

Unit 23 Working Group Meeting May 11-12, 2012 – Kotzebue, Alaska Meeting Summary

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1.0 Introduction

The Unit 23 Working Group met on May 10-11, 2012, in Kotzebue, Alaska, at the Northwest Arctic Borough (NWAB) Assembly Chambers. The 20-member Working Group was formed in 2008 to discuss fall hunting conflicts between local hunters, nonlocal hunters and big game commercial service providers (guides, transporters) in Game Management Unit (GMU) 23, in northwest Alaska.¹ The group is working together by consensus to develop solutions to fall hunting conflicts. The group's advisory recommendations are sent to regulatory boards, land and wildlife management agencies, and others to evaluate and consider for implementation. Working Group members are listed in Attachment 1 and others in attendance in Attachment 2.²

The May 10-11, 2012 meeting agenda is in Attachment 3. The objectives of the meeting were to:

- Hear updates on progress being made on Working Group recommendations.
- Discuss the 2011 hunting season and preparation for the 2012 season.
- Hear public comment (in person and through toll-free call-in).
- Discuss other topics raised by Working Group members, and the future of the Working Group.

In addition to the scheduled agenda topics, the Working Group heard comments from Representative Reggie Joule (p. 7).

¹ See Unit 23 Working Group's project web site for additional information and previous meeting summaries: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=wildlifeplanning.unit23>

² Jan Caulfield facilitated the meeting. Contact information: 114 S. Franklin St., Ste. 203, Juneau, AK 99801, 907-523-4610, janc@gci.net, www.jancaulfield.com

Section 2.0 lists next steps and assignments to follow through on Working Group recommendations. Section 3.0 is a general summary of information presented and the group's discussion, including the status of recommendations from previous meetings. Section 4.0 addresses future meetings. Public comments are summarized in Section 5.0.

All Unit 23 Working Group meetings are open to the public. Much of the May 10-11 meeting was broadcast on public radio station KOTZ (including web broadcast). Public comments were welcomed in person and teleconference on Friday afternoon, May 11.

2.0 Recommendations & Assignments

The following tasks will be done to continue progress on recommendations made by the Working Group:

- Letter re: Ambler Mine District Road (Section 3.2, below) – The Working Group will send a letter to the Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (DOT&PF) regarding the proposed Ambler Mining District Access Road. Assignment: Jan Caulfield draft, Working Group review
- BGCSB Investigator (Section 3.5, below) – The Working Group set up a subgroup to express support for continuing the work of this investigator and to consider how it could be funded (or to consider other options). Subgroup members include: Lee Anne Ayres USFWS; Frank Hays NPS; Shelly Jacobson BLM; in consultation with Working Group members Pete Schaeffer, Joe Schuster, Zaz Staheli, Phil Driver, Ted Spraker, and in coordination with the Alaska State Troopers.
- Future of the Unit 23 Working Group (Section 4) – A subgroup was formed to look at options to fund annual meetings of the Working Group. Subgroup members include: Shelly Jacobson, LeeAnne Ayres, Frank Hays, assisted by Steve Machida, ADF&G. It was suggested that the Working Group write a letter to Governor Parnell requesting funding in the state budget (have everyone sign with original signatures). If state funding can't be secured, consider other options.

3.0 Summary of Working Group Presentations & Discussion

This section provides a brief summary of presentations and Working Group discussion at the May 2012 meeting.

3.1 2011 Hunting Season and Data

Jim Dau, ADFG Wildlife Biologist, presented the following information (a link to Jim's PowerPoint presentation can be found on the Unit 23 Working Group's project website):

- 2009 Caribou herd census: The July 2009 census count of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd (WACH) was 348,000 caribou, down from a high of 490,000 in 2003 and 377,000 in 2007. Census photos were again taken in 2011, but the count is not complete. The herd has declined at an annual rate of approximately 4-6% each year since 2003 and ADFG expects this trend to continue.
- Caribou migration routes and hunting success: In fall 2011, caribou were widely distributed throughout Unit 23 during the migration, and the migration was

relatively early. There was good access to caribou by hunters from local communities. In response to a question, Jim noted that prior to moving south, caribou were widely spread all along the western North Slope in 2011.

This differed from 2009 and 2010, when the caribou were not widely distributed along the North Slope – and then migrated through Unit 23 much farther to the east, through Ivishak pass, down past Ambler, Kobuk and Shungnak. Migrations also occurred later in those years (well into October). Local hunting success for many villages was the worst in 2010 that Jim has ever seen. Villages in the western part of the region (Noatak, Kivalina) did not get caribou, although hunting was good farther east in Shungnak and Ambler.

Jim noted that local hunters are more sensitive to hunting conflicts and raise more complaints with management agencies in years when caribou are less available in their areas and they are concerned about not being able to get meat.

- Numbers of nonlocal hunters: Less than 450 nonlocal hunters hunted in Unit 23 in 2011, about the same as in 2010 and down considerably from the high of nearly 800 in 2006. Levels in 2010 and 2011 are the lowest since data collection began in 1998. Declines in 2009 -2011 are likely due to the economic recession. In 2011, ninety percent of nonlocal hunters sought caribou, moose, or both. Other species harvested include bear, sheep, and muskox.
- Number of aircraft in contact with Kotzebue Federal Aviation Administration (FAA): Jim presented information that shows that “Part 91” aircraft activity (general aviation aircraft) increases substantially during each fall hunting season, while “Part 135” (commercial aircraft services such as ERA and Bering Air) is more consistent during the year. This data is only for aircraft communicating with Kotzebue FAA Flight Service, so may not include flights accessing the region from Bettles, Fairbanks, Galena or other locations.
- Hunting dates: The average peak time period for nonlocal hunting in Unit 23 has shifted to later dates over the years, with peak hunting now after mid-September (very little activity in August).
- Areas hunted: The Guide Use Areas (GUA) most heavily used by nonlocal hunters in 2011 were GUA 006 (Squirrel, Aggie, Eli Rivers) with an average nonlocal hunter density of 3.21 hunters/100 mi² and GUA 005 (Selawik, Lower Kobuk) with an average nonlocal hunter density of 2.11 hunters/100 mi². The density is down from prior years and fewer nonlocal hunters are visiting the region.
- Commercial service use: More than 65% of the nonlocal hunters used transporter services in 2011 (higher than in 2009, 2010); less than 10% used guide services, while about 25% used no commercial services.
- Camp locations: ADFG has compiled maps showing fall hunting camp locations from 2006-2011, using available data from aerial observations made by the National Park Service (NPS), ADFG and US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the Alaska State Troopers, as well as data provided by the Alaska Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development (DCCED). The data from DCCED is the locations (lat./long.) of camps, drop-off and pick-up points provided voluntarily by guides and transporters, so does not represent all locations

used. This data is not complete, as it relies on data sources that are opportunistic and observations that are not randomly stratified.

