

**DENALI SUBSISTENCE RESOURCE COMMISSION
MINUTES**

Wednesday, February 18, 2026
10 am or until business is completed

Teleconference Call-In Number: 866-810-1272
Participant Code: 5366629

Minutes approved by Vice Chair Penny Green 3/13/2026

The Superintendent of Denali National Park and Preserve and the Chairperson of the Denali Subsistence Resource Commission announce a forthcoming meeting of the Subsistence Resource Commission for Denali National Park and Preserve. The following agenda items will be discussed:

Wednesday, February 18 10:00 am or until business is completed

1. Call to Order –
2. Roll Call and Confirmation of Quorum – Amy Craver

Present:

- | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| a. Coke Wallace – SRC Member | i. Eva Patton – NPS Staff |
| b. Pat Owen – NPS Staff | j. Andrew Johnson – SRC Member |
| c. Sara Taylor -DOI Staff | k. Miki Collins – SRC Member |
| d. Victoria Florey – NPS Staff | l. Penny Green – SRC Member |
| e. Brooke Merrell – NPS Staff | m. Victor Lord – SRC Member |
| f. Dave Schirokauer – NPS Staff | n. Chris Ciancibelli - NPS Staff |
| g. David Olson – NPS Staff | o. Michael Alexia - SRC Staff |
| h. Amy Craver – NPS Staff | p. Sterling Spilnek - AITRC |

Absent:

Charlie Wright (Excused)

3. Introductions –
4. Additions and Corrections to Draft Agenda – Amy Craver
5. Superintendent’s Welcome – Brooke Merrell
 - a. Welcome to the 8th Annual Denali SCR Winter Meeting; Brooke is grateful for the technology that allows everyone to gather during winter.
 - b. On a national front this year, we are celebrating America 250, the semi-quincentennial of our country. Events will take place in parks across the country, especially in Washington, DC and at sites associated with the Revolutionary War.
 - c. This year we are celebrating the completion of the Pretty Rocks Bridge at the end of summer. We are very excited to restore road access to this large area of Denali National Park and Preserve for the first time since the 2021 landslide, including Kantishna subsistence opportunities. After the project wraps up, we will tackle the backlog of work on the west end with the goal of fully reopening to normal traffic in 2027.

- d. Operationally, we started the year with a long federal shutdown that has us a bit behind, and we are heading into the busy summer season with about 60 percent of our normal permanent workforce. In addition, certain National Park Service functions were consolidated under the Department of the Interior and are no longer controlled at the field level by the park. These include communications, IT, and wildland fire crews. We are reassigning resources and getting inventive to make sure 2026 users are not impacted this year.
6. (10:15 am) [Federal Subsistence Management Program Review](#)- DOI Staff (Sarah)
- a. In mid-December 2025, a notice was published in the Federal Register, which stated that The Office of the Senior Advisor to the Secretary of the Interior for Alaska Affairs and the Office of the Secretary of Agriculture are conducting a targeted review of the Federal Subsistence Management Program. With this review, they will develop joint recommendations for action to ensure the Program effectively and efficiently meets the needs of Alaska residents and the Secretaries' obligations under ANILCA.
 - b. Why is this review occurring? To ensure that the program meets the needs of subsistence users, it undergoes period review.
 - i. For example, in 2009, a comprehensive review was conducted of the navigable waters to ensure that the Secretaries obligations under ANILCA were being adequately preformed.
 - ii. As it has been about 14 years since the last programmatic review, it is time for a review to ensure that the program meets the needs of the subsistence users, gather feedback on what is working and what isn't, and ensures accountability of the program.
 - iii. There are seven points that this review is targeting:
 - 1. Interior Department move of the Office of Subsistence Management to the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget
 - 2. Criteria for Regional Advisory Council membership
 - 3. Membership of the Federal Subsistence Board
 - 4. Federal and State regulations for duplication and inconsistency
 - 5. Regulations governing special actions
 - 6. Role of the State and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game in the Federal Subsistence Management Program
 - 7. Board's process for rural determinations
 - iv. Question-
 - 1. Who determines if a community is rural/non-rural? By default, a community is considered rural. The Federal Subsistence Board makes the determination if an area is to be defined as rural and what the boundary of that area is. This determination considers a variety of factors including, but not limited to population, the economy, and jobs.
7. Approval of Minutes from Last Commission Meetings
- a. Motion to approve/additions:
 - i. Corrections to make: 2nd page, add last names for Penny and Victor.
 - ii. Approved
8. Commissioners' Updates on Subsistence Issues/Activities
- a. Victor: Has been out in the woods this winter but has not done any heavy-duty stuff due to an injury.

- b. Penny: This year has been a challenge in some ways. The berries continue to be slim as they have been for several years, and hunting is still a challenge. There is continued concern about the potential hunting guide business being established. They have enjoyed being out on the trapline this fall and winter, with the snow making it more challenging. They noted seeing a lot of juvenile martins which is good for production, but it shows a lack of balance between young and old.
- c. Miki: Has been out trapping but hasn't caught much. They did go moose hunting and camping for a few weeks this past year. Fishing in Lake Minchumina was good this year, catching around one thousand fish. They feel that the increase in boats and additional hunters are creating more of a challenge for moose hunting.
- d. Coke: Had reasonable success with hunting this year, but continue to find sheep hunting to take longer as years pass. Noted that the moose, bear and wolves seem to be doing alright, but that the caribou and sheep are struggling.
- e. Andrew: Thanks all fellow subsistence commission members and I appreciate hearing all the different perspectives. I have noted an increase in the hare population this year. Around Cantwell this fall, there were a lot of bull moose were tagged overall on the community hunt, and hunting on Native and Federal land.

