

**Fairbanks Fish and Game Advisory Committee
October 11, 2023 FAC Meeting Minutes¹ DRAFT
J.P. Jones Community Center
204 Rickert Street, Fairbanks, AK
& Zoom²**

I. Call to Order: 6:04pm Chair: John Seigfried

II. Roll Call:

	<u>CHAIR</u> John Siegfried	<u>VICE-CHAIR</u> Mark Richards	<u>SECRETARY</u> Mark Oppe	Jeff Lucas	Gale Vick	Virgil Umphenour	Mike Tinker	John Wisniewski
Present	X	X	open	X	X-OL	X-OL	X	X
Absent								
Abs/Excused			Retired					
	Levi Lewellyn	Austin Smith	Warren Guichici	Bill Larry	Mike Kramer	Chuck Derrick	Gabriel Davis	James Paine (alternate)
Present		X	X	X	X-OL	X	X	X
Absent	X							
Abs/Excused								
	Lance Nelson (alternate)							
Present	X							
Absent								
Abs/Excused								

III. Introduction of Guests: (see sign-up sheet)

Ernie Weiss, Aleutian East Borough / on-line

BreAnna ? – on-line

Al Barrette, Board of Game

Amber Hannum, Fairbanks resident

Sam Fellows, Fairbanks resident

David Lorrington, BOG

Karen? On line

Fish & Game Staff Present:

Deena Jallen, ADF&G Yukon River summer season manager on-line

Sam Decker, YR Area management biologist - OL

Shane Ransbury – YR Fall season biologist – OL

Christy Gleason, ADF&G Fall manager

Luke Rogers, ADF&G Wood Bison

Tony Hollis, ADF&G Wildlife Conservation Division

Andy Gryska, ADF&G Tanana Drainage Area Manager

Jeff Weiss, ADF&G (Department?)

Klaus Wuttig, ADF&G Sports Fish

Justin Rogers, Alaska Wildlife Troopers

IV. Comments

Chair Comments: John Siegfried

Adjust agenda – Fisheries SC

Vice Chair: none

AC Member Comments: none

Public Comments: none

V. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes: April 12, 2023

approved as amended by unanimous consent

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

VII. Old Business: none

Game and Trap Subcommittee: Mark Richards, SC Chair – deferred to after Fisheries

Fisheries Subcommittee : Gale Vick, SC Chair report from Monday, October 9th

Gale apologized for not being in person, reporting on-line.

Minutes from October 9th, 2023 SC meeting available next month

Upcoming: Virgil will be at both Board of Fish meetings in Anchorage. Meetings are non-regulatory. The Work Session will be reviewing ACRs (Agenda Change Requests)

Board of Fish Work Session – Oct 12-13, 2023

Board of Fish Hatchery meeting – October 14, 2023

ACR #2, submitted by the FAC

Requesting reconsideration of June Management Plan for South Unimak and Shumigan Islands. Personal comments were submitted and on record. Criteria for ACR based on conservation and new information on high incidence of chum chucking in the 2023 June fishery. Monday night, at SC meeting, Major Aaron Frenzel, Alaska Wildlife Troopers, gave a report on Trooper activity. Area M such a huge area to police. Higher AWT presences this year, resulting in 9 citations. We are concerned about potential for much higher incidences and no enumeration of fish tossed.

The Department does not support any of the 3 criteria listed in this ACR. Conservation and unforeseen consequence of Board of Fish action (at February Area M meeting) which established triggers that may have incentivized chum chucking.

Motion to approve ACR#2 Mike Tinker to submit to BOF as a Record Copy

Second – Chuck Derrick

Approved unanimous consent

John Seigried is putting in a letter that Gale will submit as an RC to the Board of Fish on Thursday.

Virgil explained how Work Session functions. Greg Taylor (dog musher, fisherman) will also be with him in Anchorage. No public testimony in Work Sessions, so need to talk with Board members informally. Virgil calling in from Anchorage where he will be representing the FAC for both Board meetings.

Action on support for ACR# 3. By WIRAC to submit as RC

Reduce commercial salmon seine depth in the Southwestern and Unimak Districts of Registration Area M (5 AAC 09.332). (WIRAC)

Motion to approve: Mike Tinker

Second: Jeff Lucas

Approved unanimous consent

NPFMC just got done meeting on bycatch – full report in November

BBAYK group meeting every week all summer

Board of Fish 2023-24 proposal book - spreadsheet being developed

Two Board of Fish proposals that FAC submitted on time. (1) Lower Cook Inlet Salmon Enhancement Allocation Plan (2) Kitoi Bay Salmon Enhancement Allocation Plan, Kodiak.. Both proposals are requesting reduction of hatchery egg production back to pre-2000 levels as promised. FAC approved Fisheries SC to send in by April deadline at the March FAC meeting. Support from the full FAC for these proposals will be discussed at the November and December meetings Fisheries SC meetings.

