the recurring petition process takes time away from resource managers studying wolf populations and other important issues and is disruptive for certain residents. The signatories of this document believe that the AA wolf should not be listed under the Endangered Species Act.

Prince of Wales Island, the third largest island in the United States, is home to approximately 3500 residents that reside in twelve rural communities, ranging from 35 in remote Point Baker to over 1000 in Craig. Many residents rely largely on a subsistence way of life. Subsistence in rural Alaska means legally that residents can fish and hunt under bag limits that allow us to fill our freezers and pantries because we do not have access to goods and services that people who live in urban areas have. Traditional subsistence lifestyles have been and still are practiced by the Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian people who have lived here since time immemorial. Prince of Wales area census data from 2021 shows 41.6% Alaska Native residents which is almost half the population of POW's communities. Subsistence is a

very important part of Alaska Native culture, tradition and heritage. Deer hunting is a major part of the subsistence lifestyle and is vitally important on POW. Our relationships, mental and physical health and food security are all improved by deer hunting. Deer hunting on POW is important because this is the only populated area in the region with just one ungulate game animal; POW does not have caribou, moose, elk, sheep, bison, mountain goat or muskox.

Today, subsistence on POW is critical in terms of food security, as soaring inflation nation-wide has increased the cost of all goods and services. Shipping chilled or frozen food here costs \$0.82/lb. In Klawock, a gallon of milk is \$6.49, a dozen eggs are \$7.49 and ground beef is \$5.99 per pound. Additionally, gas is \$5.87/gal and \$6.23/gal for diesel. Food and fuel costs are a larger percentage of the family budget than the average household.

Information presented by Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) and other agencies at the 2022 Deer Summit on POW (October 13-15, 2022) show that the deer population has obviously declined in the past ten years. In 2012, hunters in Unit 2 averaged about 3.5 days of hunting effort per deer harvested; in 2022, hunters spent an average of 4.9 days trying to harvest a deer, according to ADFG hunt report survey data from 2012-2021.

We acknowledge that the deer population is affected by numerous factors, including habitat loss from fifty years of industrial scale old-growth logging on POW. We have noticed that, while ADFG reports link POW old-growth forest to healthy deer populations and state that the POW deer population is in trouble, Division of Forestry staff continue to describe the old-growth stands they cut here as low value and minimize their importance to deer and to hunters. That doesn't agree with what we heard at the 2022 Deer Summit. We also acknowledge there is work to be done in terms of considering changing deer bag limits or seasons in response to population concerns.

While we acknowledge that POW is not the only place where the AA wolf exists, we do know that effects of management actions are felt more sharply on our island; in part, because it is an island. We have seen more wolves more frequently over the past decade, so we have questions about whether this trend is occurring in other places within the AA wolf's range. ADFG has been cautious and conservative, but to accurately assess the population of wolves in a temperate rainforest has always been difficult. As ADFG continues to refine the methodologies used to estimate and balance populations with carrying capacity, we expect the wolf population will remain healthy. We know the AA wolf is a top predator of Sitka blacktail deer and is far from being endangered. Our personal observations and trends in ADFG data lead us to believe the wolf is thriving in our area. Recent harvests of wolves have shown that past estimates were much lower than current numbers reflect.

If the AA wolf is listed under the Endangered Species Act, the federal government will assume authority over management, which will end legal trapping and hunting of wolves. If deer populations are decreasing, it doesn't make sense to list one of its top predators as endangered unless there is credible science and data that show good cause. ADFG has a growing list of data and science, including its own studies here on POW, proving the AA Wolf should not be listed under the Endangered Species Act.

Everyone agrees that wolves are an important part of POW and we enjoy seeing them, hearing them or just knowing that they exist here. However, listing the AA wolf as endangered will not accomplish better management and will eliminate all legal take of the top non-human predator in an island ecosystem where Sitka blacktail deer is the only ungulate prey available.

We strongly oppose listing the AA wolf as endangered or threatened.

The Klawock ADFG Advisory Council

The following list also supports the above letter

Alaska Trappers Association Fairbanks, AK	Alaska Outdoor Council Anchorage, AK	Alaska Chapter Backcountry Hunters/Anglers	City of Klawock Klawock, AK
City of Craig Craig, AK	City of Thorne Bay Thorne Bay, AK	City of Coffman Cove Coffman Cove, AK	City of Kasaan Kasaan, AK
City of Whale Pass Whale Pass, AK	Hollis Community Council Hollis, AK		

