

Disclaimer: These minutes of the Subsistence Resource Commission for Gates of the Arctic National Park are NOT an official transcript of the Commission proceedings. Rather, the minutes serve as a summary of the topics discussed and actions taken by the Commission and as an index to the audio recording of the meeting. The official record of the Commission proceedings is the audio recording.

GATES OF THE ARCTIC NATIONAL PARK SUBSISTENCE RESOURCE COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes

Sophie Station Hotel Zach's Boardroom

Fairbanks, Alaska

Via Teams and In-Person

April 15-16, 2026

The minutes were Chair certified for accuracy on June 29, 2026.

1. Call to Order, Roll Call, and Quorum Establishment:

The meeting was called to order on Wednesday, April 15, 2026 a little after 9am. Council members Taqulik Hepa (Chair), Jack Reakoff (Vice-Chair), Tristen Pattee, Gary Hanchett, Raymond Woods, and Esther Hugo were present in-person. Susan Mekiana Morry and Pollock Simon Sr. were not present and were excused. With 6 out of 8 seated Commission members present, quorum was established.

Attendees:

Participated In-Person and via Teams

Mark Dowdle, Superintendent, Gates of the Arctic National Park & Preserve (GAAR), Fairbanks

Kim Jochum, Acting Resources Program Manager, GAAR, Anchorage, Alaska

Kyle Joly, Wildlife Biologist, GAAR, Denver, Colorado

Marcy Okada, Subsistence Coordinator, GAAR, Fairbanks, Alaska

Matthew Cameron, Wildlife Biologist, GAAR, Fairbanks, Alaska

Zack Delisle, Wildlife Biologist, NPS Arctic Inventory and Monitoring Program, Fairbanks

Eric Wald, Program Manager, NPS Arctic Inventory and Monitoring Program, Fairbanks, Alaska

Eva Patton (via Teams), Regional Subsistence Program Manager, Anchorage, Alaska

Sarah Taylor, Congressional Affairs & Policy Advisor, Office of Secretary of Interior, Anchorage

Nissa Pilcher (via Teams), Office of Subsistence Management, Fairbanks, Alaska

Kent Slaughter, Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Fairbanks, Alaska

Brent Ralston, BLM, Fairbanks, Alaska

Sylvia Ringer, BLM, Fairbanks, Alaska

Brent Vickers (via Teams), Acting Subsistence Resource Coordinator, BLM, Anchorage, Alaska

Anna O'Malley (via Teams), BLM, Fairbanks, Alaska

George Yaska, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Fairbanks, Alaska

Brad Wendling, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG), Fairbanks, Alaska

Glenn Stout, ADFG, Fairbanks, Alaska

Stacy Hannebaum, ADFG, Fairbanks, Alaska

Bradley Dunker (via Teams), ADFG, Anchorage, Alaska

Dan Jenkins (via Teams), Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Anchorage, Alaska

Dianna Leinberger, DNR, Fairbanks, Alaska

Taylor Stinchcomb, Wildlife Conservation Society, Fairbanks, Alaska
Member of the Public – Stanley Ned, Fairbanks, Alaska

2. Moment of Silence: Chairperson Taqulik Hepa called for a moment of silence.

3. Review and Adopt Agenda:

The agenda was amended to add the Dalton Highway Corridor Public Access presentation by Dan Jenkins (DNR). Motion by Member Reakoff, seconded by Member Pattee, to approve the agenda as amended. The motion passed with a unanimous vote.

4. Review and Approve the Previous Meeting Minutes:

Motion by Member Reakoff, seconded by Member Pattee, to approve the April 2025 meeting minutes as presented. The motion passed with a unanimous vote. Discussion - Member Reakoff found no mistakes. Member Hepa commented that she likes the current format of the meeting minutes.

5. Status of SRC Membership (Teams part 1 recording, 18:40)

Marcy Okada reviewed the status of all RAC appointees, noting that Pollock Simon Sr.'s term is valid until 2028. Tristen Pattee's term is up for renewal later this year, and Esther Hugo's term is valid until 2027. Secretary of Interior appointees Jack Reakoff, Raymond Woods, and Gary Hanchett have had their applications resubmitted following term expirations, and Susan Mekiana Morry's governor-appointed term expires at the end of the year.

The Governor of Alaska seat remains vacant after a potential applicant withdrew due to work commitments. Marcy clarified the application process and encouraged commissioners to suggest candidates from within the communities, emphasizing the importance of local representation.

SRC members discussed methods to increase community engagement and fill vacancies, including holding meetings in villages, distributing meeting recordings via CDs or online links, and leveraging technologies like Teams and Starlink to improve accessibility and participation.

Stanley Ned attended the meeting as a public member and is interested in applying to the SRC. He's served on the SRC in the past. Marcy Okada will help Stanley with his State on-line application.

6. Election of Officers – Chair/Vice-Chair (Teams part 1 recording, 34:16)

Member Reakoff made a motion to retain Member Hepa as the Chair of the SRC, seconded by Member Hanchett. The motion passed with a unanimous vote. Member Hugo made a unanimous motion to nominate Member Reakoff as Vice-Chair. The motion passed with no objections.

7. Set Time and Location for Next SRC Meeting (Teams part 1 recording, 44:22)

The Commission confirmed their winter meeting dates and location: Primary – November 4-5, 2026 in Fairbanks with an alternate date of November 18-19, 2026 in Fairbanks.

The SRC also discussed their spring 2027 meeting and possibly having the meeting in Ambler or Shungnak in mid-April (14-15).

SRC members emphasized the importance of holding meetings in local communities to increase public participation and impact, referencing past meetings in Allakaket, Anaktuvuk Pass, Shungnak, and Ambler.

8. Council Member and Chair Reports

(Teams part 1 recording, 1:47:22)

Gary Hanchett of Fairbanks shared that Wild Lake has 18 inches of snow with water on top of the Lake.