Jeff asked about the numbers on the proposals

Lower Cook Inlet #43

Kodiak #59

End of Fisheries SC report.

Appointment of new secretary

Mark Richards – meetings recorded, there is an AI transcription text available. We can take that transcription and fill in the blanks. It's a big help.

Mike Tinker – take this up after election next month and could make appointment then.

Mark Richards: Mark Oppe was the best minute taker we have ever had so the bar is very high.

Gale Vick – taking minutes for this meeting

VIII. New Business:
ADF&G Staff Reports and Updates:

AWT updates Tony Hollis- ADF&G.

Chronological order starting in the Spring. Part of 20A. Trouble with pilots. Got central 20A, which usually has the highest number of moose and Minto Flats. 20A was poor, hovering around 15% twins when target is 20%. But Minto was very high, with about 30%. Summer, shifted to sheep surveys, poor. Good news is was not worse than previous survey. In 20A total of 327 sheep. Between the Wood River and West Fork of Little Delta. (See report.) We usually can't get all of 20A so we do same block every year. 91 rams, but only 5 legal rams, down to 17 last year. 20 lambs per hundred, higher than last year, still not good. We like to see 30 or more. White Mountain sheep survey with the feds, do the whole WM. 159 sheep. Last survey was 2020. Only two legal rams, down from 8 last year. One ram was taken. Lamb numbers great. 35 lambs per hundred, the best in all of Alaska. The biggest that group has been was 700 total. Caribou counts on the Delta herd, last week, they were bunched together in the rut. We try to get 40 radio collars on that herd. Switching to newer technology with satellite collars. Weather hampered us. Army helicopter wreck happened in our survey time, flight restriction around that area. We are learning new things, some going down across the Denali Highway and returning. We are going to try to get more on cows next year. We haven't lost many collars. Our goals to is to do 20D for moose surveys. We are spending time on BOG proposals.

Tony – don't have a lot of harvest data yet with harvest tickets, next month. Leaves still on and moose hunting tougher this year. Preliminary sheep harvest. Sealed 102 sheep this year in Fairbanks. Number of sublegal sheep was 6. 20A sheep harvest, 39, 15 were non-resident, 20 by resident, and 4 not sure. Some big rams. 20A on average has one 40" ram. We saw that in 1992 when the sheep population crashed, a few years later a higher density of 40".

Mike Tinker noted that a few years back 9 year old average. Tony said currently 7-8 year olds dominant.

Tony: Delta caribou drawing permit, harvest 57 caribou (?) this year. About average. I don't have a goal on that herd. Was one time an IM herd, we took them out. Trying to provide trophy opportunity.

Mark Richards: flood impacts.

Tony: hunters along the lower Yukon saw impacts this year and Minto, which has been flooding a lot. Moose move out of Flats into dryer areas. Makes it difficult to manage. The Department has a grad student working to collar 30 bulls in McGrath, 30 in Galena and 30 in Fairbanks area. Surveys in November. Looking at wide range of ages.

Chuck Derrick asked about ratio of cows to bulls.

Tony: Big calving area in Minto, lots of willows, unlike previous years. Even with high water, cow and calf would find a little island with willows.

Question on caribou winter hunt. Tony said it will be announced soon. Quota for winter is only 150. Mike T said an EO will announce.

Justin Rogers, AWT - Enforcement report

40 Mile hunt, Zones 1-4, Steese Highway. 9th-14th. 5 Troopers, fourwheelers, trucks and helicopters. Wrote 29 tickets. One wanton waste on a cow where the hunter knew it was illegal so walked away from it. Sheep season open at same time, trying to dedicate some troopers there. Taylor Highway slow. Zone 2 some more citations. Some self reported accidentally shooting cows and called troopers. About 6 total. Area wide, 13 self-reported on shooting illegal moose. 3 cases of sublegal moose not reported. One first offense, if reported, it is treated like an accident and penalties are low. Not the case with people trying to hide. One case of archery hunters coming on a bull and shot with a pistol but was considered self-defense. Controlled use area violations. Some in bison range. Lots of outside area hunters in Delta. Some illegal sheep. Some shot in Coldfoot and came to Fairbanks to be viewed. Fairbanks, 2 cited, Delta 1, Coldfoot 2 people. (cross with Tony's numbers.) Unit 25/26 some non-resident illegal caribou. Had a transporter with clients getting post-season wolverine up north. A few people using aircraft to spot sheep, but hard to make a case. Working on search and rescues for decades, as responders (because we have gear) but now to manage searches. We responded to 3 aircraft, 8 search and rescues, welfare checks. We are now dedicating staff to multi-agency rescue management. Missing boats. Some upgraded equipment. Full staffing accept one position in Galena we are looking to fill. 2 blueshirts there now and they want to add. What we are lacking is a long term trooper who have been here a while. We are a training post so lots of turn over.