- Caribou Locations, in relation to Existing Roads and Potential Road Routes: The ADFG PowerPoint presentation shows the location of collared caribou in fall, in relation to existing and potential roads in the region (proposed Umiat and Ambler Roads, and westward extensions of these roads). The westward extensions, particularly, would cross high use migration corridors from Shungnak westward to the coast.
- DCCED data re: guide and transporter camp locations and access points: The Working Group has long tried to get more accurate data about where big game guides and transporters set up camps and access the area for drop-off and pick-ups (latitude/longitude). The primary purpose is to evaluate whether caribou migrations (path and timing) are affected by the location of these areas of concentrated human activity during fall hunting, using this data in coordination with traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) that states that this is the case.

DCCED has asked guides and transporters to voluntarily provide this information in their annual hunt records (guides) and transporter activity reports. However, data is not complete. In 2009, only 75% of guides and 63% of transporters provided the data, in 2010 voluntary reporting declined to just 45% of guides and 54% of transporters. DCCED is facing budget issues that will make it difficult for them to continue to request this information. Further, it is not routine for DCCED to enter the spatial data into a database and share it with management agencies for analysis.

Individual Working Group members raised the following questions / points for discussion:

- General comments on 2011 season: The season was generally good with caribou available to local hunters, due to their distribution. However, concern about declining population trend and potential effect on local subsistence users.
- Herd numbers: In response to a question about the cause of the caribou herd decline, Jim suggested that it might be caused by past significant surface icing events that make it hard for caribou to feed in the winter (density independent) and/or by wolf or brown bear predation (density dependent). The decline is not caused by human harvest. Frank Hays, NPS, noted that the agency is working on habitat condition analysis, and will present information to the Unit 23 Working Group at a future meeting.
- Predation on caribou: The Working Group discussed whether increased predation (particularly by wolves) could be depleting the herd. Individual Working Group members offered the following points during the discussion; no recommendations were developed on this point.
 - There have been more wolves and wolf sign observed in the region. (Noted by Enoch Mitchell, Ron Moto, Melvin Lee, Cyrus Harris, Raymond Stoney)
 - There are fewer people trapping or hunting wolves. Perhaps a bounty should be considered.
 - Agencies (ADF&G) and others (local trappers, Alaska Trappers Association) can offer trapping clinics to encourage that activity.

The Advisory Committees should look at the trapping regulations and see if there are any impediments to local people taking wolves that could be addressed through regulation changes.

Demand for wolf hides for traditional uses (e.g., mukluks) is decreased.

There is value to talking about predation effect on the herd with this group, but not a need for the group to formulate any recommendations. It would not be likely that the group could formulate a consensus recommendation on intensive management. Consideration of intensive management would be within the purview of the Board of Game and would likely be contentious.

As the caribou population decreases (regardless of cause or causes) it is expected that conflicts among users will worsen. When people have more difficulty getting a caribou, they are more sensitive to conflicts with other hunters.

It is important to track the caribou population and to assess carrying capacity. It is important to collect complete information about all possible contributors to the herd's decline, including habitat/vegetation changes, insect harassment, weather/climate conditions (e.g. surface icing events), predation – so that data is available for consideration if more intensive management of the herd is considered in the future.

Subsistence food security is essential to the people of the region. If the caribou population continues its decline, there will likely be a point where some wildlife management action will be taken to try to reverse that trend.

- **Camp and access locations: Based on the many constraints noted above, the Working Group has decided that it is no longer worth pursuing camp and access location data through the guide hunt records and transporter activity reports submitted to DCCED.** Agency permits require this location data to be reported. It can be combined annually to show locations and supplemented by observations during area over flights, although the data set will not be complete.

3.2 Ambler Mining District Access Project

Ryan Anderson, Project Manager, and Paul Karczmarczyk, Environmental Analyst, from DOT&PF provided information about the State project evaluating potential transportation corridors serving the Ambler Mining District, located in GMU 23. The project is evaluating road, rail, barge and airport networks and address other infrastructure needs to support natural resource development, including power and communications. DOT&PF is currently in the reconnaissance stage, holding public meetings and collecting information. The project is now focused on routes connecting the Ambler Mining District to the east (toward the Dalton Highway), as it would be less expensive, has more material sites available, and fewer federally-managed Conservation System Units (CSU) would be affected. Baseline information is being collected for potential routes to the east.

A key issue is what type of access would be provided to the road, as opening a road to public access would substantially changes how the region's lands and resources are accessed and used by the public. The Commissioner has the authority to determine what type of access will be provided. How the road is financed may also determine this, as an industry-financed road may not be open to the public. The speakers noted that the City of Bettles had issued a resolution (# 2012-5) in support of the road, provided there is a

Controlled Use Area five miles on each side of the road, closed to hunting and hunting access except for residents of GMU 23 and 24 (Attachment 4).

There will be fieldwork with helicopter access in the upper Kobuk region in June and July 2012. The project will move into the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process later this year. However, a decision on who will have access via the road will be needed prior to that, as that will substantially affect the impact analysis.

DOT&PF will host another round of community meetings in December 2012. More information about the Ambler Mining District access project can be found at the DOT&PF project website: www.ambleraccess.alaska.gov

The Working Group also reviewed a letter sent by the Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group (WACHWG) to DOT&PF with comments on Roads to Resources (Attachment 5). The letter focused on concerns with community health impacts, impacts on the caribou herd, and on the people who depend on it. The types of studies requested in WACHWG April 2012 letter would be done during an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process.

Individual Working Group members offered the following remarks and/or questions:

- The access question needs to be addressed early in project planning and there needs to be long-term certainty on this point.
- An individual working group member expressed concern with Bettles' recommendation that the road be open to some members of the public (residents of Unit 23 and 24), but not all.
- Q: Are road routes to the west out of consideration? A: Will likely be evaluated as an alternative under NEPA, but not likely to be the proposed action.
- Q: Will there be work this summer on potential health impacts on people and their communities? A: Yes, DOT&PF will be coordinating with the Department of Health and Social Services regarding community health impacts, as well as with the ADF&G Subsistence Division.
- Concern about continued access to traditional subsistence sites (e.g., berry picking).
- Suggestion of connecting communities to a regional road via small spur roads with restricted access.
- Q: When will potential costs be available to review? A: Northern Economics is evaluating costs/benefits. Looking at potential for State and/or public/private partnership. Not evaluating use of federal funds.
- Dust control is an important issue.
- Q: Would railroad solve the access issues? A: Must tie to an existing railway system, or setup a separate entity. Uncertain if Alaska Railroad Corporation is interested. Railroad cost is 2 to 2.5 times that of a road (can't do the shorter routes, which raises the cost).
- If, ten to twenty years from now, the road interrupts access to caribou for subsistence, is there a plan to compensate the people for this loss?