Esther Hugo's report for Anaktuvuk Pass included observations of snow levels, ice fishing, caribou migrations, and hunting practices. She described caribou heading north earlier than usual, ongoing ice fishing, and the importance of hunting for community food security. People are ice-fishing at Chandler Lake and catching arctic chars and lake trout. There's been lots of caribou after the rutting passed – people have been hunting cows. Her nephews have been bringing her caribou and they're really healthy. She goes after the fat and she makes dry meat which is ready in a couple days. Right now, the caribou are heading north which is kind of early, usually they'll stick around until before the rivers start breaking up. We appreciate that even though there's a low cow ratio, Anaktuvuk Pass is not limited.

Esther detailed recurring fuel shortages affecting transportation and heating, with her community relying on alternative methods and preparing for emergencies due to limited diesel and gasoline supplies.

Esther Hugo and Raymond Woods discussed ongoing issues with sport hunters and guides, including competition for transportation, prioritization on non-local hunters, and the impact on local subsistence opportunities, particularly in areas like Howard Pass.

Taqulik Hepa encouraged Esther to keep sharing information because federal managers change and her voice is being heard. Raymond Woods commented that Esther's report breaks it down to the details of the culture, our way of life and his village (Shungnak) is very related to what's going on in her village of Anaktuvuk Pass. He shared that she needs to stress living off the land to her village. He mentions that a lot of the young people do not know how to preserve it, how to cook it.

Gary Hanchett added to his earlier report. Just this morning, he learned that Bettles is having some trouble with their ice road because it's being blocked by all these vehicles that are working on the Ambler Mining Road. So that's caused problems for people to access what they normally do – that would be fuel from Fairbanks or Coldfoot. This ties in with Esther's report is the Ambler Road is going to open even more country. There's a lot of people that only shoot animals for antlers and it takes food away from other people. The farther north you go, the less biomass the land supports. As a result, the remoteness of villages absolutely depends upon their groceries which is the country around them. I think a lot of people are not aware of that and those that are, ignore it.

Follow-up question from Taqulik Hepa. Taqulik asked about the winter and spring caribou that people are harvesting and the conservation concern in particular for the Western Arctic Herd. Question for Kyle Joly – The caribou that are spending the winters and the early spring near our communities, are they Western Arctic herd? They're probably Teshekpuk or Central Arctic Herd? I want the community to understand because Esther mentioned that when all the herds come, that 4 caribou herds at one point would migrate through and around Anaktuvuk Pass, but the springtime caribou for them, I don't think there is a conservation issue, unless the Teshekpuk or the Central Arctic are. This would be based on collar information – which caribou are most likely around their community during this time.

Kyle Joly responded that there's 4 Arctic Herds, big ones from west to east. They're the Western Arctic, then the Teshekpuk and the Central Arctic, and then the Porcupine. Some years, they get some Western Arctic Herd animals. And so this year, just north of the village, we did have collared animals from the Western Arctic Herd. There was one on the east side of the valley, just northeast of Anaktuvuk, and then probably 30 miles out, there's four or five collars, which probably translates to 5000 to 6000 Western Arctic Herd animals. So they do get over there. The Western Arctic Herd spends more time further west, but this year and other years, there are some Western Arctic Herd animals that are out there.

Taqulik Hepa: And then just going back historically – Esther was sharing her childhood memories and when I began working for the North Slope Borough in the early 1990s, listening to the Elders talk about

these huge migrations in their lifetime. Taqulik asked about the migration of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd. So that's my point is just any knowledge about the historic migrations. It's very important that our people from our communities understand that. That's why I was talking about if they're hunting in the springtime, they're also aware that there's a conservation concern for the Western Arctic that they need to eat. It's important to educate the people. That's what I'm trying to encourage is more information all of us know, like the information that you have as a wildlife biologist, the information that Esther and Raymond and everyone holds from our communities is important because together what we share helps make better decisions to understand what's going on.

Kyle Joly: So in terms of when you see Western Arctic herd animals in Anaktuvuk, I'll start with calving - they're really far away from Anaktuvuk and the calving, they're over west in the Utukok uplands. So you're not seeing them in late May, June, July, they're still not getting over there. They start spreading across the Brooks Range in July. Sometimes in late August, you'll start seeing them creep in from the west. They'll flow from the west towards Anaktuvuk. It's usually not until September. And then the winter months, they stop moving as much. So if they end up wintering, say they get there by December, you know, they'll be there December, January, February, March. And as people are saying, they're starting to move out about now. And we're starting to see that in the collar data as well. They tend to start migrating a little bit later up in that area than in the Upper Kobuk area. The Western Arctic Herd is more accessible generally during the winter months for Anaktuvuk Pass.

Tristen Pattee reported a summary of increased wolf activities near the Upper Kobuk communities, with incidents involving predations on dogs, and wolves preying on caribou, raising safety and ecological concerns. This past fall, caribou arrived in early October. This was the first time in several years that they came through before the Kobuk River froze which led to a lot of boat traffic near Onion Portage. The caribou arrived during a pretty big storm. The river conditions were very rough. But even in the dangerous water, people still went out. They didn't want to miss that opportunity. So thankfully, many community members were able to harvest caribou.

I've also been seeing people sharing their harvest on social media, which shows that people are still able to get caribou. As a community, we've always taken care to harvest in a way that protects the herd. I just want to remind us all how important it is to focus on taking bulls and leaving the cows, so we can help sustain and rebuild the caribou population for the future.

The fishing conditions were mixed. Sheefish harvest was good, but salmon was not as strong, mainly due to the high water levels that made fishing difficult and affected the runs. We also set nets for pike in some of the creeks and did very well, which helped provide for people that wanted some siilik (sheefish).

Since January, we are still seeing ongoing and increased wolf activity very close to the community. Wolves continue to come near homes and food storage areas. There have been multiple incidents involving dogs and wolves, and it appears that they may still be targeting them as a food source. We were witnessing more wolf activity near the Red Dog Mine area, where the wolves have been observed chasing and killing caribou. This is something we're continuing to see as a concern.

