

Nushagak ADFG Advisory Committee

Meeting Minutes

April, 21, 2014

Dillingham City Council Chambers

Minutes

I. Call to Order: 9:12 AM

II. Roll Call:

Present in chambers

Frank Woods – Dlg Chair, **Exp**
Joe Chythlook - Dlg - Vice Chair
Travis Ball - Aleknagik
Dan Dunaway – Dlg Secretary
Lloyd (Tom) O’Connor – Dlg **Exp**
Glen Wysoki - Koliganek
Curt Armstrong - Dlg
Gary Kline - Alt. **Exp**
Peter Christopher - New Stuyahok - by phone 9:17
Chris Carr - Portage - by phone
Jon Forsling -Togiak by phone joined 9:40

Absent

Robin Samuelson – Dlg **term expired**
Mariano Floresta - Clark's Pt.
Louie Alakayak - Manokotak
Robert Heyano - Dlg **term expired**
Joe Kazmirowicz - Ekwok

ADFG Staff Present:

Susie Brito - Boards
Tim Sands - Com Fish
Neil Barten - Wildlife
Ted Krieg - Subsistence
Matt Jones - Com Fish

ADNR Parks: Ali Eskelin

Togiak Refuge Staff:

Suzanna Henry Supt. Andy Aderman Biologist

Public

Stan Small

Other public and agency staff in attendance are on the attached sign in sheet.

It took some time to assemble a quorum.

When it was clear a quorum was met, those in attendance decided to conduct elections as between the absences and expired seats it would have been hard to conduct business.

III Elections:

The chair turned the meeting over to Susie Brito to record nominations and conduct election.

There were 4 expired seat Dillingham seats and one "At Large" seat open, formerly held by Robin Samuelson, Curt Armstrong, Robert Heyano, Frank Woods, Tom O'Connor. The two Annual Alternate seats needed filling as well. Only Dillingham residents could vote for the Dillingham seats while all in attendance could vote for the At Large and Alternate seats. Susie had ballots prepared for those present and would take votes over the phone for those on teleconference.

Dillingham seats nominations:

Tom (Lloyd) O'Connor

Frank Woods

Curt Armstrong

Jim Woolington

Steve Perkins

Gary Cline

Dan D moved and Tim Sands 2nd to close nominations

At Large Nominations

Gary Cline

Steve Perkins Tom O moved and Dan D 2nd to close nominations

Alternate

Gayla Hoseth nominations closes for lack of more names

Susie collected and counted ballots. Tom O'Connor, Frank Woods, Curt Armstrong, and Jim Woolington were selected for the Dillingham seats.

The At Large Seat was filled by Gary Cline.

Alternates selected were Gayla Hoseth, and Steve Perkins.

Attendance was sparse so all new members were seated to participate in the rest of the meeting.

Present and seated with full terms:

Curt Armstrong Dlg

Travis Ball Alek

Tom O'Connor Dlg

Gayla Hoseth Alt

Gary Cline At Large

Frank Woods Dlg

Dan Dunaway Dlg? At large?

Steve Perkins Alt

Jim Woolington Dlg

Glen (Skin) Wysoki Koliganek

Chris Carr Portage by phone

Peter Christopher New Stu. by phone

Jon Forsling Togiak by phone joined 9:40

The meeting was resumed with a full quorum at 9:38.

IV Agenda

Dan D moved and Frank W 2nd with the request to amend agenda to remove Item 6 Elections; to New Business add #3, day and time of day for future AC meetings and #4 discuss Village representative participation and travel; add Togiak Refuge staff report on Nushagak Caribou & Moose hunts after ADFG staff report. Dan D agrees to friendly amendments. Motion carries 13-0.

V Minutes of January 21 Nushagak AC meeting.

Tom O moved and Jim W 2nd. Motion carries 13-0

VI Introductions

All present gave their name, community and sometime their occupation or interest.

VII ADFG & Togiak Refuge Staff Reports

A. ADFG Wildlife: New Area Wildlife Biologist Neil Barten, recently of the Juneau ADFG office introduced himself.

He reported that he had just finished some caribou and moose tagging in the area and managed to complete the first aerial moose survey of 17 C since 2008 - but is still awaiting final analysis.

