

Fairbanks Fish and Game Advisory Committee
 3/8/2023 Meeting Minutes
 J.P. Jones Community Center
 204 Rickert Street
 Fairbanks, AK
 &
 Teleconference

I. Call to Order: Chair at 6:06PM

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	x	X	X		x
Absent								
Abs/Excused	x						x	
	Levi Lewellyn	Austin Smith	Warren Guichici	Bill Larry	Mike Kramer	Chuck Derrick	Gabriel Davis	James Paine (alternate)
Present	X	X			x	x		x
Absent				x			x	
Abs/Excused			x					
	Lance Nelson (alternate)							
Present	x							
Absent								
Abs/Excused								

III. Introduction of Guests: Dave Loring, Casandra Manci, Fari Sylvester, Jim Simon, Liann Peryea, Eva Dawnburk, Melanie Rode, Tyrel Palmer

Fish & Game Staff Present: Al Barrette (BOG), Shane Ransbury, Luke Rogers, Andy Gryska, Klaus Wuttig, Tony Hollis, Sam Decker, Mark Nelson

IV. Comments

Chair Comments: none

Vice Chair: none

Trapping: none

Game: none

Fish: none

AC Member Comments: none

Public Comments: none

V. Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes: approval of February 8 minutes by unanimous consent

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

VII. Old Business: none

VIII. New Business:

AK Wildlife Trooper Update: Tony Hollis provided moose harvest data for fall. Numbers were down slightly from last year w/exception of 20A, which was the same as last year (458). 20B will be surveyed in the fall. Capture/weighing of yearling moose in 20A is currently ongoing.

“Town wolf” came from the Chena and spent 9 days in Fairbanks; traveled along river and Noyes Slough while in town.

Mark Nelson provided update on northeast species. Porcupine caribou appear to be stable/increasing at highest level since 1970s. North slope muskox population is above 300, allowing for resumption of hunting this fall. 26B moose population is over objective enough to allow for 10 permits to be offered for this fall. Sheep trends in Brooks Range seem to be stable since 2018; may be beginning to grow. Sheep will be collared starting this spring/summer in areas that are hunted heavily and areas not hunted. Central Arctic caribou population has been coming back up. 2022 census was about 34,000. Proposal to change from bull only hunt to bulls and cows will be submitted this year. Cow mortality appears to be higher than expected but other parameters indicate herd growth. 25D moose survey is ongoing now.

Wood Bison Restoration Project Update: Jeff Lucas reported favorably on wood bison meeting attendance.

Luke Rogers provided updates on wood bison releases. Next shipment from Canada will be due a year from now. Bison are held at UAF LARS prior to release in Alaska. 28 yearlings were added to Lower Innoko herd in most recent soft release in August. November photo census backed up by helicopter census. Population counted at 150 animals with high degree of confidence. Recently released yearlings appear to be integrating with wild herd based on collar data.

Current effort to identify future release sites in Lower Tanana, Upper Tanana, and Yukon Flats. Recent meetings were to address issues and concerns in each area with potential future releases. Next planning meetings will focus on management plans for establishment of additional wild herds. Letters of support would be helpful with this process and provide additional direction.

Innoko planning team has made minor adjustments to management plan. Another meeting will be necessary to finish this process. Meeting may be scheduled for this spring.

Mark Richards asked if refuges are supportive of bison introduction. Luke Rogers stated that this would be dependent on local community support. Refuges are unlikely to oppose introduction. Doyon has not taken a firm position, but appears to be listening to local communities before clarifying their stance. Past Doyon concerns centered on oil/gas exploration. Doyon position against hunting access on their lands for non-shareholders has not changed. There will still be public land in each of the 3 areas under consideration to allow for public access.

Doyon has finished test drilling in Minto flats, which may alleviate their concerns about wood bison introduction that area. Minto village appears to be supportive. BOG will review Innoko management plan in upcoming cycle. Future hunting of wood bison will have to be approved by the BOG.

Mike Kramer asked about original introduction numbers and current population after most recent release. There are less bison in the herd now than the total number that has been released since reintroduction. This can be partially explained by adjustment period for newly released bison from captivity. Survival appears to be improving as adaptation improves. Mike Kramer believes that the Minto state refuge will be preferable for next introduction due to accessibility and good habitat.

Motion by Mike Kramer, seconded by Jeff Lucas for Fairbanks AC to write letter in support of wood bison project. Passed by unanimous consent. Mike Kramer and Jeff Lucas will work on writing this letter.

Gale Vick asked if there is a summary report of wood bison meetings available.

Luke Rogers stated that this will be provided to the AC.

Al Barrette stated that introductions of wood bison are contingent on development of management plans.

Chuck Derrick asked about possibility of release on the south side of the Tanana near the Kantishna. This appears to be a good area as well. Current authorizations cover the north side of the Tanana, but bison may move across the river if habitat is suitable.

Austin Smith asked about duration of agreement with Canada to supply surplus

bison. This can be extended, according to Luke Rogers.