Jack Reakoff asked Tristen whether the caribou were pretty fat this winter and how deep the snow was in areas near Ambler. Tristen shared that they haven't had a lot of snow this year and that it was a cold winter. Ambler's water is completely frozen throughout the whole community. With less snow, it gave the cold the opportunity to penetrate. Shungnak and Selawik's water is also completely frozen. Disaster declarations were announced in those areas.

Raymond Woods shared that late October is not a good time to go shoot a fat caribou. That's when the bulls start to get into their rut. And some that were shared into Shungnak from Ambler, he could taste the

rut. You can survive on it, if that's the only meat you've got. And then later on, if you start looking into females, regardless of how much snow there is during November and December, females are feeding, of course, they're pregnant then, because the rutting season just finished in October. Being pregnant, they're fat and then they'll be fat depending on how much food they eat from December through January. And that's when the hunter is going to hunt the females. So that if they don't get their fat caribou before rutting in August and early September. You know, caribou are safe, breeding wise. So that's how the hunters look at it.

Tristen Pattee shared that proposals were submitted because of the decline in the Western Arctic Herd – a 4 caribou/year and zero cows proposal. Biologists have been studying these caribou herds for a long time. There's concern that if action isn't taken, it will go to a Tier 2 level hunt. He has stressed the importance of conserving the herd at meetings.

He shares that he sees ptarmigan all over the place. There's still fish and other alternatives that people can eat to survive. Nobody's going to be able to eat once the caribou herd is gone. Then you're going to be forced to do all these things that should have been done prior, which is going after the other resources. We have so many resources available. Talking to my Aana (grandmother) and my mom, they ate muskrat growing up. I didn't eat muskrat growing up, but obviously they did what they had to survive back then. We might be forced to do that, but it's making that effort now for future generations to be able to sustain this caribou herd. So we can pass on that tradition, pass on that culture. Because otherwise, if we continue to kill cows because we want fat, we're not going to have a herd, we're not going to have anything. Biologists give us the information for us to make the hard decisions. So that was one of the hard decisions that the Kobuk Valley SRC did – proposed 4 caribou/year with 0 cows. We left the Teshekpuk caribou herd out of it because the Herd is doing okay and we also made it for unit 26A southwest.

Gary Hanchett asked whether anyone is trapping wolves in Ambler and Tristen shared maybe one person is. Tristen mentioned that there's this opportunity to hunt wolves, but people are not doing it. They're just focused only on the stuff that they eat. Back in the day, they used wolf skins for clothing – I have wolf mittens. People aren't going out and doing these things. It's encouraged, but it's not happening as much anymore. People are stuck doing modern things now and it's taking away from our culture.

Gary Hanchett shared that there's lynx and beaver that are good to eat. I'm not sure of the black bear population up there, but there's that as well.

Kyle Joly shared that he's one of those biologists that thinks now's the time for conservation. So he appreciates Tristan's message. I don't think I've heard someone say it so eloquently. And so I'm hoping the meeting was recorded and we can share your message directly because you just said it perfectly, so thank you.

Raymond Woods' report - he brought up that the culture is dying. He described efforts to teach traditional harvesting and preservation techniques to youth through school and Tribal programs, highlighting the challenges of maintaining cultural practices and the need for agency support and funding.

We had a very great fall camp harvest on fish last fall. We did a lot of seining with a 150 foot net and we brought in whitefish, sheefish, and salmon. And then we hung it all for drying for the winter use. When it started freezing up in late September, we seined to put away sheefish. That's for quaq (frozen fish) in the winter.

On top of that, we're hunting caribou. Last fall, the caribou really didn't come into our area. They were down by Ambler. Thanks to our relatives in Ambler, they were sharing their boatloads, going up to Shungnak to share with other people. Some of the hunters went down, but that is like traveling 35 miles to

the crossing of Onion Portage – like using 40 gallons of gas, that's 40 times \$8 a gallon. So it's pretty tough for some people, for some hunters. But we had a very good harvest on fish because we have a variety of fish – trout, salmon, sheefish, and whitefish. And we harvested for the winter use, it was good.

We had a very good moose hunt last fall. Our family harvested four moose. Some people would say that's a lot of meat, but when you pass it out to 10 freezers, that's not a lot of meat. We're still maintaining what we need and still using what we need to survive.

Also, reported on a collaborative beaver study with ADFG, explaining how beaver dams affect whitefish migration and harvest opportunities, and the importance of direct field observation for accurate research. The whitefish don't migrate up and down the river, they go into the lakes, and the beavers blocked them in when there's low waters in the fall. The whitefish don't come out for people to harvest, they're trapped in. Had a high water season around mid-August and the water went over the dam, then the fish came out and they were able to seine for whitefish.

(Teams part 1 recording, 1:50:18)

Taqulik Hepa and the other SRC members discussed strategies for improving subsistence management, education, and outreach, including the use of technology, engagement with transporters and guides, and sharing traditional knowledge to support sustainable resource use. Taqulik described outreach efforts in Kotzebue to educate transporters and guides about local hunting traditions, conservation concerns, and the impact of their activities on subsistence communities.

Jack Reakoff shared the following information.

Migration Patterns: Jack described the historical and current migration routes of caribou herds, including the Porcupine and Central Arctic herds, noting changes in migration due to environmental conditions and human activity. He referenced specific locations such as the John River, Ray Mountains, and Yukon Flats, and discussed how caribou trails are etched into the landscape and followed by generations of animals.

Herd Health Indicators: He explained that the health of caribou and moose can be determined by the color of their coats, with reddish-colored moose being preferable for consumption. They also discussed the importance of cotton grass as a protein source for caribou and how the timing of its growth affects herd reproductive success.