He reported that during the caribou calf tagging they found the calves to average a healthy 130-140 pounds vs 90-100 lbs 10-12 years ago. Caribou abundance still seems low.

Winter conditions resulted in very little wolf control activity.

He also mentioned the very difficult winter hunt conditions seemed to have limited moose hunting success.

Barten mentioned the intensive management program: Many signed up only 1 showed up no wolves harvested in that program - too poor of conditions. Possibly 15-17 wolves may have been taken with conventional means. **The plan is due to be reviewed in the next couple years and the AC can make suggestions like adding brown bears to the program.**

Caribou calf survival study is planned for mid May near Port Alsworth during calving and another team will be in the vicinity of Koliganek.

A summer photo census of caribou is planned. With more collars out it will help to find them. With the herd small and very widely dispersed more collars are needed than when the herd was large ad they are harder to find. Last year the estimated population was 20,000 to 30,000.

Round Island Walrus staffing will end after this summer.

The topic of introducing Musk Ox and or Wood Bison was discussed.

Barten requested to provide more 2014 moose hunt data when its available.

B. USFWS Togiak: Andy Aderman

Nushagak Peninsula Caribou group met late fall and agreed to issue 200 more winter permits as few were taken in the fall. Total harvest reported to date is 101 still 12 permits un-returned and may be a few more caribou harvests reported. For next fall the plan is to issue permits for 50% of t he allowable harvest.

17A Winter Moose, initially only 8 cows, 4 bulls taken, hunt was extended. Travel conditions

terrible. Most moose were taken using a skiff in Feb!!!. Most moose taken close to Togiak. Moose stayed dispersed over whole area due to lack of snow. Final count 6 bulls, 7 cows. Fall hunt estimated 22 bulls and one of unknown sex.

Federal Hunt 17C. 25 permits issue, 9 from Dlg, 16 in Manokotak. Bad travel conditions and no moose taken. Some confusion on permits and reporting cards and areas open to hunting. Some hunters complained they couldn't do their hunt report online. Aderman explained these special hunts can't be reported online, website not set up. A few problems on using the right harvest permit reporting forms - one caribou harvest reported on moose permit.

Wolves. Another wolf collaring study is proposed for the refuge.

Bears. A bear predation study is being considered - will use modified snares to capture only bear hair.

Guiding. Brief discussion on big game guiding areas in refuge (3) and process for obtaining concessions. The AC is interested in the number and residency of guides applying for refuge concessions.

Several AC members thanked Aderman for his faithful attendance of our meetings; always being prepared and willing to share refuge information and data.

Dunaway requested of State and Federal biologists to consider providing different colored permits in another year. In 2013/14 all permits were white and they were easily confused. ADFG said they only had white card stock.

C. ADFG Commercial Fish Matt Jones: Brief herring comments. Rumors of herring spotted April 19, ADFG plans to fly April 22.

Frank Woods asked AC member Forsling if Togiak was getting enough herring roe on kelp with the new regulations. Jonathan said Togiak did well last year.

D. ADFG Board Support Susie Brito: Briefly outlined the issue of changing Game Board cycle. Statewide, AC's were about 50/50 change 2yr vs 3 yr. BOG hasn't made a final decision??.

VIII Election of Officers

Nominations opened for Chair. Jim W nominated Frank Woods. Tom O. 2nd and asked for unanimous consent. No objections.

Nominations opened for Vice Chair. Frank W said he'd heard Joe Chythlook was willing to serve again and so nominated. Gayla 2nd. Tom O moved to close nominations. Frank 2nd and asked for unanimous consent. No objections.

Nominations opened for Secretary. Dunaway nominated. Frank moved to close nominations. Tom O 2nd and asked for unanimous consent. No objections.

