

**Fairbanks
Fish & Game Advisory Committee**

**Interior Region
Fish & Game Advisory Committees**

Jeff Lucas
Chairman
1030 Daisy Drive
Fairbanks, Alaska 99712

Central	Middle Nenana River
Delta Junction	Middle Yukon River
Eagle	Minto-Nenana
Fairbanks	Ruby
GASH	Stony Holitna
Koyukuk River	Tanana-Rampart-
Lake Minchumina	Manley
McGrath	Upper Tanana
	Fortymile
	Yukon Flats

**January 8, 2025
Fairbanks Fish & Game Advisory Committee Meeting**

- I. Call to Order: 6:06PM by Jeff Lucas (chair)
- II. Roll Call
Members Present: Jeff Lucas, Mark Richards, John Haddix, Gabriel Davis, Mike Tinker, James Paine, John Wisniewski, Warren Giuchici, Chuck Derrick, Lance Nelson, Virgil Umphenour, Gale Vick

Members Absent (Excused): Levi Lewellyn, Mike Kramer, Austin Smith
Members Absent (Unexcused):
Number Needed for Quorum on AC: 8
- III. Fish and Game Staff Present: Jeff Wells, Andy Gryska, Cameron Carol, Dave Funfola, Matt Olson,
- IV. Guests Present: Jen Yuhas, Lenny & Diane Jewkes, Mary Glaves, Tyrel Palmer, Andy Mazerick, Steve Springer, Michelle Heun, Dave Lorrington
- V. Approval of Agenda: Agenda approved by unanimous consent
- VI. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes: Approved by unanimous consent
- VII. Reports
 - a. Vice-chair's report: Mark Richards announced that the Fortymile winter hunt RC 867 would open on Saturday, January 11, in zones 1 & 4. Anyone with an AC 999 permit can still hunt under that permit. If you don't already have an RC 867

permit, you can still get one to participate in the winter hunt while it's open. Caribou are currently scattered and well off the road.

- b. ADF&G: Andy Gryska asked the AC to think about salmon proposals for next year's Board of Fish meeting. He also mentioned the mark/recapture work at Tangle Lakes, the Harding Lake pike study, and Nome Creek grayling closure

Alaska Small Game Program Overview by Cameron Carol

Cameron Carol provided an overview of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game's small game program. She discussed past research and surveys conducted on various grouse and ptarmigan species, including translocation efforts. The program initiated in 2011 focuses on surveys, research, outreach, and regulatory recommendations. Recent work includes ptarmigan studies using GPS transmitters and reliance on citizen scientists for brood surveys across the state. The program aims to monitor small game populations through breeding and brood surveys while conducting relevant research to inform management decisions.

Cameron also mentioned an upcoming proposal (#63) for the Region IV Board of Game meeting she submitted for the Department that would require a registration permit to hunt ptarmigan in Units 13B & 13E. The proposal is related to ptarmigan conservation concerns, and the need to collect better harvest data, but she has since withdrawn the proposal after receiving comments.

Small Game Populations and Leks

Cameron discussed the data from spring breeding and summer brood surveys, focusing on small game populations in the state. She explained the concept of leks, communal breeding grounds for species like sharp-tailed grouse, and how their numbers have been declining over the past few years. However, in 2024, the number of male sharp-tailed grouse at leks increased. Cameron also discussed the drumming surveys for male ruffed grouse, noting that their populations cycle every 7 to 10 years. She also mentioned that the number of leks visited has changed over the years due to habitat changes and fluctuations in grouse numbers.

Ptarmigan Population, Distribution, and Research

Cameron discussed the abundance and distribution of ptarmigan in Alaska, highlighting the importance of the Eagle Summit survey and the Denali Highway survey in unit 13B. She emphasized the need for more data on harvest and the potential for restricting harvest to protect the species. She also mentioned the importance of understanding the movements and ecology of ptarmigan and the potential for using wing donation programs to gather more information.

Small Game Data Challenges

Cameron discussed the challenges of collecting harvest data for small game, particularly for species like ptarmigan and grouse. She mentioned that the current proposal for a registration

permit has been withdrawn, but other options are being considered. Cameron also highlighted the importance of age and sex composition data for understanding juvenile recruitment into the fall season. She mentioned the possibility of offering compensation for returning wings, tails, and heads for data collection. Cameron also addressed the decline in snowshoe hare populations, attributing it to predators and habitat changes.