Impacts of Weather Events: He highlighted the effects of late springs and hard summers on caribou herds, noting that events such as early pollination and deep snow years have led to significant declines in herd numbers and reproductive rates with specific reference to the 2013 late spring and the 2023 hot summer.

Roles of Cows in Migration: He emphasized that cow caribou lead herd migrations and that their protection is critical for herd survival. They advocated for closing cow caribou harvests before October 5 to prevent disruption of migration and ensure the survival of calves.

Hunting Pressure and Regulatory Concerns: Jack and other participants discussed the impact of sport and non-resident hunting on caribou populations, the role of Pittman-Robertson funds on driving non-resident license sales, and the need for regulatory changes to protect local subsistence and herd sustainability.

- **Non-Resident Hunting Impact:** There was discussion on how over 50% of caribou killed in Unit 26B are by non-resident hunters, attributing this to air taxis and high license fees. It was explained that non-resident hunting is incentivized by federal funding mechanisms, which prioritize license sales.
- **Pittman-Robertson Funds:** Further discussion on how Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration funds are allocated based on license sales, with non-residents paying the highest fees. They proposed that Alaska should receive direct funding rather than relying on license sales, to reduce hunting pressure and protect wildlife.

- Regulatory Proposals: The SRC discussed closing cow caribou seasons and reducing bag limits, citing the reproductive biology of caribou and the negative impact of current hunting regulations.
- Local vs. Outside Interests: The SRC discussed how local subsistence needs are often overridden by outside interest groups and regulatory bodies, leading to overharvesting and reduced representation of local voices in decision-making processes.

Jack described how the current shallow snow year has benefited caribou and sheep populations, allowing for better survival and potential recovering after a series of deep snow years that previously reduced numbers. He also noted that wolves are struggling due to shallow snow, leading to increased cannibalism, and that bear predation on moose has increased due to poor salmon runs caused by flooding.

Jack Reakoff suggested that the SRC submit a special action request. He introduced and passed a motion for the SRC to submit a special action request for a winter bull moose hunt in Unit 24A in Gates of the Arctic. (Teams Part 2 recording, 30:32)

Motion Introduction: Member Hepa proposed a motion for a special action request to allow a one bull moose winter harvest from December 15 to April 15 in Unit 24A, specifying that the bull must have at least one inch of antler, mirroring regulations in adjacent Unit 24B.

Discussion and Rationale: Participants discussed the timing and biological rationale for the hunt, noting that yearlings and two year old bulls are available in early winter, while larger bulls begin growing antlers in late March and April. The hunt is intended to provide local residents with subsistence opportunities without impacting breeding populations.

Access and Traditional Practices: Jack Reakoff described challenges in accessing the park for hunting due to land restrictions and the need for easements, as well as traditional practices of caching moose meat for later retrieval, emphasizing the importance of maintaining customary subsistence activities.

Motion Approval: The motion was seconded by member Hanchett, discussed, and unanimously approved by the SRC, with plans to submit the request to the Federal Subsistence Board for consideration in the upcoming summer work session.

Chair Taqulik Hepa's report highlighted the importance of integrating local and traditional knowledge with scientific research in wildlife management, advancing for greater representation of local voices in regulatory decisions and emphasizing the role of community teachings in sustainable harvesting.

Taqulik explained how local families historically managed hunting and fishing territories, enforced rules to prevent overharvesting, and relied on secondary resources during conservation concerns, illustrating the depth of traditional ecological knowledge. Discussed the importance of passing down hunting responsibilities and teachings to younger generations, ensuring that community needs are prioritized and that cultural practices are maintained.

Taqulik encouraged ongoing dialogue between local communities, biologists, and economic stakeholders, stressing the need for mutual respect and understanding to improve wildlife management outcomes.

Concerns were raised about the lack of local representation in regulatory bodies such as the Board of Game and the Federal Subsistence Board, with calls for increased advocacy and participation to influence decisions affecting subsistence and resource sustainability.

9. Gates of the Arctic SRC Charter

Kim and SRC members reviewed the current SRC charter, discussed recent changes to appointment language, and passed a motion to clarify that members serve until reappointed or removed, ensuring consistent interpretation for future Commissions. (Team part 3 recording, 3:12:03).

Charter Language Review: Kim confirmed that the current SRC charter reflects recent input to remove certain language, but members noted ambiguity regarding service until reappointment, prompting a recommendation for further clarification.

Motion for Clarification: A motion was made and passed to recommend adding language to the charter specifying that members continue to serve until reappointed or replaced, to avoid confusion for future commissions.

10. Agency and Public Comments

There were no public comments.

11. Public Land Orders 5150 and 5180 - BLM

Revocation of Public Land Orders and State Land Selections: Sylvia Ringer and Kent Slaughter from BLM, along with Diana Leinberger from the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR), provided a comprehensive update on the revocation of PLOs 5150 and 5180, the implementation of PLO 7966, and the resulting process for state land selections, including impacts on subsistence, management changes, and the timeline for state approval and relinquishment. (Teams Part 3 recording, minute 4:06)

Revocation and Implementation Timeline: Sylvia Ringer explained that in February, the Secretary of Interior published PLO 7966, revoking PLOs 5150 and 5180, with the new order taking effect on March 27th. This opened the lands to state selections, changing management responsibilities and requiring BLM to seek state approval for activities on these lands.

Changes in Subsistence Access: Sylvia Ringer and Kent Slaughter clarified that state-selected lands within the area of PLO 7966 are no longer available for federal subsistence priority, except for approximately 62,000 acres not top-filed by the state. This change directly impacts local communities relying on subsistence resources.

State Relinquishment Process: Kent Slaughter (BLM) and Diana Leinberger (DNR) described the state's commitment to relinquishing selections on 400,000 acres within the corridor and 250,000 acres adjacent by December 2026, and a further million acres statewide by December 2027, with public notice and prioritization of selections guiding the process.