New officers for 2014:

Frank Woods was re-elected as the Chair of the committee

Joe Chythlook was re-elected Vice Chair

Dan Dunaway was re-elected to be Secretary

IX New Business

1. Board of Game Call for proposals Central / Southwest due May 1. Proposals can be and are best submitted with online form available at ADFG Boards website. Susie outlined the process and provided copy of the new proposal form.

PROPOSALS

FALL MOOSE

AC started with a "concept" proposal drafted earlier this spring to extend the fall moose registration hunt by 5 days.

Long long discussion whether to change the fall moose season dates or extend the closure date to Sept 20. Strong feeling in New Stu and among some hunters that season starts too early, too warm and moose too hard to find in thick vegetation. Many other parts of the state the season ends Sept 20.

Barten ADFG outlined history of current season date adopted in 1992 when harvest climbed steeply. Used to have 600 fall permits now about 1,200 to 1,300. Asked if there should only be a registration hunt or continue the "General Hunt" as well? No bull cow data and not likely to ever get it consistently. Pointed out for several years harvest was "stable" in the 240-250 range but lately is declining.

Woolington reviewed history that registration hunt started in 1982 when there were very few moose and back then locals insisted the hunt end 9/15 as later, moose were stinky. Also pointed out possible problems if the registration dates changed and the general hunt dates didn't. **Moose seem to change distribution over their range over the years might be food and predator responses.**

Other expressed concern that a long and later season might attract more nonlocal hunters.

One guide mentioned that moose start getting rutty even if its warm, seems like former locals now come back and hunt adding pressure. Concerned there are fewer moose out there and we don't need longer season to attract more hunters and guided hunters. Another felt adding 5 days is too too much.

Pete C. moved, Jon F. 2nd - for the AC to submit a proposal to set the fall registration hunt for an August 25 to Sept 20 season.-

Roll call vote failed (3 yea 10 nay) See attached record form.

Final decision Nushagak AC will not submit a proposal for any changes to fall moose.

The AC encouraged New Stuyahok or other advocates of longer season to submit proposals.

LUNCH BREAK 12:17 to 1:29

CARIBOU 17, A, B, C; POSSIBLY 9, 18, 19.

AC started with a "concept" proposal drafted earlier this spring to extend the caribou registration hunt to March 31.

ADFG Barten explained current dates set in 2005 by Agenda Change Request due to low herd population. Area wasn't meeting harvest objectives, calf survival appeared poor. He reviewed how this first year as a registration hunt is going - poor reporting so far but hope to get better as hunters adjust. Numerous annual extension requests have been denied due to low herd numbers, concern for attracting too many nonlocal hunters, lack of good caribou data.

Side discussion on predator control area and process. Predators still a big concern of local residents; bears as well as wolves.

Discussion lead to seeking a way to at least open the possibility of extension in late spring if there is a winter like 2013/14 where much of the time travel was near impossible. We need flexibility. ADFG cannot extend a season by EO beyond the closure date set by BOG regardless - so lets ask for a later absolute date but run the season normally from Aug 1 to March 15..

Dunaway moved Woolington 2nd: AC submit a proposal similar to moose: request the BOG to set a "final" season date at March 31. In normal cases the season will still run from August 1 to March 15. But ADFG would be authorized to extend the season by EO to as late as March 31 under specified circumstances. ADFG would be able to determine the length of the extension whether a day or two to the full 16 days. Criteria will have to be worked out.

motion carried unanimous 10-0.

WINTER MOOSE 17 B&C

Again terrible winter conditions prevented hunting.

Manokotak got 8 moose and we would like to have flexibility much like 17A winter moose. Use the Togiak as a model.

After a long discussion of various approaches it was decided that hunters need to be able to plan on an opening date so lets keep Dec 1.

Tom O moved Gary C 2nd for the AC to: submit a proposal for RM585 to keep the December 1 opening and normal December 31 closure but ask the Board to set the "final" season end date at January 31. The proposal will be designed to get ADFG authorized to make Emergency Order season extensions under specified circumstances like extremely poor weather and travel conditions, low harvest success or opportunity and;

ADFG would be allowed to determine the length of the extension with consultation with the AC and other stake holders and;

this will require good communication among villages and users as there could be a wide variety of conditions across the area. from Manokotak to Koliganek.

motion carried unanimous 10-0.