ACTION – The Working Group decided to send a letter to the DOT&PF Commissioner regarding the Ambler Mining District proposed road, requesting that the group be added to the project contact list as an interested party, and restating relevant points raised by the WACHWG (Attachment 5) regarding potential impacts to the caribou herd and potential increase in user conflicts during fall hunting.

Communication, Coordination & Enforcement

3.3 Remarks by Representative Reggie Joule

Rep. Joule visited the Working Group meeting and offered the following comments:

- Recommends that the Unit 23 Working Group continue to meet, at least annually. There are many potential changes in the region, including development of overland transportation routes. While these are important for the region, it is essential that resources be developed in a way that protects food security for the region's residents, and that local residents can provide input on how to mitigate impacts. Consider solutions such as establishing a corridor with access restrictions (such as on the haul road).
- The Working Group would need to make a proposal for additional funding and make a case for it continuing (documenting accomplishments). Look forward to why it would be beneficial for the group to continue to meet. Submit this information through Rep. Joule or Sen. Olson's offices, or go directly through a state agency for inclusion in the Governor's budget for that agency.
- A group like this can help assure that baseline information is collected and that there is appropriate balance as the region's resources are accessed and developed. Both traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) and scientific information must be applied.
- The group should consider whether there are other entities to collaborate with in addressing food security (other arctic commissions).
- Regarding the investigator that served in the region in 2010 and 2011 (via contract with DCCED), Rep. Joule noted that there is not funding in the state budget for 2012. Both Unit 23 and Anaktuvuk Pass are areas where conflicts can be high during fall hunting. Suggest that Unit 23 and others continue to make the case for the need for this additional enforcement, as well as more regulation of transporter services. Consider whether North Slope Borough would contribute funding to an expanded effort?

In discussion, individual working group members offered remarks:

- Food security is linked to social / community health and security. Threats to food security in the arctic include climate change, as well as impacts from human development. Concern about marine mammals feeding on food sources contaminated by pollutants. Uncertain that regulatory processes are capable of responding to needed food and community security.
- The Working Group should continue. If the herd is declining, it is likely that complaints and conflict will increase, rather than lessen.

- Appreciate what the group's work has done for the community of Noatak and wants it to continue. How could working group be funded?
- It may be possible for the USFWS to contribute funding for the contract investigator. July 6 is the deadline for these types of funding agreements.

3.4 Pilot Orientation in GMU 23

In 2010, a new regulation took affect (proposed by Unit 23 Working Group and approved by Board of Game) that requires a one-time online orientation session for aircraft pilots transporting big game or meat in Unit 23. A pilot may not transport parts of big game with an aircraft without having, in their possession, a certificate of successful completion of a department-approved education course. (Note: This provision does not apply to transportation between state-maintained airports.)

Meghan Nedwick, ADFG Education Associate, conducted an evaluation of the requirement (surveyed those who've taken test, as well as regional Fish and Game Advisory Committees) and presented the following information:

- As of May 8, 2011, 200 pilots had taken the test, including 173 Alaska residents and 27 non-residents. There were 15 pilots who took the test between November 2011 and May 2012.
- Forty pilots (of 170) responded to the survey. Results from pilots:
 1. How well did the pilot orientation prepare you to operate in Unit 23? – 30% not helpful, 45% somewhat, 25% very helpful
 2. Did the pilot orientation make you aware of user conflict issues that you did not know about before? – 17.5% no; 45% somewhat; 37.5% very
 3. Will the information help you operate your aircraft in ways to avoid user conflicts in GMU 23? – 30% no, 12.5% somewhat; 32.5% yes; 25% NA
- Only the Kotzebue Fish and Game Advisory Committee (AC) responded. One AC member responded that conflicts have increased; others did not know or did not respond. The AC indicated that there is decreased wasted meat. All AC members indicated that disturbances from aircraft use are still occurring. All AC members indicated they did not know if the pilot orientation requirement makes a difference in aircraft disturbance of wildlife.

The following comments were made in Working Group discussion:

- Q: Which question on test was most frequently missed? A: ADFG Information Technology does not track results of tests in a way that can answer this question.
- Enforcement officers do check to ensure that pilots have taken the orientation. Compliance is good. It is important to ensure that Troopers are aware of the pilot orientation requirement.
- ADFG has a database of those who have taken the orientation. This could be useful to notify pilots of relevant information in the future.
- The orientation is a reasonable one-time requirement, and raises pilot awareness. Only 15 pilots have taken it since November 2011.

- The emphasis is on using this type of education to avoid/reduce user conflicts, instead of additional restrictions. Pilots need to understand that this approach is more beneficial to them than restrictions.
- Requested that Meghan Nedwick send a copy of the pilot orientation materials again to the agency members on the Working Group, so they can check them with their permit stipulations to make sure they are consistent.
- If pilots are surveyed again in the future, ask them: “What types of information do pilots who have operated in Unit 23 think that new pilots should know?” This could be used to improve pilot orientation materials.
- Noted that updated land status maps are part of the orientation requirement, so pilots are aware of where private land is located. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) is updating land status information annually and making it available on DVDs.

3.5 Enforcement / DCCED Investigator

In 2010 and 2011, the Alaska State Legislature provided funding to the DCCED, Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing to hire a seasonal investigator (non-permanent employee) to be based in Unit 23 during the fall hunting season. The investigator focused on compliance with the Big Game Commercial Services Board’s (BGCSB) regulations for the big game commercial services industry. A copy of a March 2012 report to the Legislature prepared by DCCED is attached (Attachment 6).

DCCED’s seasonal investigator John Clark and permanent investigator Lee Strout spent a total of 32 days in the field in Unit 23 in 2011. With 117 interviews conducted and 72 field inspections made, Mr. Clark opened 14 investigations of violations of BGCSB statutes and regulations in GMU 23.

There is no state funding in the Fiscal Year 2013 budget to continue the work of the seasonal investigator focused on GMU 23.

The following points were made during discussion:

- The Working Group expressed support for continuing to have an investigator focusing on compliance with BGCSB requirements for guides and transporters operating in Unit 23. The following points were made:
 - BLM noted that its enforcement staff is spread thin statewide; their guide and transporter permit stipulations require compliance with other regulations, so having the DCCED investigator follow-up on compliance with the BGCSB requirements for guides and transporters is relevant to their enforcement responsibilities.
 - The presence of the investigator increases overall enforcement capacity and attention in Unit 23. This encourages operators to remain in compliance with all requirements and indicates to local residents that monitoring and enforcement of the commercial service industry is a priority.
 - A special investigator may be lower profile and more able to see what is actually going on in the field.