Management of Remaining BLM Lands: Sylvia Ringer noted that certain facilities, campgrounds, and federal mining claims within the corridor will remain under BLM management, with details accessible via a provided map and QR code.

Community Concerns and Legal Compliance: SRC member Jack Reakoff and other SRC members raised concerns about the state's over-selection, statutory compliance under ANILCA and the urgent need for divestment to restore subsistence access, emphasizing the significant impact on local users and the potential for litigation if statutory limits are not met.

Public Access and Easement Planning in the Dalton Highway Corridor: Dan Jenkins from DNR, supported by Diana Leinberger outlined the State's process for gathering public input on access needs in the Dalton Highway Corridor, the statutory framework for motorized access, and upcoming public meetings to identify and address community concerns regarding travel routes and easements. (Teams part 3 recording, minute 58:07).

Statutory Framework for Access: Dan Jenkins explained that Alaska Statute 19.40.210 prohibits motorized access within five miles of the Dalton Highway, with exceptions for mining and other activities, and authorizes the DNR Commissioner to issue additional easements for motorized use between the Yukon River and the North Slope Borough boundary.

Public Engagement Process: Dan Jenkins described the state's plan to hold informational and input-gathering meetings in affected communities, including Wiseman, to identify existing and needed access routes, with the process running through June 26th and flexibility for extension if necessary.

RS2477 Route Authorization: Dan Jenkins reported that DNR has authorized motorized use on ten existing RS2477 historical routes through the corridor, primarily for winter snowmachine travel, to facilitate access to adjacent federal and Alaska Native Corporation lands.

Easement Issuance Timeline: Diane Leinberger detailed the process for issuing easements, including agency review, public notice (30 days), and appeal period (20 days), estimating that decisions could be made within three to four months depending on community input and location.

Coordination with North Slope Borough: Dan Jenkins confirmed ongoing communication with the North Slope Borough to address access issues north of the boundary, with plans to provide updates at the upcoming Wiseman meeting.

12. Ambler Access Road – BLM and NPS

Status and Agency Permitting: Sylvia Ringer from BLM, Mark Dowdle from NPS, and Diana Leinberger from DNR provided updates on the Ambler Road project, including the history of approvals, litigation, current permitting for field work, and the transition of management responsibilities as lands are conveyed to the state. (Teams part 3 recording, 1:18:13).

Project History and Litigation: Sylvia Ringer summarized that the Ambler Road was approved in 2020, then subject to litigation and a supplemental EIS, with the no-action alternative selected under the Biden administration. A subsequent presidential decision in October 2025 invalidated the no-action decision, reinstating the original approval.

Current Permitting and Fieldwork: Mark Dowdle explained that the National Park Service reissued a right-of-way permit for the road and a special use permit for winter field work, including geotechnical studies and fish habitat surveys, with the permit valid through May 2027.

State Easement and Reconsideration: Diana Leinberger reported that DNR issued a decision to grant an easement to AIDEA for the Ambler Road, which is under consideration due to a related court case, and that a valid land use permit for field work has been issued.

Transition of Management: Sylvia Ringer (BLM) noted that once the selected lands are conveyed to the state, BLM will no longer have a role in the Ambler Road project, with ongoing responsibilities shifting to the Park Service and the state.

13. Sheep Ecology/Health Assessment Project Update – Brad Wendling (ADFG)

Brad Wendling from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game presented a comprehensive update on the multi-year Dall's sheep research project, discussing study design, data collection, disease screening, survival rates, and the impacts of climate and harvest strategies, with input and questions from Jack Reakoff, Taqulik Hepa, and other SRC members. (Teams part 4 recording, 14:40).

Research Project Overview: Brad Wendling described the background and objectives of the research project, which began with a horn morphometric study and expanded to a comparative analysis of hunted and unhunted populations across four study areas in Alaska. The project involves GPS collaring, genetic sampling, and ground-based composition counts to assess population health, survival, and recruitment.

Study Areas and Experimental Design: The Study is structured as a four-year project with four distinct areas: two open to hunting and two closed or mostly closed to hunting. Each area aims to maintain 30 collared ewes and 30 collared rams, with data collected on survival, recruitment, and health. The Study is

looking at whether there are differences between the hunted and the un-hunted populations as it relates to survival, recruitment, and health.

Disease Screening and Health Assessment: Veterinary staff, including Dr. Annette Rogue, conducted disease screening on captured sheep, focusing on pathogens like *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae*. Results indicated that the sheep populations were generally healthy, with no significant disease-related declines detected.

Survival and Mortality Data: Brad reported survival rates for collared sheep, noting high survival in normal snow years and significant mortality following major snowfall events, particularly in the Brooks Range. The data showed that weather events, especially deep snow and avalanches, are major drivers of sheep mortality.

Historical Population Trends and Climate Change: Discussion included historical survey data, population crashes, and rebounds, with Brad Wendling and Jack Reakoff referencing past studies and weather events. Brad emphasized that climate change and severe weather are likely the primary factors affecting sheep populations, rather than harvest strategies or predation.

Disease Monitoring in Sheep Populations: Brad Wendling addressed questions about disease monitoring in Dall's sheep, explaining the absence of detrimental *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* in Alaska populations and the procedures for necropsy and sample collection in cases of sheep mortality. (Teams part 4 recording, 1:48: 42)

- **Disease Screening Results:** Brad reported that disease screening during collaring activities has not detected the harmful variant of *Mycoplasma ovipneumoniae* found in domestic sheep, and that occasional pneumonia-related deaths do occur but are not widespread or transmissible.
- **Sample Collection and Community Involvement:** Brad encouraged community members to submit lung samples from harvested sheep showing signs of disease, noting that increased sample submissions would improve monitoring and understanding of disease prevalence in wild populations.

14. Sheep Survey Update – Zack Delisle, Arctic Inventory & Monitoring Network

Zack is currently working on a project looking at linking sheep population changes with certain environmental characteristics from British Columbia to Kotzebue.