Mark R: on self-reporting, in the past people felt confident they would get a lesser fine if they self-reported. I understood that was up to the prosecutor and judge.

Justin: we have 2 choices on our tickets. We can pre-choose type of violation. If they surrender critter and take good care of them, the penalty is much lower if first time offense. We think about things like were violation occurred and relative size of animal. In a true poaching, we ask for restitution.

Mark R: are we finding out some reasons why they shoot a cow?

Justin: Not all hunters equal in their knowledge and what they are going after. One person shot a bedded cow caribou this year so couldn't tell gender. There are plea agreements with attorneys.

Q: evidence that a particular group doesn't have the right training? Like age, or non-resident.
Tony: less experienced hunters make more mistakes. Plenty of non-residents get it right, and plenty of residents can mess up.

Luke Rogers – Assistant Biologist on Wood Bison projects (see news article)

Innoko population, about 50% mortality after last winter. More freezing rain events in that area, bison cannot reach forage. Several yearlings did not make it through the winter. About 75 bison remaining.

Planning Team meeting to establish new populations in Eastern Interior. Lower Tanana drainage, including Minto Flats, Yukon Flats and upper Tanana drainage from Tok to border. Governor has asked to really focus on Minto Flats. Need to go through public planning process – one last Spring and one next month for Tanana River Drainage. In order to establish any population, the federal ruling that allows us to pursue bison requires a management or implementation in place. We are on track to get 30-50 yearlings from Elk Island National Park, February-to April. Utilizing the Alaska Wildlife Center to establish 75 animals.

Mike Tinker asked about predator control plan – In the original planning, Innoko, looking at Canadian experience better with mixed forest instead of just open grass land. They are hunting bison out of Whitehorse.

Justin: We include a lot of groups in the plan team. Doyon and many Native communities. Local level mixed, Tanana and Nenana very supportive, Manley and Minto and some very vocally against. Doyon has been historical one of the biggest opposers because of resource development. They worked with the Department to get a 10J ruling for bison as experimental in Alaska.

Mike T: the State is in a position to discuss at a higher level, if they stay on state land, no one has a complaint.

Justin: We don't have an answer on if there is a hard rule on where to put them, north side or south side. We are investigating that now. Plan team meetings this fall

October 24-26th reviewing Innoko – Wedgewood in Fairbanks
Nov 14-16th Fairbanks, Westmark Hotel – Lower Tanana, Minto
Yukon Flats Dec 5th to 7th, Fairbanks, Westmark

Trying to finalize management plan for next 5 years. Had an October meeting. We discussed harvest. With the variability of bison populations, we could still have a small harvest within a year or two.

Q: bull cow ratio?

Justin: will be targeting bulls.

Last summer doing a lot of educational outreach trips. We were sewing small bison hides. (passed around some samples)

Gale asked about relative thickness of a bison hide to moose hide?

Mike T: like a moose hide.

Justin: Would like to have an FAC rep at those meetings.

MOTION: Mark Richards nominated Jeff Lucas to attend

Second:

Approved

Mark: ratio of adults to yearlings to start with a population?

A: You could start with all yearling, that's happened in Canada before. But at the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center we have a mixed age stock, would be good to have older cows to go out with yearlings. We have 10 2 year olds. Roughly 25 animals we could release with this next population.

Mark: Will only locals be able to harvest?

A: the issue is on the table. On the Innoko - A surplus of 25 animals for harvest, with about 20% local.

Chuck Derrick: Any talk about relocating Innoko herd?

Justin: Would be very difficult. But some years increased by 25-30%. Potentially a long term future.

Several FAC members discussed permitting and best weather areas. Bill Larry noted that he has raised bison in Fairbanks in years past. Further discussion on musk ox hunts.

7:30pm 15 minute break

Yukon Salmon Update - See ADF&G announcements and minutes from Fisheries SC Oct 9, 2023

Deena Jallen – Yukon River Summer Season Manager ADF&G on line -

Summer season preliminary summary-official summer season summary in full next month ¹

Chinook – 58,529 at Pilot, no fishing allowed on the river for Chinook, no goals met, Treaty obligation not met. Similar to 2022, second lost count on record, well below 5-year average. Only 15,300 at Eagle, border crossing. Closures for Chinook kept all season. Chena and Salcha below goal and below average. Looking at en route mortality factors. Ichthyophonous project this summer took samples at Pilot, Rapids and Fort Yukon, results being analyzed. Also a radio telemetry project conducted near Emmonak and monitored up river. Could only tag 50 fish this year. Genetics will be conducted on tagged fish. Subsistence fishing for kings closed all season. Non-salmon gear allowed for whitefish.