ADFG Ketchikan Advisory Committee	ADFG Klawock Advisory Committee	ADFG East PoW Advisory Committee	ADFG Craig Advisory Committee
Clinton Cook Sr. Tribal President Craig Tribal Association Craig, AK	Tim O'Conner Mayor of Craig VP Alaska Troller Assoc. F/V Virginia Rose Craig, AK	Scott Van Valin Heidi Van Valin Island Air Express El Capitan Lodge	Ray & Elizabeth Douville F/V Faith Faith Fisheries Craig, AK
David & Cynthia Egelston Alaska Rainforest Adventures Thorne Bay, AK	David & Jen Creighton Shelter Cove Lodge Rainforest Auto Rentals Craig, AK	DJ & Anne Hansen DJ's Alaska Adventure Rentals Klawock, AK	Sam & Michelle Peters Slammin' Sam's Charters POW Electric & Repair Klawock, AK
Ellen Hannan & Brian Castle F/V Renegade Craig, AK	Scott Peakes & Elijah Winrod Northern Spell Lodge Klawock, AK	Josh & Chace Anderson Fireweed Lodge Klawock, AK	Kirk & Katie Agnitsch Sure Strike Lodge Craig, AK
Kurt Whitehead & Trina Nation Treasure Hunter Lodge Klawock, AK	LeRoy & Tanya Johns F/V Chelsea Dawn Klawock, AK	Rosey & Lisa Roseland The Salt Shack Thorne Bay, Alaska	Joel & Leanne Steenstra Alaska Wide Open Charters Craig, AK
Chuck & Jeanette Haydu Kingfisher Lodge & Charters Craig, AK	Spencer & Hannah Richter F/V Resolution Craig, AK	Jim & Jane Holien F/V Kenai Jane Klawock, AK	Shawn & Jill Kato-Yates F/V Nauti Lady Klawock, AK
Daniel & Emily Peters F/V Sunlight Klawock, AK	Vaughn & Carrie Skinna F/V Annalyn Klawock, AK	Don & Teresa Busse Trophy Inn Klawock, AK	Carter & Gretchen Jones Spindrift Adventures Klawock, AK
James Heppe Jr. Heppe & Sons Construction Klawock, AK	Grace Heppe Heppe's Indoor Edition Klawock, AK	Mike & Sarah Warner Coffman Cove Adventures Coffman Cove, AK	Rich Trojan Trojan & Sons LLC Craig, AK
Jason Clowar/Luther Jenson Adventure AK Southeast Thorne Bay, AK	Rob & Val Steward Changing Tides Inn Klawock, AK	Sean Tomkinson Passages Alaska Adventure Therapy, Klawock, AK	Brad McMillan Klawock Cooperative Assoc. Klawock, AK
Phillip & Danel Winrod F/V Aurie G Thorne Bay, AK	Melissa LaCour Log Cabin Sports Craig, AK	Mike & Jan Bush B-3 Contractors Inc. Klawock, AK	Mike Hamme Hamme's Quality Carpentry Craig, AK
Jon & Debbie Winrod Webster Point, AK	David & Gail Winrod Hydaburg, AK	Jim Baichtal Thorne Bay, AK	Sam Sawyer Thorne Bay, AK
Enoch & Elizabeth Winrod Ketchikan, AK	Ann Williams Klawock, AK	Justin Fitch Klawock, AK	John & Sheri Wylie Klawock, AK
Matt & Pam Beck Whale Pass, AK	Mark & Beth Farrar Eagles Wings Lodge Klawock, AK	Brian Ringeisen Anglers-Adventures Ketchikan, AK	Kyle Berg & Courtney Nase Ketchikan, AK
Chris Guggenbickler Wrangell, AK	Clay Bezenek Ketchikan, AK	Sharon Toman Whale Pass, AK	Nichole Pope Naukati, AK

New Business:

Kurt gave background about the lawsuit and read the following resolution:

Killer Whale Lawsuit Against SE Trollers

Whereas commercial fishing is a mainstay of Alaska's economy and the largest private sector employer in the state; and

Whereas the troll fleet is the second largest fleet in Alaska; and

Whereas 44% of the fishing income to trollers is derived from their Chinook catch; and

Whereas commercial salmon trolling is a year-round contributor to the Southeast Alaska economy and sustains year-round employment in the fishing processing and support sector industries; and

Whereas including fishing, processing and all retailer multiplier effects, the troll fleet has a total economic impact of approximately \$85 million for the whole of Southeast annually, as measured in terms of total output; and

Whereas the lawsuit files by the Wild Fish Conservancy against the National Marine Fisheries Service threatens to close the Southeast troll fishery despite that closure providing no meaningful benefits to Southern Resident Killer Whales; and

Whereas the Wild Fish Conservancy has pledged to eliminate mixed stock fisheries and eliminate hatcheries; and

Whereas the communities of Southeast will suffer severe economic hardship if the Southeast troll fishery is closed; then

Therefore, be it resolved that the ADFG East Prince of Wales Advisory Committee urge in the strongest possible terms that:

NMFS and ADFG commits the necessary resources to effectively defend all Alaska's chinook fisheries and the Southeast troll fishery in particular; and

All necessary and available state, federal or private resources be made available to support lawsuit defendants and intervenors; and

The State of Alaska work with Alaska's Congressional delegation to protect Alaska's fisheries from present and future misdirected or malicious lawsuits.