Sheep Survey Methodology and Data Analysis: Zack Delisle and SRC members discussed sheep survey techniques, including distance sampling, photographic analysis of horn morphologies, and the importance of classifying age cohorts for population modeling, with recommendations for improving data precision and utility. (Team part 4 recording, 1:28:45)

Survey Techniques and Data Collection: The most recent survey conducted was from July 5-11. Zack described the use of distance sampling surveys in Gates of the Arctic, employing two aircraft to cover study areas and collect data on adult and lamb populations. High-definition photographs of ram groups have been archived for three to four years, enabling retrospective analysis. Jack Reakoff mentioned the inclusion of the ewe-like component in surveys – it tells you what's coming into the population.

Horn Morphology and Age Classification: SRC members, especially Jack, emphasized the importance of analyzing horn photos to determine age classes, particularly half curl rams, which are critical for understanding recruitment and productivity. Zack agreed to review Brad's collection of 2500 horn photos to refine age cohort analysis.

Data Modeling and Population Performance: The group discussed the need for standardized classification of horn curl categories (half, three-quarter, full curl) to improve repeatability and accuracy in population models. Recommendations included focusing on half curl rams for recruitment analysis and using photographic data to validate field observations.

Zack shared that there's high definition photographs going back 3-4 years, but it wasn't consistent with every survey. He plans to collect this data consistently and will classify rams after $\frac{3}{4}$ curl and larger, with the intention of building a sample size of the curl horn cohorts to eventually test the feasibility of modeling to provide composition data. Jack Reakoff is especially interested in the $\frac{1}{2}$ curl component what the first year estrus ewes are going to be producing.

Community Engagement and Survey Notification: SRC members discussed the importance of notifying Tribal villages and local communities about aerial surveys and research activities, recommending the use of social media and direct communication to improve transparency and reduce confusion about aircraft activity. (Teams part 4 recording, 1:43:14)

Survey Notification Practices: Zack Delisle and Marcy Okada explained that compliance processes include notifying villages about survey dates, aircraft details, and flight plans, with suggestions to expand outreach via Facebook and flyers to ensure community awareness.

Community Concerns and Recommendations: SRC members shared experiences of community confusion regarding aircraft activity, emphasizing the need for clear communication to distinguish research flights from potential illegal hunting and to foster trust between agencies and local residents. As shared by SRC member Esther Hugo, there's concerns about illegal sheep hunting in the fall time in the Agiak and Killik areas of the Park.

15. WIRAC Draft Sheep Management Strategy – Jack Reakoff

Hunting Plan Recommendation and Management Guidelines: Jack Reakoff led the SRC in reviewing and adopting a hunting plan recommendation for Dall's sheep management in Gates of the Arctic, clarifying horn curl classifications and submitting the proposal to the Secretary of Interior, with input from SRC members. (Team part 4 recording, 1:57:03)

Plan Review and Classification Standards: The SRC reviewed the Western Interior Regional Council's Dall's Sheep Management Strategy, focusing on the classification of rams by horn curl (half, three-quarter, and full curl) for survey and management purposes. The group agreed to strike intermediate categories for clarity and precision.

Motion and Adoption Process: Jack Reakoff made a motion to adopt the clarified hunting plan recommendation, which was seconded and discussed by the SRC. The motion passed, and the recommendation will be submitted to the Secretary of Interior for inclusion in park management guidelines.

Implementation and Future Adjustments: The SRC discussed the need for ongoing review and potential adjustment of classification methods based on future survey data and analysis, ensuring that management practices remain responsive to new information.

16. Local Knowledge of Carnivore Populations in Northern Alaska – Taylor Stinchcomb

Taylor Stinchcomb from the Wildlife Conservation Society presented updates on community-based research documenting local knowledge of carnivores in northern Alaska, including interview processes, report dissemination, and efforts to integrate local knowledge into scientific models and management strategies. (Teams part 3 recording, 2:28:19).

Community Engagement and Feedback: Taylor outlined plans for community meetings to present findings, gather feedback, and transfer interview materials, noting the importance of building relationships and respecting community decisions on participation.

Integration with Western Science: Taylor and SRC members discussed the value of combining local knowledge with western scientific models, including the potential for qualitative data to inform wildlife management and the need for collaborative study design.

Application to Management and Advocacy: SRC members emphasized the utility of documented local knowledge for advocacy, management decisions, and scientific analysis, with Taylor noting ongoing work to produce accessible summaries for community use. There was mention that if scientific modeling is used, it should be linked with historical local knowledge.

In the future, Taylor will share the approved Shungnak Carnivore Knowledge report with interested SRC members and facilitate access to interview recordings through the Shungnak Tribal Council.

17. Secretarial Federal Subsistence Mgmt. Program Review – Sarah Taylor

Sarah Taylor from the Secretary's office discussed the ongoing review of the Federal Subsistence Management Program, the comment process, and the proposed wildlife rule with Commission members emphasizing the need for rural representation and clarification of management authority between park preserves and hard park lands. (Teams part 3 recording, 1:33:55).

Program Review Process: Sarah Taylor described the second comprehensive review of the Federal Subsistence Management Program, with public comments collected and an interagency working group preparing a report and recommendations for the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture. It's about accountability and making sure the Program is working.

Importance of Rural Membership: Commission members stressed the statutory requirement for meaningful rural representation on the Federal Subsistence Board and Regional Councils, advocating for this to be the main focus of their comment letter. As follow-up, a comment letter will be drafted and submitted to the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture emphasizing the importance of maintaining rural membership on the Federal Subsistence Board and clarifying management distinctions between park and preserve lands in the proposed wildlife rule.

Clarification of the Proposed Wildlife Rule: The discussion highlighted confusion in the proposed wildlife rule regarding the delineation of management authority between state and federal agencies for park preserves and hard park lands, with SRC members requesting clearer regulatory language.