Compliance with BGCSB regulations is a civil, rather than criminal, matter and infractions can be followed through the system more expeditiously than criminal cases.

- **ACTION** – The working group set up a subgroup to express support for continuing the work of this investigator and to consider how it could be funded (or to consider other options). Subgroup members include: Lee Anne Ayres USFWS; Frank Hays NPS; Shelly Jacobson BLM; in consultation with Working Group members Pete Schaeffer, Joe Schuster, Zaz Staheli, Phil Driver, Ted Spraker, and in coordination with the Alaska State Troopers.

As noted at past Working Group meetings, the federal and state agencies have increased coordination with each other and with the NANA Trespass program and Northwest Arctic Borough in the past several years to improve enforcement in GMU 23 during the fall hunting season.

State and Federal Agency Planning and Permitting

3.6 Update on Big Game Guide Concession Program

Valerie Baxter, Natural Resource Specialist, reported that the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is expecting to implement the new guide concession program beginning January 1, 2015.³ The program will establish guide concession areas (generally matching the boundaries of the existing Guide Use Areas) on State of Alaska land and possibly BLM land. The State will enter into contracts with guides in each concession area. A new development is that the Legislature has asserted approval authority over the guide concession program, rather than having the decision to proceed under the authority of the DNR Commissioner. The State is not currently proposing to establish any similar management program for big game transporter services.

3.7 National Park Service

NPS Western Arctic National Parklands Superintendent Frank Hays addressed the following topics:

- **Permitting** – The NPS issues Commercial Use Authorizations (CUAs) for commercial *transporter* visitor services for the Noatak National Preserve. For 2012-2013, it will eliminate the former limit on the numbers of permitted transporters and clients. Instead, CUA holders will be authorized to transport non-federally qualified caribou hunters into the area west of the Kugururok River and Maiyumerak Mountains after September 15th, unless authorized by the Superintendent to provide services before this date. The Superintendent will consult with CUA holders, local villages and other agencies between August 15-September 15 to discuss the status of the caribou migration across the Preserve and to determine if access prior to September 15 will be allowed.

The Noatak CUA established by the Board of Game is not affected by these conditions. Pilots of private aircraft are not affected by these conditions.

³ For more information, see the program website at <http://dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/gcp/> or contact Clark Cox, DNR, Division of Mining, Land and Water, at clark.cox@alaska.gov, 907-269-8565.

Commercial transporter services for Dall sheep and moose sport hunters are not affected by this provision.

In response to a question, it was clarified that guides permitted to operate in the Preserve would still have a limit on the number of clients they can bring in.

- Research Projects – The NPS is conducting the following research in the Noatak Preserve:
 - A TEK study with a survey and guided interviews in Noatak, Kiana, Noorvik and Kotzebue, through a cooperative agreement with Dr. Gary Kofinas (University of Alaska Fairbanks).
 - Visitor questionnaire regarding recreation, to gather data about length of stay, and camp and access points.
 - Monitor sound in the Preserve (aircraft and boat motor noise).
 - Ongoing work with ADFG, monitoring the timing and pathways of caribou migration through satellite collars.

Individual Working Group made the following points during discussion:

- In setting the CUA boundaries, the NPS avoided some landing strips that are most important to transporters, while still achieving the management goal.
- Q: Is it possible that pilots who are not commercial transporters will increase their use of the areas prior to September 15, since they won't face the competition with transported hunters? A: NPS will monitor to see if this becomes an issue.
- While the NPS is dropping the client limit for transporters, it still requires that camps be five miles apart from each other to control density.

3.8 US Fish and Wildlife Service

Selawik National Wildlife Refuge Manager Lee Anne Ayres presented the following information:

- Planning – The Selawik Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) was completed in 2011. The plan delineated an area of the Kobuk Delta where commercial use by transporters and guides will not be authorized. In this area, Refuge lands are intertwined with private land and there is no previous pattern of commercial use. Local subsistence hunters heavily use the area, accessing it by boat. Most access sites, camp locations, and desirable hunting sites are private allotments. The plan does include a provision for the Refuge Manager to approve access for commercial use to this area on a case-by-case basis.
- 2011 Commercial Use Update – The Selawik Wildlife Refuge issued special use permits in 2011 to one big game guide and three transporters. These businesses served only 21 clients in 2011 (down from 64 in 2010).

3.9 Bureau of Land Management

BLM Field Manager Shelly Jacobson addressed the following points:

- Land status maps – BLM is keeping updated land status maps for Unit 23, which include topographic information. The maps are available on BLM and ADFG web

sites and are also available on DVD for distribution to permittees. The maps are part of the curriculum for the pilot orientation and test.

- 2011 Permitting – In 2011, BLM issued 10 special recreation permits in Unit 23 (four for transporter permits in the Squirrel River area; six for guides.) Transporters must have a permit to operate on BLM lands, but not on State lands. In the Squirrel River area, there were 45 guided clients and 59 transported clients in 2011, which is a decline from 2010. Two BLM staff work on permits and compliance, including visits to camps in the field.
- Enforcement – BLM has recently hired a ranger/pilot that will increase BLM’s enforcement capacity and ability to participate in coordinated enforcement actions with other agencies and NANA Trespass.
- Planning for Squirrel River Area – BLM is preparing a special management plan and Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Squirrel River area. Four alternatives likely to be considered are:
 - A. No Action
 - B. “Maximum Commercial Use” – evaluating a management scenario with 10 guides, unlimited transporters, and unlimited clients
 - C. “Adaptive Management” – evaluating a scenario with managers tracking animal population and movements and visitor use trends, and adapting management. Under this scenario, there would be four permitted guides and four permitted transporters in the Squirrel River area, or the number identified through DNR’s guide concession program (whichever is lower). It is uncertain if there would be a client limit under this alternative. This alternative would also evaluate using a delayed start date, similar to that put into place by the NPS for the Noatak Preserve.
 - D. “Maximum Subsistence Use” – evaluating a scenario with no commercial use allowed.

The Squirrel River draft plan is expected to be out for public review in July 2012, with a decision by April 2013. The Northwest Arctic Borough and DNR are formal cooperators in the plan, and there have been numerous public meetings and consultations with villages. It was noted that BLM also have a five-mile distance required between commercial service camp locations.

- Guide Concession Program – BLM would like to be covered under the State’s guide concession program, but expects it will have some kind of similar system if this is not the case.

Individual Working Group made the following points during discussion:

- One group member noted that limits big game commercial services on BLM and other federal lands could have the consequence of concentrating more non-local hunting on Borough and State lands.
- Another group member requested that limits be placed on the number of transporters servicing the Squirrel River area. In response, Shelly noted that this would be evaluated under Alternative C in the draft plan.