Recap of Board of Fisheries Area M & South Peninsula Meeting and

Outcomes: Gale Vick referred to meeting packet materials related to Area M proposals. Meeting outcome resulted in smaller reduction in fishing times than hoped for (12% vs. 60% reduction). Proposal 140 was considered an allocative proposal.

Virgil Umphenour reported that most testifiers supported Proposal 140.

Mike Kramer stated that support from AYK and Bristol Bay for Proposal 140 was amazing, but that BOF members favoring commercial interests were never likely to vote in favor. Proposal failed by vote of 3-4 after much heated discussion.

Commercial fishermen testified about voluntary restrictions, but still harvested 550,000 chums bound for AYK in June. BOF members appeared to be complimentary about this effort and stated that it was preferable to Board action. BOF members did not meet with AYK residents, but did meet with commercial fishermen.

Chuck Derrick asked about AYK residents' request for the legislature or governor to require reconsideration of Proposal 140. Mike Kramer believes that this is not likely to happen and that this exemplifies importance of paying attention to board appointments.

Mark Richards asked how the Fairbanks AC ended up supporting RC 179, which was more restrictive than 140 and if this impacted the vote on the original proposal. Virgil Umphenour did not have an answer for this, but stated that many attendees were supportive of more stringent restrictions. Mike Kramer stated that representatives of the Fairbanks AC always intended to support passage of Proposal 140 as written. Gale Vick and Mike Kramer stated that they did not believe Fairbanks AC support for RC 179 did not make a difference in the outcome of the Board's vote on Proposal 140. Mark Richards asked why some AC members believe commercial interests on the BOF are biased but guides on the BOG are not. Virgil Umphenour stated that this depends on the individual Board member. Gale Vick stated that these BOF members were only willing to negotiate with Area M fishermen and not with AYK interests.

Al Barrette provided some context on how RC 179 time limits were determined based on fish passage times.

Consideration of Support of Test Fishery for Genetic Testing of Area M

Chinook: Motion to support by Mike Kramer; seconded by Jeff Lucas. Gale Vick gave details of proposed June test fishery. Mark Richards asked about cost of this test fishery. Gale Vick stated that this would be a line item, but did not believe it would be large; believes it is important for the AC to support. Motion passed by unanimous consent.

Discussion of Upcoming Vacancies on the BOF: Gale Vick stated that 3 seats will be up for appointment with at least 2 likely to be vacant. Mark Richards asked

if there are any potential candidates that the Fairbanks AC might support. Gale Vick stated that at this point there are not.

Fisheries Subcommittee Recommendations on Statewide Proposals: Gale Vick referred AC members to the meeting packet with comments from the fisheries subcommittee on statewide proposals and asked that the AC support subcommittee recommendations to be submitted to the Board.

Regarding Proposal 164, Chuck Derrick feels that the Board might make guides and transporters register.

Proposal 166 would establish statewide bag limits on personal use fisheries. Chuck Derrick stated that the proposal sponsor is implying that users harvest full household limit in both Chitina and Southcentral dipnet fisheries. Harvest numbers do not support this, which means that there is no problem to be addressed by this proposal. If households are using both permits this suggests that they are not meeting their needs through 1 permit. This may indicate that the household limits should be increased. Gale Vick stated that the Department is opposed to this proposal. Chuck Derrick intends to submit his comments and harvest data with comments on this proposal.

Levi Lewellyn asked about Proposal 165 prohibiting guide services from operating in subsistence fisheries. He opposes this proposal because it is an absolute prohibition that does not account for differences in individual fisheries. The fisheries subcommittee voted to oppose this proposal. Virgil Umphenour stated that there are rural residents who use guides in these fisheries because they are unable to meet their subsistence needs locally.

Motion by Jeff Lucas, seconded by Austin Smith to accept subcommittee recommendations on statewide proposals. Motion passed by unanimous consent.

Discussion of Upcoming Comment Deadlines and Meeting Dates: In order to meet before April 10 BOF comment deadline, the full AC would need to meet early to approve subcommittee comments. Motion to allow fisheries subcommittee to submit proposals for next year's BOF meeting to be approved by the full AC in the fall by Virgil Umphenour; seconded by Levi Lewellyn. Subcommittee will meet on April 3rd in order to submit proposals by April 10th deadline.

Report by Andy Gryska on Chatanika Whitefish Spear Fishery: This fishery was closed in 1994 and re-opened by permit only in 2007. This year 300 permits were issued. Online reporting started this year. 425 applicants for 300 permits this year; all reports were returned. 181 households fished; 764 fish harvested. Participation and harvest rates have been consistent over time since reopening of fishery. Online application period is open for 2 weeks and permits are randomly selected.

Al Barrette said that based on data it appears that more permits could be issued. Andy Gryska would like to run this fishery for few years at the current level before increasing.

Virgil Umphenour asked if change from in-person permit application to online application has changed participation rate. This has been consistent over time. Jeff Lucas asked if unused permits are reissued. That has not been the practice in the past.

Board of Game 2023-24 Call for Proposals: Proposals are due May 1st. Game/trap subcommittee will meet March 29th at 6PM.

Other: none

IX. Adjourn: Chair at 8:43PM.

Minutes Recorded by Mark Oppe