BEAVER TRAPPING GMU 17

After a very extensive discussion the Nushagak AC decided to submit a proposal (Steve P Moved and Tom O 2nd) to: allow the taking of beaver under trapping regulations by the use of firearms or bow and arrow for the full duration of the season, Oct 10 to May 31; and eliminate the requirement that beaver so taken must be salvaged for human consumption. The hide or meat must be salvaged for use.

Currently the regulation only allows firearms for a short period in April and May and the meat must be salvaged for human consumption.

Justification of the new regulation is that there are so few beaver trappers and very few beaver taken compared to the past (30'- 70's?) when this area was the highest beaver producing area in the state with literally 1,000's of animals taken yearly.

motion carried 8 yea, 2 nay

There is concern among some AC members that allowing firearms could result in wastage while other members are convinced that more beavers need to be harvested to keep them from "eating themselves out of house and home".

BROWN BEAR HIDES AND SKULLS GMU 17

Glen W moved Tom O 2nd to submit a proposal to encourage and incentivize locals to take their full annual bag limit of 2 brown bears by asking the BOG to allow the sale of hides with claws and / or skulls of legally taken bears.

The hope is that it will help reduce predation of brown bears on moose and caribou as well as help thin out bears around villages.

There was discussion of what the State laws currently allow and where.

motion carried 9 yea, 1 nay

End of Proposal discussion.

Dunaway will draft the proposals, share for review, and submit to BOG.

These and all other proposals submitted will be available for public review next fall.

OTHER ITEMS

* Musk Ox and Bison: There was a discussion about transplanting Musk Oxen and or Wood Bison to the area.

The AC elected to write a letter to Fish & Game formally requesting the department to review the possibilities of transplanting these species to the area. Some AC members expressed the hope that Musk Ox could live around Etolin Point and Dan D wondered if the controversial Wood Bison herd currently held at Portage Glacier near Anchorage might be able to live along the lower Nushagak River drainage where he has seen a lot of grassy areas, particularly on the large islands in the river.

* Intensive Management Plan Review (predator control): Every Five years a review is mandated. The AC will write a letter to ADFG asking them to consider adding brown bears to the plan at its next review period when adjustments can be made.

* Federal RAC Activities, especially the issue of Customary & Traditional Determination Process: Dan Dunaway also a member of the Federal Bristol Bay Regional Advisory Council discussed the C&T Determination process used by the Feds, how it has become an issue for some other RACs especially the South East RAC and the SERAC is reaching out to all RACS of the state for their input. In response, and to be certain all Bristol Bay stakeholders have an opportunity to comment, the Bristol Bay RAC this spring wrote letters to communities, tribes, ACs, and other interested parties seeking their comments.

* Time of meeting for the Nushagak AC: The AC members discussed their concern that by meeting mid-day on weekdays, many interested public are not able to attend. The AC will seek to hold their next meeting on a Saturday, or evening to provide more opportunities for wider public participation.

* Village representative participation: For some recent AC meetings, representatives from some villages have not called in or attended in person. ADFG is limited in its ability to fund travel. But one village supported funding travel for their representative. The AC will compose a letter to outlying villages to encourage them to consider providing some travel support for their representatives, and to encourage leadership to contact the Legislature to support better funding for the Board Support section of ADFG.

* BAD NEWS: Susie Jenkins-Brito announced that she will be leaving her Board Support Position May 2 to take a position at BBEDC. Numerous AC members expressed sadness to see her go, and thanked her profusely for the very good and hard work she has done very cheerfully in her position. This lady is one very smart and hard worker - she has been a huge help and a real dynamo getting several ACs back on track, getting process straightened out and things running quite well. She will be missed.

X. Set date and location of next meeting.

Next meeting at the call of the chair "after moose season". Will try to have on a weekend or evening to include. Probably in Dillingham.

XI. Adjourn 5:00 PM

Minutes ratified by unanimous consent 11/19/14