ADFG East Prince of Wales Advisory Committee

Kurt: read Perry Olson's email about opposing the resolution.

Have you all read the opposing sides evidence? This controversy isn't just about Puget Sound Orca. It's about the sustainability of the Chinook for the rest of us....commercial and non-commercial alike.

"In other words, not only would these Chinook fisheries reduce the number of salmon available to orcas each season, they would threaten the very future of the already endangered populations they rely on for their survival. This is because 97% of the Chinook salmon caught in SE AK are from rivers in BC and WA state. Catching these fish in AK before they can return home to spawn, deprives the SR Orcas of feeding opportunities and salmon the chance to produce the next generation."

Chinook from the Pacific NW river systems have been listed on the ESA and if 97% of the Chinook being caught in SE AK originate from those drainages that means we're directly harming the very fish stocks that all of us are targeting. Those fish never make it back to their rivers and streams to spawn the next generation.

If the quote below is true and NOAA has determined that the Chinook harvest is unsustainable then supporting the current troll harvest directly harms everyone else and could even lead to a collapse of the Chinook population in SE AK.

"In their most recent analysis of this fisheries impact on threatened and endangered species, NOAA admits that over the last decade and continuing today, Chinook harvest is occurring at levels that are unsustainable for the long term survival and reproductive success of both threatened wild Chinook populations and endangered SR killer whales." I can sympathize with the trollers whose livelihoods depend partly on the Chinook they catch but there seems to be a lot more to this story than just a bunch of environmentalists who hate comm fishermen

If the combined catch from all of SE AK user groups causes a future collapse of the Chinook pop that will destroy the trollers AND hurt everyone else....

Is it in the best interests interests of residents, guides, the tourism industry or trollers and other commercial interests to allow unsustainable harvests until the Chinook population crashes?

If reductions in catch are mandated to protect the resource, then in my opinion, comm interests need to take a backseat to residents who are putting food on their tables.

Perry Olson

Moved by Matt Beck to discuss the letter and seconded by Kurt.

Discussion:

Matt Beck: Killer whales are not getting enough salmon but the issue is way more complex. Sea otters are destroying kelp beds, the sealions are eating salmon at the locks, closing hatcheries that can help augment the loss of salmon and what about the herring? Is there any way the advisory committees can join together and put pressure on the groups. He doesn't feel status quo for the commercial industry is working. Asked Craig Schwanke to speak on the issue.

John Ryan: BC fishermen are blaming AK that we are catching the majority of the fish destined for BC. Sea lions are killing untold numbers of king salmon at the base of the dams. Orcas are eating salmon and their population is staying static. NMFS is finally allowed to cull some of the sealions that are regularly ambushing fish below the dams. Boat traffic and pollution in Puget Sound are impacting the orcas. He thinks this lawsuits main goal is to shut down commercial fishing. If we support this letter it is mainly that we want AK to throw maximum resources against the lawsuit.

Matt Beck: This is not a quick fix at all. We have hatcheries reducing their output. This is an opportunity to manage our sea lion and sea otter issues.

John Ryan: This letter is just to encourage the state to throw maximum resources to defend us against the lawsuit.

Jim Beard: We should support the trollers but if reductions come the sport fishery will take the cuts. Singling out one group over the other could hurt all the groups. This is not a simple solution. As Perry pointed out, this in not a simple fix.

John Ryan: Each user group is allowed different harvest levels.

Craig Schwanke: Chinook are managed under a treaty with Canada. Sportfishing gets 20% of the harvest and commercial anglers get 80% of the harvest with the majority of the kings going to trollers. The closures on the east side of pow are specifically for the king runs in the transboundary rivers. This lawsuit deals with the perceived interception of chinook by trollers and orcas.

John Ryan: The lawsuit is targeting the summer troll fishery. There is no personal use or subsistence fishing for king salmon in AK.

Moved by Della Colburn to support as written and seconded by Will Pattison.

Jim Beard: Would it be possible to support the letter by being in support of all commercial fisheries instead of just the trollers. We need to support all the fisheries in general not just the trollers. Perry had a persuasive argument. If we come out in support we need to do it together not just for trollers.

Kurt Whitehead: We can table the letter and kick it to back to the next meeting after we work on it and get a draft that we are all comfortable with.

Della Colburn: rescinded her motion. Her phone battery is dying and will sign off soon.

Kurt Whitehead: moved to table the letter.

John Ryan: We need to move faster to support this letter because this fishery is going to happen in a few months and it will be a crushing blow for all of SE AK.

Amy Jennings: We need to support the letter now.

John Ryan: We are going to table the meeting until the end of the meeting.