4.0 Future of Unit 23 Working Group

The Unit 23 Working Group decided it would like to meet again in the spring of 2013 in Kotzebue, if funding can be found to continue the group (the group's initial funding has been exhausted). The group sees value in continuing communication and updates, to push for progress on the recommendations it has made to date and to be ready to respond if there is an increase in conflict in the future.

The Working Group expressed their perspectives about the value of the group and what it has accomplished, noting the following:

- Working Group members value coming together to exchange information, to share cross-user perspectives and concerns, and to maintain relationships with one another. Agency representatives expressed that what they learn while meeting with the group helps them with their work on management issues.
- While user conflicts have calmed down, the problem hasn't gone away and there is a potential for it to get worse as the caribou herd declines.
- There will be future issues and proposals that could affect hunter access and user conflicts, such as proposed roads/access, herd population trends, etc. There is value in this group staying together to keep communication open.
- The Working Group improves communication between local residents, commercial service providers, agencies and management boards. It can be a good avenue to share the perspective of villages with agencies and others, and to also take information back out to the villages to share.
- Encourage the AC members represented on the Working Group to take information back to their villages to share.
- It would be desirable to more actively share information about the Working Group with the villages (Caribou Trails or a separate newsletter), and to get more public participation at the meetings.
- Need to let the Advisory Committees and Resource Advisory Councils address biological issues related to the herd. This group must focus on user conflicts and ways to reduce those.
- Noted that when this group reaches consensus on a recommendation, it can be very effective, such as with regulation changes adopted by the Board of Game.

ACTION – A subgroup was formed to look at options to fund annual meetings of the Working Group. Group members include: Shelly Jacobson, LeeAnne Ayres and Frank Hays, assisted by Steve Machida, ADFG. It was suggested that the Working Group write a letter to Governor Parnell requesting funding in the state budget (have everyone sign with original signatures). If state funding can't be secured, consider other options.

5.0 Public / Other Agency Comments

Comments were welcomed from people attending the meeting in Kotzebue, as well as through a toll-free telephone line. The following points were during the comment period.

Marlene Moto, Deering

- Questioned whether there are hunting guides operating in the Deering area. Concern that there is not enough drawing permits available for musk ox. (In

response, Jim Dau noted that the musk ox hunt will be Tier II in 2012, which will favor local resident hunting. ADFG was recently in Deering helping residents complete permit applications for the Tier II hunt.

Attamuk Shiedt, Kotzebue –

- A guide recently told him that he would be switching from guiding to operating as a transporter / outfitter, as there are fewer restrictions and more profit in transport services.

Unit 23 Working Group Membership
& Attendance at May 10-11, 2012 Meeting

Name	Affiliations
Lee Anne Ayres	US Fish and Wildlife Service
Valerie Baxter	Alaska Department of Natural Resources
Jim Dau	Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Phil Driver	Alaska Professional Hunting Association Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group
Cyrus Harris	Maniilaq Association
Frank Hays	National Park Service
Shelly Jacobson	Bureau of Land Management
Cliff Judkins	Board of Game
Victor Karmun (unable to attend)	Northwest Arctic Regional Advisory Council Kotzebue Sound Advisory Committee
Melvin Lee	Upper Kobuk Advisory Committee
Enoch Mitchell	Noatak/Kivalina Advisory Committee
Ron Moto, Sr.	North Seward Peninsula Advisory Committee
Noah Naylor	Northwest Arctic Borough
Pete Schaeffer	Kotzebue Sound Advisory Council
Joe Schuster	Alaska Professional Hunting Association Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group
Ted Spraker	Board of Game Big Game Commercial Services Board
Zazell Staheli	Big Game Commercial Services Board
Raymond Stoney	Northwest Arctic Regional Advisory Council Lower Kobuk Advisory Committee Big Game Commercial Services Board Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group
Tim Towarak (unable to attend)	Federal Subsistence Board
Alex Whiting	Kotzebue IRA

**Public & Agency Attendance List
Unit 23 Working Group Meeting
May 10-11, 2012 – Kotzebue, Alaska**

Name	Affiliation
Jared Cummings	Golden Eagle Outfitters
John Erlich	Bureau of Land Management
Marci Johnson	National Park Service
Representative Reggie Joule	Alaska State Legislature
Jim Lawler	National Park Service
Steve Machida	Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Karmen Monigold	public
Meghan Nedwick	Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Brandon Nelson	public
Ernie Norton	Kikiktagruk Inupiat Corporation (KIC)
Anne Orlando	US Fish and Wildlife Service
Ashley Reed	Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Attamuk Shiedt, Sr.	Maniilaq Association
Dan Stevenson	National Park Service
Vee Venters	public
Charolotte Westing	Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Public comments presented by:

Marlene Moto, Deering
Attamuk Shiedt, Kotzebue

Unit 23 Working Group May 10-11, 2012

Northwest Arctic Borough Assembly Chambers
163 Lagoon Street, Kotzebue, Alaska

Thursday, May 10
3:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Friday, May 11
9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Public radio station KOTZ will broadcast the meeting on Friday, May 11, 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. Tune to 89.9 FM or AM 720, or listen via the web at www.kotz.org

AGENDA

Meeting Objectives

- Update on status of Unit 23 Working Group advisory recommendations made to date
- Discuss 2011 hunting season & preparation for 2012 season
- Information on special topics
- Public comment session – Friday, May 11, 1:15 – 2:15 p.m.
- Discussion of additional topics raised by Working Group members

Thursday, May 10

Coffee/Refreshments

3:00 p.m. Welcome, Introductions – Review Agenda / Revise if necessary

- List of Unit 23 Working Group members (*Attachment 1*)
- Unit 23 Working Group – Review status of recommendations made by the Working Group at past meetings (*Attachment 2*)

3:20 p.m. 2011 Hunting Season & Data

- Caribou population, 2011 harvest data, and available data regarding hunting camp locations – Jim Dau, Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) -- *See additional time for discussion of location data on Friday morning*
- Working Group comments regarding 2011 hunting season / Identify any topics for further discussion on Friday

4:20 p.m. Break

4:40 p.m. Ambler Mining District Access Project

Discussion with Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF) on access and potential hunting impacts for the Ambler Mining District Access Project, at the request of the Working Group – Ryan Anderson & Paul Karczmarczyk, DOT&PF

6:00 p.m. Adjourn for the day

Friday, May 11

Coffee/Refreshments

Note that Friday, 9:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. broadcast on KOTZ and online at www.kotz.org