Commission Action on Comments: A motion was passed to submit a letter to the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture addressing the need for rural membership and clarification of management authority in the proposed rule, combining both points into a single comment.

18. RAC Meeting Updates – North Slope, Western Interior, NW Arctic – Marcy Okada

Marcy Okada provided summaries of recent North Slope, Western Interior, and NW Arctic Regional Advisory Council meetings, highlighting key topics such as wildlife management, subsistence concerns, and Federal Subsistence Board proposals with Commission members discussing implications for future actions. (Teams part 3 recording, 3:15:32).

North Slope RAC meeting – The Council met on February 24-25, 2026 and reports covered community updates, the Western Arctic caribou herd status, and the wildlife special actions pertaining to the herd.

Western Interior RAC meeting – The Council met on February 24-25, 2026 and reports covered community updates, including Yukon River and Kuskokwim River fisheries concerns and issues. The RAC supported the sheep management strategy and requested correct interpretation of Public Land Order changes along the Dalton Highway Corridor.

Northwest Arctic RAC meeting – The Council met on March 24-25, 2026 and reports covered community updates. Tristen Pattee and Marcy Okada described proposals to address the Western Arctic Caribou Herd decline, including closure of non-resident hunting, reduced harvest limits, and emergency cow harvest closure, with upcoming Board of Game meetings scheduled in Kotzebue and the Interior. Teck Cominco/Red Dog Mine gave an update on their Community Observer Program and their Environmental Program and how it relates to the Western Arctic Caribou Herd. There was much discussion on this topic.

Air Taxi Reporting Motion: Similar to what the Western Interior RAC proposed, Jack Reakoff proposed a motion for air taxis to report hunter drop-off locations in park preserves (Itkillik and Kobuk) to aid enforcement and reduce wanton waste, with the motion tabled pending input from the Gates of the Arctic Chief Ranger.

19. Federal Subsistence Board Update – Kim Jochum

(Teams part 4 recording, 2:15:30)

Board Meeting and Proposal Review: Kim reported on the Federal Subsistence Board's upcoming session, which will address 45 non-consensus and 33 consensus wildlife proposals, including a request for reconsideration regarding Ketchikan's rural status and several special action requests related to the Western Arctic Caribou Herd.

The Federal Subsistence Board still consists of 11 members with Don Striker as the NPS Regional Director. Jack Reakoff let the SRC know that he'll be attending the Federal Subsistence Board meeting next week as the Chair of the Western Interior Regional Advisory Council.

20. Federal Subsistence Wildlife Proposals – Marcy Okada

The SRC reviewed and voted on several federal wildlife proposals affecting Unit 23, including changes to wolf, muskrat, ptarmigan, and mink/weasel harvest regulations, aligning federal regulations with state regulations to support subsistence needs. (Teams part 4 recording, 2:41:17)

Wolf Harvest Limit and Season Extension: The SRC supported WP26-66 to increase the wolf harvest limit from 15 to 20 animals and extend the season to match state regulations, with discussion on the inclusion of Kobuk Valley National Park and justification based on subsistence needs and observed wolf activity.

Muskrat Trapping Season Adjustment: WP26-67 was approved to remove the closed season for muskrat trapping, allowing year-round harvest. SRC members noted the historical importance of muskrats as a food source and the lack of impact on population sustainability.

Ptarmigan Harvest Limit and Season Extension: WP26-68 was supported to increase ptarmigan harvest limits and extend the season, with justification based on caribou declines, increased ptarmigan populations, and the need for alternative subsistence resources.

Mink and Weasel Trapping Season Extension: WP26-69 was approved to extend the trapping season for mink and weasels, aligning federal regulations with state rules to reduce confusion and increase subsistence opportunities.

21. Federal Wildlife Special Actions 26-01/26-02/26-03 – Marcy Okada

The SRC reviewed and voted on multiple wildlife special actions, including proposals to restrict caribou harvests, close federal lands to non-federally qualified users, and align state and federal regulations, with detailed discussion on regional impacts and procedural steps. (Teams part 6 recording, 3:09:46)

WSA 26-01 (Modified version) Limit the caribou harvest to four bulls, no cows per year per hunter for Units 22, 23, and the southwest portion of 26A. This modified version was supported by multiple Regional Advisory Councils and public testimony.

The SRC voted unanimously to support the modified version of the proposal as listed above.

Justification: In discussion, it was shared that with the Western Arctic Caribou Herd declining, there are no extra caribou to give and female caribou only have one calf. If the Herd declines further to 75,000 caribou, the hunt will go to full closure. One of the SRC members shared that he experienced the full hunting closure back in 1976 and it is strongly advised that they don't allow it to get to that point. It's really important to reduce cow caribou harvest at this time. The thought is hunters on the ground should be able to tell the difference between a cow and a bull. The SRC feels it's important to preserve the Western Arctic Caribou Herd for future generations and to be able to carry on their traditions of harvesting caribou and feeding their families.

WSA 26-02 Closure of federal public lands in Unit 22 to caribou hunting by non-federally qualified users for the 2026-2028 regulatory cycle. The SRC took no action because it's outside of Gates of the Arctic National Park.

WSA 26-03 Closure of federal public lands in the southwest portion of Unit 26A to caribou hunting by non-federally qualified users for the 2026-2028 regulatory cycle.

The SRC voted unanimously to support this proposal.

Justification: With the high use of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd in the southwest portion of Unit 26A and subsistence users limiting themselves, this area should be closed to non-federally qualified subsistence users.

State and Federal Alignment: Efforts were made to align state and federal regulations, with emergency proposals submitted to the Alaska Board of Game to mirror federal restrictions, ensuring consistent management across jurisdictions.

Regional Considerations: Discussions included the impact of proposals on specific game management units (e.g. 21D, 24C/D), the need for homogenizing bag limits, and the importance of considering local herd usage and migratory patterns in regulatory decisions.