9. New Business

- a. Review Wildlife Proposals – Office of Subsistence Management Staff
 - i. WP26-25 brown bear – increase harvest limit
 - ii. WP26-26 brown bear – increase harvest limit
 - iii. WP26-27 remainder caribou – change in harvest limit
 - 1. These reviews will occur at a later date when Charlie Wright is able to attend.
- b. Regional Office Update – Regional Office Update (Victoria)
 - i. New Acting Regional Director is Don Striker, who is working out the Regional Office in Anchorage.
 - ii. Dylan Patterson is no longer working at the Regional Office; this leaves this division down to three people.
 - iii. Received the full requested funding from the Subsistence Advisory Council Funds. Projects funded for Denali are listed in the next section (D).
- c. Status of SRC Vacancies – Amy Craver
 - i. One individual has applied for the position held by James Roberts; applications are due by the end of March 2026. These applications will then be forwarded to DOI.
 - ii. There are still two positions to be filled, but they are challenging to fill as the individuals is required to be a member of the Local Advisory Council or the South Central Regional Advisory Council.
 - iii. The Governors Office has approved Penny's appointment.
- d. Update on AK Geographic and SAC Projects – Amy Craver
 - i. Winter Culture Camp in Nenana will happen next winter with involvement from The Nenana Tribal Council and Charlie Wright and Donald, the 1st Chief in Nenana. This was a request from the SRC in August 2025.

- ii. In 1988 Diane Gudge-Holmes. completed 31 oral history interviews in the 1980s, many of which were not published. With this funding, we will return the transcripts to the families of these Elders to received permission to publish the transcriptions. The families will be involved in reviewing and editing the transcripts. Common themes will be identified from the interviews.
- iii. Continuing to work with the University of Alaska Fairbanks on oral histories related to sheep and bear.
- iv. Alaska Geographic Funding: a Youth Dance Group from Nenana will travel to Denali NPS to perform at the Visitor Center for the public. They will then embark on a multi-day backcountry trip in the park.

10. Reports and Updates

a. Ranger Division Update – David Olson

- i. Patrick T. left for a job out on the East Coast and John Shepard is a new Ranger. Currently working on hiring two new rangers who are anticipated to be onboard by late summer.
- ii. David appreciates the help from Miki and Julie on the boundary markers. Hoping to print boundary markers and get them placed this summer to continue updating the boundary line.
- iii. Law Enforcement will be heavily involved in the America 250 events across the country this year.
- iv. In Talkeetna, the mountaineering operations are underway, with seasonals starting in a month. Base camp will be placed in April. There were three people (a pair and a single) who were planning on climbing the mountain this winter; both groups decided to not climb.
- v. The kennels team are out patrolling and breaking trail. They will be patrolling out in the Cantwell and Stampede areas.

b. Resources Update – Dave Schirokauer

- i. Annual Science and Scholarship Symposium where park and partner staff share what they are working on and what they have learned in the last year. This year the dates are April 29 and May 7.
- ii. Tek West Archeological Site, will be undergoing an investigation this summer to look at the stabilization of the site. Field work will occur this year to map out where there is erosion occurring and developing a treatment plan.
- iii. There is a big effort to understand the permafrost along the park road. Working with USGS and University of Alaska Fairbanks on a five year plan to study the nature of the frozen ground/composition.
- iv. Currently down about 25% of their staff. Capacity is diminished but enthusiasm is not.

c. Cultural Resources Update – Chris Ciancibelli (Archeologist)

- i. Ancient Pathways Archeological Project (2023-2025); this project is an archeological investigation of travel corridors across the Alaska Range.
 - 1. There has been a long-standing archeological interest in this area and over the last three years there have been various surveys targeting high areas of archeological interest.
 - 2. 46 new historical sites were identified and old sites were revisited. A lot of lithic scatter sites were identified; these sites contain spearheads, darts, blades, knives etc. Some obsidian artifacts were found which can be chemical examined to identify their origin. Having the origin of these

objects can help inform the history of travel and movement across Alaska. Some bury sites were also identified, which are important as they contain animal remains and carbon which can be dated and used to inform history.

3. Overall, findings suggest that these areas have been travel corridors through history.

d. Fish and Wildlife Updates – Pat Owen

- i. Bear Update: continuing the study on bear movement and behavior due to the road closure. Looking forward to seeing the data gathered once the road opens in 2027. There will be a bear capture this spring to keep the sample size around 18. Nothing out of the ordinary in relation to bear-human interaction for 2025.
- ii. Wolf Update: collard 9 new wolves in 2025 with 10 collared wolves having passed. 9 packs are being monitored.
- iii. Sheep Update: AK Department of Fish and Game sheep survey still going. Overall between the AK Department of Fish and Game and the NPS surveys, it appears that the sheep numbers are on the rise. There has been a good lamb to ewe ration this last year. A small glimmer of hope for the sheep.
- iv. Caribou Update: typical herd monitoring is continuing. The 2025 herd estimate size was down to around one thousand which shows a continuing decline in the herd population.
- v. Moose Update: Nothing new since August update. Plan to complete a moose survey in 2027.
- vi. Avian Update: Carol McIntrye retired in October. She intends to continue the eagle survey work as an independent researcher. The breeding bird survey along the Park Road is planned for June.
- vii. Pat O. is retiring at the end of February 2026.

11. Public and Other Agency Comment.

- a. None

12. Set Time and Place for next Denali SRC Meeting

- a. Proposed date: August 11
- b. Alternative date: August 18

13. Adjournment

Date: Wednesday, February 18, 2026

Time: 10 am or until business is completed

For Further Information Contact Amy Craver, Subsistence Coordinator
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