9:00 a.m. Introductions / Agenda Review for the day / Announcements

9:15 a.m. Communication, Coordination & Enforcement

- Evaluation of pilot education requirement (regulation in effect 2010 and 2011 hunting seasons) – Meghan Nedwick, ADF&G
- Enforcement report to Alaska State Legislature from the Alaska Department of Commerce and Economic Development (DCCED): report prepared by investigator who gathered information about transporter conduct in Unit 23 in 2011 – Quinten Warren, DCCED (*Attachment 3*)
- Enforcement coordination – 2011 and plans for 2012
- Additional topics related to improving communication and enforcement

10:30 a.m. Break

10:45 a.m. Location Data – Camps, Drop-off and Pick-up Points

- Review past Working Group recommendations and requests
- Current status and limitations of location data
- Objectives / potential use of more complete mapping of camps and access

11:30 a.m. Begin Update on State & Federal Management, Planning & Permitting – Agency presentations and Working Group discussion

- Guide Concession Program – Valerie Baxter, Alaska Department of Natural Resources (*Unit 23 Working Group comment letter to DNR provided in Attachment 4*)
- Noatak National Preserve commercial use permitting – Frank Hays, National Park Service

- 12:00 p.m. Lunch**
- 1:15 p.m. Public Comment Opportunity – Telephone Call-In & In-person comments**
To provide comments by phone, dial 1-800-315-6338, enter code 2323#.
To participate in Kotzebue, please come to the NWAB Assembly Chambers. Time per comment may be limited, to ensure opportunity for those who want to speak.
- 2:15 p.m. Continue Update on Federal Agency Planning & Permitting**
(This topic may begin prior to 2:15 p.m., depending upon participation in public comment opportunity)
- Selawik Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan (completed) – Lee Anne Ayres, US Fish and Wildlife Service
 - Squirrel River Management Plan (underway) – Shelly Jacobson, Bureau of Land Management
 - Other topics
- 3:30 p.m. Break**
- 3:45 p.m. Other Topics / Time for Open Discussion**
- Future of Unit 23 Working Group – Meet again in spring 2013?
(Note: It is not recommended that the Unit 23 Working Group become a subgroup of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group)
 - Other topics raised by Working Group members
- 5:00 p.m. Adjourn**

Additional information about the Unit 23 Working Group can be found at the project web site:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=wildlifepanning.unit23>



City of Bettles

P. O. Box 26023
Bettles, AK 99726
907-692-5191

Resolution 2012-5

A RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF THE STATE OF ALASKA BUILDING A YEAR-ROUND ROAD TO ACCESS THE AMBLER MINING DISTRICT USING THE BROOKS EAST CORRIDOR STARTING AT PROSPECT CREEK.

- WHEREAS, The City of Bettles has supported development of year-round road access to Bettles since its incorporation and continues to desire year-round road system access; and,
- WHEREAS, The City of Bettles has previously gone on public record in support of a State highway between Prospect and the Ambler Mining District on a route connecting the City of Bettles to the State road system (Resolutions 86-7, 90-9, 90-10, 90-11, 93-4); and,
- WHEREAS, The City of Bettles desires economic development which road system access would facilitate; and
- WHEREAS, The proposed road has been part of the ADOT&PF expansion plans for some time and has recently been receiving renewed attention from the State of Alaska; and
- WHEREAS, The present ice-road between Bettles and Prospect is difficult and expensive to open and maintain and is only open for a short period during the winter; and
- WHEREAS, Federal, State, and local governments, as well as local residents and businesses will benefit from the significantly reduced cost of living that highway access will bring; and
- WHEREAS, The Brooks East Corridor is the least expensive option being examined for constructing and maintaining overland access to the Ambler Mining District; and
- WHEREAS, Road access to the Ambler Mining District and the subsequent development of mines in that area would provide more than 500 full-time well-paying jobs for twenty-five to thirty years; and
- WHEREAS, Significant concerns in opposition to building this road and other roads in the Interior of Alaska need to be adequately addressed; now,

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, That the Bettles City Council by this resolution hereby declares our wholehearted support for the State of Alaska building a year-round road to access the Ambler Mining District using the Brooks East Corridor from Prospect Creek with a spur road connecting the City of Bettles to the road system, and urges the State of Alaska to address the concerns of the opposition to building this road by committing to the following prior to construction:

Gateway to the Arctic

1. Establishing an adequately funded program to mitigate the advance of ecosystem-threatening invasive weeds.
2. Establishing additional State Trooper posts at Ambler and Bettles.
3. Establishing a Controlled Use Area along the Ambler Mining District Access Road in Hunting Units 23 and 24 (AMDARCUA) five miles on either side of the road, including the drivable surface of the road, the entire length of the road: the AMDARCUA is closed to hunting except for residents of hunting units 23 and 24; however, big game, small game, and fur animals may be taken in the area by bow and arrow only. Motor boats, airboats, and hovercraft may not be launched from within the AMDARCUA, or used for hunting or fishing within AMDARCUA except by residents of units 23 and 24. Aircraft may not land on the road except for law enforcement purposes or in an emergency. Aircraft may be used to transport hunters, their gear, or parts of game within AMDARCUA. A snowmachine may be used to transport hunters, their hunting gear, or parts of game across the AMDARCUA from land outside the AMDARCUA to access land on the other side of the AMDARCUA. No motorized land vehicle may be used to transport hunters, their hunting gear, or parts of game within AMDARCUA except by residents of hunting units 23 and 24.
4. Establishing a mandatory hunter education program for all who want to hunt in units 23 and 24 that includes Native traditional knowledge of animals and their behavior, such as the prohibition of shooting the lead animal in a band of caribou to avoid affecting migration patterns.
5. Establishing a catch-and-release only fishing zone (except for residents of hunting units 23 and 24) within the AMDARCUA.

PASSED and APPROVED by a duly constituted quorum of the City Council of Bettles, Alaska
this 16th day of February, 2012.

SIGNED:

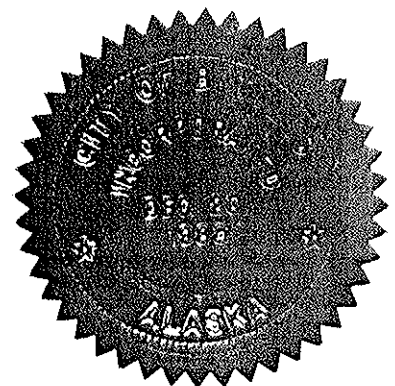


Mayor

ATTEST:



City Clerk



Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group

Goal: To work together to ensure the long-term conservation of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd and the ecosystem on which it depends, to maintain traditional and other uses for the benefit of all people now and in the future.