Moose Harvest data and report by Jeff Wells

Jeff Wells announced that Tony Hollis had left the Department and that he was now the acting area biologist. He presented the moose harvest data for the past year in Unit 20, noting that the new moose registration permit system was working well, with a 73% reporting rate before the first reminder. He also discussed the increase in reported hunters in Unit 20C, which could be due to changes in road access. Jeff also mentioned plans to increase the number of permits for Delta caribou and the need for a recent population estimate for Delta Caribou. He also discussed the results of the survey conducted in November, which provided insights into the management of Unit 20A moose.

The moose population in Unit 20A remains stable within the intensive management objective of 10,000 to 15,000 moose. This year's survey showed a point estimate of just under 12,000 moose, slightly above the 2022 estimate. The bull-to-cow ratio of 26 bulls per 100 cows meets the management objective of 25:100, indicating the bull harvest is maximized. A bright spot is the high calf-to-cow ratio of 38 calves per 100 cows, the highest in recent years. Indices suggest moderate nutritional condition, with twinning rates around 15% and average short yearling weights of 398 pounds, above the lower threshold but below the higher threshold for good nutrition.

Jeff explained the proposed number of any bull moose hunting permits for the upcoming fall season in different areas of Game Management Unit 20A. He proposes a slight increase overall from the previous year, while keeping the numbers close to the management objectives. For the muzzleloader hunt in one area, he suggests equalizing the permits with the any bull hunt to allow equity between early and late season hunters. No antlerless moose hunts are planned for the upcoming year, but a limited antlerless harvest around 1% of the population may be implemented in the fall of 2026 to stabilize population growth. For Unit 20B, the antlerless hunt plan will remain the same as the previous year.

Fisheries Subcommittee Update and Report

Gale Vick gave a fisheries subcommittee update and proposed inviting the Interior region Advisory Committees (ACs) to a virtual meeting on January 22nd to discuss upcoming Board of Fish proposals and fisheries issues.

Mike Tinker made motion for approval to invite interior ACs to a joint zoom meeting. Seconded by John Wisniewski. Motion approved by unanimous consent.

Gale says the next fisheries subcommittee meeting will be on January 15 to discuss the Southeast Board of Fish meeting proposals, particularly Virgil's proposal (#156) for an egg reduction.

Virgil Umphenour made motion that the AC supports proposal 156, seconded by John Wisniewski. Motion approved by unanimous consent.

Kyle Campbell (board support) suggests submitting previous record copies (RCs) along with new information about hatchery impacts on wild stocks and pollution issues. Virgil provided background on the 25% hatchery production reduction negotiated in 2001.

Subcommittee Recommendations and Authority Concerns

Gale proposed that the subcommittee could submit their recommendations for the upcoming Board of Fisheries meeting after the deadline as an RC.

Mark Richards expressed concern about the delegation of authority to the subcommittee, suggesting that it could lead to the full advisory committee not being fully informed about issues. Gale suggested that they could either not make any comments on the southeast proposals except for 156, which the AC just approved, or allow the subcommittee to submit their recommendations under their name. Mark emphasized the need to find a better way to handle fisheries issues in the future so the fisheries subcommittee recommendations came before the full AC.

Mark Richards made motion to give delegation of authority to the fisheries subcommittee to send in comments to the Board of Fisheries, seconded by John Wisniewski. Motion approved by unanimous consent. The AC agreed to proceed with this plan for the current situation but try to do better in future with planning for fisheries proposals.

Other Fisheries Subcommittee Meeting Updates

The Fishery Subcommittee discussed several upcoming meetings and proposal deadlines. Gail informs the group about the Southeast meeting proposal to only accept egg reduction hatchery proposals at the Statewide meeting every three years, and the notice of proposed changes in statewide nonprofit hatchery regulations due on February 12th. They also schedule meetings on February 10th and March 10th to develop proposals for the April 10th deadline. Chuck provides an update on the recent Board of Fisheries meeting, including failed proposals to reduce the personal use fishery and an approved proposal giving the Commissioner authority to increase the sockeye bag limit if the run exceeds the goal.

Next Game/Trap subcommittee meeting

Mark Richards sets the next game/trap meeting for January 29th to review statewide proposals.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30pm

Minutes Recorded By: Jeff Lucas & Mark Richards

Minutes Approved By: _____

Date: 1/12/25