Summer chum – 845,955 at Pilot, only drainagewide escapement goal met, no other goals were met. Limited summer chum allowed with selected gear of dipnets and manned fishwheels, hook and line, beach seines. SD5-D remained closed. Heard from fishermen that fishing opportunity lost to high water and flooding and limited gear. No

¹ 2023 Yukon River Salmon Summer Fishery Announcement #26 / 2023 Yukon River Preliminary Summer Season Summary became available November 7th

counts from the Andrefsky River because of water conditions. Aerial surveys poor. Anvik sonar 60,000, well below goal of 350,000, but project did not operate for part of season. Counts at Gisasa, Chena and Salcha were all below mediums. Many projects were hampered by high water.
No commercial fishing on the Yukon for a couple of years.

Gale: just wanted to reiterate that the ONLY escapement goal that we made all season was summer chum drainage wide. Someone suggested that we get a chart of where and when the counting closures occurred.

Deena: As we discussed on Monday, our season summary should have a table to indicate this. Also tables to list escapement goals and outcomes.

Gale: Just want to thank both you and Christy for all your help when we ask.

Mark Richards: Are we still doing DNA sampling to determine Canadian origin, mainstem and Porcupine?

Deena: That occurs at Pilot Station. Fairly quick turnaround. We also want to collect fish throughout a stratum.

Virgil: What were numbers on Chena and Salcha?

Deena: Chena, 834 summer chum, from an average of over 8,000.
Salcha 676 summer chum compared to medium of 13,900.
Chena, Chinook – 1,069, from an average of over 6,000
Salcha 1,242 from an average of over 7,000

Gale: For the record - summer chum subsistence fishing was available with selective gear from Emmonak to Tanana drainage, but above the Tanana there was no summer chum availability on the Yukon and fall chum was closed for the whole season.

Deena: That is correct. We normally don't get any summer chum above SD5-D.

Mark: What is confidence of fish count on Salcha and Chena with weather problems?

Deena: very low

Klaus: we had a really good sports fish year on the Chena and Salcha for ???

Chuck D: Do you ever do salmon carcass counts?

Deena: When we do aerial surveys we do live and dead fish. Klaus can speak to sports fish counts.

Christy Gleason –Yukon River Fall Season manager ADF&G on-line preliminary fall season summary

Fall Season starts middle of July and usually mid-October but fall chum and coho are still Spawning through end of December. Fall chum have a smaller population than summer chum. We have been below escapement goals for fall chum 4 years in a row. Coho have been variable up and down. In 2021 we had record low for all species on the Yukon. In 2023 we had the fifth lowest fall chum on record and coho was second lowest on record. Fall chum about 1/3 of historic average and coho about 1/4 . At the beginning of the fall season, still a lot of summer chum. We extended the opportunity for summer chum, with mandatory king salmon release. Two fall chum escapement goals with

Canada. We didn't meet drainagewide or escapement goals, but met one goal on the Teedriinjik (Chandalar) river and we opened up to gillnets 24/7. That only helped about 2 communities. Venetie and Arctic Village, which rarely harvests salmon. Otherwise complete closure. Coho run estimated at 65,000 in lower Yukon, vs. historic 220,000. So this was closed. We do aerial surveys in October / November.

Mark: What kind of aircraft?

Christy: helicopters. We train around peak spawning times.

Sheep working group: Mark Richards

Board of Game – working group composition

Resident hunting in 19C

Subsistence hunting in 19C

Guiding 19C

Representation for McGrath AC

and also landholders

Mark recommends an FAC seat on this group – send in a letter

John Seigfried will send letter.

ACR for Board of Game – due November 1st

Mike Tinker: best to go after statewide applications.

November FAC elections: 6 seats open

Mike Tinker

Mark Richards

John Wisniewski

Gabe Davis

Austin Smith

Open seat from Mark Oppe's resignation

Western Arctic Caribou Working Group representative

Dave Kilbourn (passed away this last year) former rep – listed as Fairbank hunter

Christy Tibbles welcomes Fairbanks AC recommendations to replace that seat

Board support does not pay for AC members to go to the meetings

Ask Al Barrette to clarify where funding is available - through Holly Carroll, USFWS ?

Mike Tinker – maybe we could discuss after our election in November

No meeting on line

Meetings always in Anchorage / usually a couple of days

Next full FAC meeting: November 8, 2023

Meeting adjourned at 8:22pm

¹ Transcribed by Gale K. Vick