Chair: Roy Ashenfelter

Vice-Chair: Phil Driver

April 20, 2012 B

Governor Sean Parnell B
P.O. Box 110001 B
Juneau, AK 99811-0001 B

Dear Governor Parnell: B

As the State of Alaska evaluates the feasibility of various "Roads to Resources" projects, I would B like to submit the following request on behalf of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group B (Working Group). The Working Group is a permanent organization of stakeholders that represent B communities within the range of this herd, guides, transporters, environmentalists, nonlocal B hunters and reindeer herders. The purpose of this group is to ensure the conservation of the B Western Arctic Herd. B

We request that: B

1. 5 The State of Alaska fund a Community Health Impacts Assessment to identify potential B impacts of proposed roads on people and their communities within the range of the B Western Arctic Herd. This project could be structured using the Technical Guidance for B Health Impact Assessments in Alaska¹ report that identifies health effects categories B relevant to Alaskan resource development projects. The Food, Nutrition and Subsistence B Activity category (p. 29) appears to address the primary concerns of the Working Group, B including: B
 - a. 5 How changes in wildlife habitat, hunting patterns and food choices will influence B the diet and cultural practices of local communities; and B
 - b. 5 Project-specific impacts that may affect the availability of foods needed by local B communities to survive in a mixed cash and subsistence economy in rural Alaska. B
2. 5 That no decision be made regarding whether or not to build these roads until the B Community Health Impacts Assessment is completed with input from the communities, B and the final results provided to potentially affected communities. B

Working Group members feel that it is important that the State of Alaska consider projected B impacts of new roads on this herd as well as the people who depend upon it. This includes the B Ambler Mining District Access Project, the Foothills West Transportation Access project (Umiat) B and the Western Alaska Access Planning Study (Nome). The following topics are of primary B concern: B

1. 5 Road impacts on the Western Arctic Herd, including changes in movements, distribution, B and population size in response to infrastructure, disturbance and hunting pressure. B

¹ State of Alaska HIA Program, Department of Health and Social Services. July 2011. Technical Guidance for B Health Impact Assessment (HIA) in Alaska, v 1.0. B

B

Please Reply To: Caribou Working Group, P.O. Box 175, Nome, AK 99762
With copy of reply sent to 114 S. Franklin St., Ste. 203, Juneau, AK 99801

2. \ Impacts of roads on hunting access for local residents as well as visiting hunters, including B anticipated changes in harvest levels and the complexity of hunting regulations. B
3. \ Social and economic costs/benefits of road access on previously roadless communities, B addressing projected changes in reliance on and costs of commercial goods including B foods and fuels compared to costs associated with subsistence based culture and B economy. B
4. \ We feel that the cumulative effects of all road and development projects within the range B of the Western Arctic Herd should be considered in these analyses. B

The herd peaked around 2003 at a population size of 490,000 caribou and has since begun to B steadily decline. Low population levels, could significantly impact the communities that harvest B caribou from this herd. Increased access bringing greater numbers of hunters into traditional B subsistence hunting areas could greatly compound the effects of natural fluctuations in caribou B abundance. B

Working Group members from rural communities want to know how their subsistence activities B will be changed if roads are established through their hunting areas. The concerns we have B identified in #2 and #3 above are important in determining the social and economic costs of roads B on communities. Studies by ADFG on the Nelchina Caribou Herd regulations and harvest history² B illustrate the challenges of managing hunting in areas that have supported rural subsistence B hunters/communities and become accessible to large populations by roads. Restrictions B associated with hunting near industrial developments are also a concern. Increased off-road B access, including ORVs, boats and snowmachines, may also impact the behavior of the Western B Arctic Herd and other species, and make it more difficult for local hunters to obtain the meat they B need. B

The Working Group is not requesting that a social study be conducted to merely document the B effects of roads on subsistence users. That was done long ago³. Our objectives are to: 1) attempt B to predict specific impacts of the proposed roads on local residents; 2) provide this information to B affected communities to allow them to make informed decisions regarding whether or not to B build these roads; and 3) decide how to proceed. If it is decided to establish these roads, the B information from this project could be used to minimize or mitigate likely impacts. In order to B complete this process, the Working Group requests that no decision be made regarding whether B to establish these roads until the requested project be completed and its results provided to B potentially affected communities. B

Thank you for your consideration of our request. We look forward to your response. B

Sincerely, B

B
B
B


Roy Ashenfelter, Chair B

² Fall, J.A and W.E. Simeone. 2010. Overview of Nelchina Caribou Herd Regulation and Harvest History. B Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Special Publication No. BOG 2010-05. B

³ Wolf, R.J. and R.J. Walker. 1987. Subsistence economies in Alaska: Productivity, geography, and B development Impacts. Arctic Anthropology 24(2):56-81. B

B

CC: B

Cora Campbell, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Fish and Game B

Marc Luiken, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities B

William Streur, Commissioner, Alaska Department of Health and Social Services B

Jeff Haskett, Alaska Regional Director, US Fish and Wildlife Service B

Sue Masica, Alaska Regional Director, National Park Service B

ud Cribley, Alaska State Director, Bureau of Land Management B

Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group Members & Alternates B

B



STATE OF ALASKA
DEPARTMENT OF
COMMERCE
COMMUNITY AND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Office of the Commissioner)

Sean Parnell, Governor)
Susan K. Bell, Commissioner)

March 9, 2012 -

-
-

State of Alaska Legislative Offices -

State Capitol -

Juneau, AK 99801-1182 -

-

Dear Legislator, -

-

Attached is a Game Management Unit 23 Investigation and Enforcement Services report prepared -
by the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development, Division of -
Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing. -

-

Members of the legislature are invited to review the report. Questions may be directed to Don -
Habeger, Division Director for the Division of Corporations, Business, and Professional Licensing -
at 465-2536 or don.habeger@alaska.gov. -

-

Sincerely, -

-

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan K. Bell".

Susan K. Bell -

Commissioner -

-

Enclosure -

-

-

Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development

**BIG GAME COMMERCIAL SERVICES BOARD
GMU 23 Working Group
Investigation and Enforcement Services
Report to the Legislature ,**



March 2012

Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing

Big Game Commercial Services Board

www.commerce.alaska.gov/occ/pgui.htm

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Wildlife resource management in Alaska is accomplished through the cooperative efforts of Alaska's Departments of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development (DC ED); Fish and Game; and Public Safety. Collaboration between these state departments, as well as with federal wildlife management agencies and other stakeholders, is an important part of the stewardship of Alaska's wildlife.

The Big Game Commercial Services Board (Board), administered through DC ED, regulates and licenses the big game commercial services industry in Alaska. The Board also enforces its regulations through investigative and possible disciplinary action against commercial operator licensees who may violate licensing laws.

The Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing (Division) monitors compliance with Board regulations through investigative and enforcement efforts conducted by an investigative unit. One permanent investigator assigned to the Board is responsible for investigation and enforcement efforts in Alaska's 26 game management units (GMUs).

In 2008, the Board was invited to participate in a 21-member¹ working group established to address hunting and game management concerns in the area encompassing Kotzebue Sound and the Chukchi Sea, known as Game Management Unit 23 (GMU 23).²

The 26th Alaska State Legislature allocated \$63,000 to the Board for the purpose of hiring a second, seasonal investigator for FY2011, to provide additional investigation and enforcement services within GMU 23. With the passage of the FY2012 operating budget, the Legislature allocated \$65,000 to the Board to provide the additional investigative and enforcement services within this unit.

Investigator John Clark was hired as the seasonal investigator, and worked for a term of six months. Clark spent time both in the field and in the Division's Anchorage office. He and the Division's permanent investigator, Lee Strout, spent a total of 32 days traveling within GMU 23. With 117 interviews conducted, and 72 field inspections made, Clark opened 14 investigations of violations of Board statutes and regulations within GMU 23.

¹ See Appendix A, GMU 23 Working Group

² See Appendix B, GMU 23 Map

OBJECTIVES

1. 2 Conduct field inspections within GMU 23 to verify licensees' compliance with statutes and regulations related to big game commercial services.
2. 2 Interview hunters to determine if any transporter violations, game animal waste, or other illegal activity occurred and review the quality of their hunting experience in Alaska.
3. 2 Investigate, enforce, and report any violation of statutes and regulations relating to big game commercial services.
- 4.G Cooperate with state and federal wildlife management agencies, permitting agencies for commercial operations on public lands, and regional organizations.

RESULTS

OBJECTIVE 1: Conduct field inspections within GMU 23 to verify licensees' compliance with statutes and regulations related to big game commercial services.

Clark spent a total of 25 days traveling within GMU 23, compared to 22 days spent traveling within the area during the previous year. A total of 62 camps were inspected. Some of the camps were inspected from the air due to their remote locations. In addition, Strout spent seven days traveling to Kotzebue, Coldfoot, and Happy Valley, and conducted 10 additional field inspections within these areas.

Clark was able to increase the number of field inspections conducted, and to travel deeper into GMU 23 by using an air taxi service to fly to camps in remote locations previously unreachable when traveling with the Alaska State Troopers.

Minor violations observed in the field, such as failure to keep a camp up to state or federal requirements, were enforced and corrected by licensees with no further license action required.

OBJECTIVE 2: Interview hunters to determine if any transporter violation, game animal waste, or other illegal activity had occurred during their hunt, as well as to review the quality of their hunting experience in Alaska.

Compared to 75 the previous year, Clark conducted approximately 100 interviews within GMU 23, and Strout conducted 17 interviews. In an effort to avoid conflict between communities and hunters, guides, and operators who visit the region each fall, the GMU Working Group recommended improving communications by, not only questioning interviewees about transport and harvest methods, and providing them with information and regulations as needed, but by also giving them an opportunity to ask questions or discuss concerns related to their hunting experience.

Overall, hunters expressed satisfaction with their Alaska hunting experiences. However, as in the previous hunting season, they voiced their need for meat-processing facilities in Kotzebue and concern with the high cost of transporting trophies.

OBJECTIVE 3: Investigate, enforce, and report any violation of statutes and regulations relating to big game commercial services.

Clark and Strout traveled a total of 32 days within GMU 23, conducted at least 117 interviews, and completed 72 field inspections. Some minor violations were corrected in the field, without further enforcement actions. In an effort to educate and prevent violations, both Clark and Strout reviewed regulations with licensees. Due to increased and more extensive field inspections, the investigators were able to speak with licensees who had not been contacted in previous years. A total of 14 new investigations were opened as a result of field inspections and interviews conducted during FY12.

The following is a summary of investigations opened by Clark; several were closed with advisory letters, and the remaining investigations are pending final resolution.

- Two investigations of operating in the field without licenses on person were closed with advisory letters to licensees³
- One investigation into operating on Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land without proper permitting was investigated but closed - insufficient evidence; advisory letter was issued⁴
- One investigation for operating in an area for which guide was not registered, and for operating without written contracts; investigation pending⁵
- One investigation of sub-legal horn size and not having a current harvest tag; investigation pending⁶
- One investigation of a guide operating in the field without a licensed assistant guide; investigation pending⁷

³ AS 08.54.720(a)(6)

⁴ AS 08.54.720(a)(8)(A)

⁵ AS 08.54.720(a)(5)

⁶ AS 08.54.720(a)(8)(A)

- Multiple violations by a licensee of submitting false hunt records and failure to file hunt records; investigation pending⁸
- One investigation involving wasted moose and guiding outside of registered area; investigation pending⁹
- One investigation of trespass on Native land; investigation pending¹⁰
- One investigation involving an assistant guide directing client to shoot illegal sheep; investigation pending¹¹
- One investigation of a master guide trespassing on private lands; investigation pending
- Two investigations of horns being harvested before meat; investigation pending¹²
- One investigation of failure to report a federal offense conviction on an application; investigation pending¹³

OBJECTIVE 4: Coordinate with state and federal wildlife management agencies to investigate big game hunting violations, and with agencies involved in issuing permits for commercial operations involving hunting on public lands, and with other regional organizations.

Clark and Strout continued to work with representatives from the State of Alaska Wildlife Enforcement, State of Alaska Fish and Game, US Fish and Wildlife, Bureau of Land Management, The Northwest Arctic Borough, and the NANA Regional Corporation on investigations and issues of concern within GMU 23. Specifically, Clark coordinated with the BLM and several Native organizations to investigate trespass issues by operators registered with the State of Alaska.

A new cooperative relationship with the National Park Service was developed during FY12. The Division has been invited to accompany the Park Service on river patrol for nine days in July of 2012. Acceptance of this invitation is contingent upon continued funding of the temporary investigative position.

⁷ AS 08.54.720(a)(8)(A)

⁸ AS 08.54.720(a)(5); AS 08.54.760; 12 AA 320(a)(2)(D)

⁹ AS 08.54.720(a)(15); AS 08.54.720(a)(5)

¹⁰ AS 08.54.720(a)(4)

¹¹ AS 08.54.720(a)(8)(A)

¹² AS 08.54.720(a)(8)(A)

¹³ AS 08.54.720(a)(3)

SUMMARY

The \$65,000 allocation provided additional investigative and enforcement services to the Big Game Commercial Services Board, administered through the Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing, for the purpose of focusing on commercial services providers' conduct and regulatory compliance within GMU 23. The allocation also allowed increased coordination between state, federal, and regional entities to effectively manage Alaska's wildlife resources.