BOF Proposals:	Support	Oppose	Discussion
Prop 154: Allow the use of purse seine drums	0	9	Seiners are already extremely efficient. Drums can haul the nets a lot faster, are more efficient, dangerous and will change the fishery for the worse.
Prop 155: Allow the use of spear and speargun while swimming	9	0	No biological concerns, this is for sport fishing only. Increase opportunity with little impact to the resource.

Amy Jennings: Makes the motion to **support prop 155 with the amendment to change as written instead of a person in the water to: “the person who is completely in the water may use a spear or speargun to take fish if the spear or speargun is not tipped with an explosive.”**

This change/amendment is to prevent anglers from using a speargun while standing/wading in the river. This will improve enforcement.

Moved by Amy and seconded by Kurt to adopt.

Discussion:

Amy Jennings: Is in support of this prop.

Craig Schwanke: This will allow snorkelers to spear fish. An example would be legal fishing by snorkelers in saltwater at the mouth of the rivers. This will fall under sportfishing regs. There are no biological concerns and ADFG is in support of the prop.

John Ryan: He thinks enforcement would likely prefer to have it written so the angler is completely in the water so it is crystal clear that the angler has to in the water not standing in the river.

Amy Jennings: Explain how this could be a loophole?

John Ryan: This is a sport fishing reg not personal use or subsistence.

If its adopted as written, people that are standing in water is able to spear fish vs being submerged. Spearing is not a legal method of take fish with sport fishing. People sitting on the surface at Hidden Falls are spearing king salmon which could be why this proposal is in front of us.

Amy Jennings:

Vote:

9-0 Unanimous support with the above amendment.

BOF Proposals:	Support	Oppose	Discussion
Prop 156: Prohibit the use of felt soled wading footwear while personal use fishing	9	0	This is a housekeeping reg and all responsible outdoors people should be in full support.
Prop 157: Allows commercial anglers to fish in different areas around the state. Moved by John Ryan to support. No second. No action.	No Action		Lots of discussion on whether it would allow more comm fishing in SE AK. Many felt we have reached a saturation point of comm fishing in SE AK and do not want more entry especially with net fisheries. We also felt it would also increase competition with the existing comm fisheries if allowed. It could allow individual comm anglers to move around the state but it could also be very disruptive and put more nets in the waters.
Prop 158: Similar prop as 157	No Action		No action due to 157
Prop 159: Close comm fishing within .25 mile	1-Kris Anderson	8	This could impact hatchery openings of SE AK. This prop mainly involves PWS and would negatively impact our comm anglers in SE AK.
Kris Anderson signed off			
Prop 160: Surrender of proceeds from sale of wild king salmon	0	8	Hatcheries in SE AK are moving towards 100% fin clip of king salmon starting last year but it will be 3-5 years before those fish return, currently a small number of hatchery fish are fin clipped so this prop will be detrimental.

Prop 161:	No Action		
Prop 163: Prohibit guiding in personal use finfish fisheries.	0	8	ADFG is opposed to prohibiting services and would be detrimental to AK residents. Currently it is not illegal to guide in personal use fisheries. This prop is mainly for rivers up north. Subsistence users pay operators to take them out subsistence fishing and drop them off. If passed this would negatively impact the subsistence anglers.
Prop 164: Establish registration and reporting requirements for personal use guides and transporters.	8	0	This would establish registration and potentially logbook requirements for personal use guiding.
Prop 165: Prohibit compensation for guide services in subsistence fisheries	No Action		
Prop 166: Establish a statewide bag limit for personal use (dipnet) fisheries	0	8	ADFG is in opposition. It is unnecessarily restrictive to personal use fisheries.
Prop 167: Require in season reporting of subsistence and personal use salmon harvest within 5 days of harvest.	0	8	ADFG is in opposition. This is an unnecessary burden to users, staff and AST. We already have reporting requirements in PU fisheries. This would be very hard to implement and enforce.
Prop 168: Extend emergency order authority to allow restrictions of sport fisheries in contaminated waters.	8	0	ADFG is in support. This is a housekeeping issue so users can still catch and release fish while protecting the public from eating them.
Prop 169: Amend the list of banned invasive species.	8	0	ADFG's own proposal that is a housekeeping prop to keep invasive species from coming into our waters.

John Ryan makes a motion to support the Alaska troll lawsuit letter as written above with the amendment to change the 3rd sentence from the bottom to "NMFS and ADFG commits the necessary resources to effectively defend all Alaska's chinook fisheries and the Southeast troll fishery in particular; and"

Vote:

8-0. Unanimous approval.

Next meeting date: Let the chair decide on the next meeting date.

Agreed to an email discussion about a representative to the statewide BOF.

Adjourned: 7:47pm

Minutes recorded by: Kurt Whitehead

Minutes approved by: Perry Olson

Date: 2.11.2023