Wildlife Health and Harvest Practices: Jack Reakoff and other SRC members discussed traditional methods for assessing the health of caribou and moose based on color, sharing insights from local elders and emphasizing the importance of selecting healthy animals for harvest. (Teams part 7 recording, 00:30)

- Caribou Health Indicators: Jack Reakoff explained that caribou are harvested based on their color, with lighter-colored animals often being less healthy. Dark colors may indicate sickness such as pulmonary pneumonia or episomatosis, and animals with bumps under their legs should be avoided during harvest.
- Moose Health Assessment: Jack Reakoff described that moose with a rust-red nose and coloration are considered healthy, while lighter-colored moose are typically older and in declining health. The selection of moose for harvest is based on these visual cues, with red-colored bulls being preferred for their fat and quality meat.
- Traditional Knowledge Sharing: Jack Reakoff shared that local elders provide valuable information about wildlife health and harvest practices, and that much of this knowledge predates formal studies, emphasizing the importance of observing animal characteristics in the field.

22. Anaktuvuk Pass ATV Access – Mark Dowdle

Subsistence Access and ATV Use in Gates of the Arctic: Mark and the SRC members revisited the issue of subsistence access by ATV in the Park, reviewing the Land Exchange, the General Management Plan, and community feedback on the necessity of ATV use for hunting and gathering, with calls for improved access and consideration of trail hardening solutions. (Teams part 6 recording, 3:29:24)

Historical Context and Land Exchange: Mark summarized the history of ATV use in the region, the 1986 SRC resolution supporting a three-way land exchange, and the resulting management plan that defined areas for ATV access, noting ongoing community concerns about boundary limitations.

Community Feedback on ATV Necessity: Local residents, including Esther Hugo, emphasized the importance of ATVs for subsistence activities, stating that returning to dog teams is not feasible and that ATV use has become essential for hunting, fishing, and gathering.

Environmental Impact and Trail Management: The Park Service acknowledged concerns about trail impacts and discussed the potential for trail hardening and stabilization techniques, referencing successful examples from other regions and the need for collaboration with local communities.

Future Considerations: SRC members advocated for continued evolution of access methods, recognition of technological advancements, and the importance of maintaining subsistence rights and cultural practices within park management.

23. NPS Regional Subsistence Program Update – Kim Jochum

(Teams part 4 recording, 2:45:30)

Regional Office Staffing and Support: Kim Jochum and Mark Dowdle discussed recent staffing changes at the Regional Office, noting the loss of capacity and the ongoing hiring freeze, but affirmed continued support for park-level management and subsistence activities.

24. Ranger Division Update – Scott Sample

Law Enforcement, Air Taxi Permitting, and Hunter Drop-Off Monitoring: Scott Sample provided an update on law enforcement staffing, interagency cooperation, and the challenges of monitoring air taxi drop-offs and hunter activities, with SRC members advocating for real-time reporting and improved enforcement to address wanton waste and resource impacts. (Teams part 6 recording, 2:05:28)

Law Enforcement Staffing Updates: Scott Sample announced new and returning staff for Gates of the Arctic and other northern parks, including the recent addition of Mike Eastman and returnee Al Smith, and outlined ongoing recruitment for vacant positions in Nome and Kotzebue.

Interagency Cooperation: The Park Service is collaborating with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and other agencies for joint patrols and overflights, sharing resources and cross-designating pilots to enhance coverage and enforcement.

Air Taxi and Hunter Drop-Off Monitoring: SRC members requested changes to air taxi permitting to require real-time GPS reporting of hunter drop-off and pick-up locations, aiming to improve enforcement and reduce wanton waste. Scott Sample explained current reporting practices and discussed potential stipulations and technological solutions.

Enforcement Challenges and Recommendations: The group discussed the difficulty of monitoring dispersed hunter camps, the need for timely information to enable effective enforcement, and the potential for concessionizing air taxis to better manage access and impacts.

25. Wildlife Update – Kyle Joly

Western Arctic Caribou Herd Decline and Management Actions: Kyle Joly provided a comprehensive update on the Western Arctic Caribou Herd's population decline, management resolutions, and the rationale for reducing cow harvests, with input from Regional Advisory Councils, and local hunters such as Tristen Pattee and Jack Reakoff, culminating in support for stricter harvest limits and emergency actions. (Teams part 6 recording, 00:44)

Population Decline Overview: Kyle Joly reported that the Western Arctic Caribou Herd has declined to 121,000 animals, representing a 75% decrease from its historical high, with an annual reduction of about 10% over recent years. This trend was discussed in the context of similar declines in other Alaskan and Canadian herds, highlighting the urgency for management intervention.

Management Resolutions: The Western Arctic Herd Working Group voted to move the herd into a critical management level and passed resolutions to reduce the annual bag limit from 15 to 4 caribou per person per year, one of which can be a cow, restrict non-resident hunting permits in GMU 23, and establish a threshold for further harvest curtailment for all users at 75,000 animals, with restrictions lifted if the herd rebounds above 100,000.

Cow Harvest Restrictions: Discussion focused on the timing and necessity of cow harvests, with recommendations to eliminate or restrict cow harvests, especially during lactation periods. The group discussed the impact of cow harvest on herd decline, referencing population models that showed accelerated decline when more females were harvested.

Wildlife Special Action 26-01: Wildlife Special Action 26-01 was introduced to formalize the management changes, with broad support from Regional Advisory Councils for a modification to prohibit cow harvest entirely. The SRC voted to support the proposal for a four-bull, zero-cow annual limit, aligning with both federal and state emergency actions.

Community and Agency Communication: Efforts to educate and engage local communities were emphasized, including outreach through social media, radio broadcasts, and direct communication with hunters to reinforce conservation concerns and the importance of reducing cow harvests.

Caribou Migrations Patterns and Environmental Drivers: Kyle Joly and Matt Cameron shared recent data on caribou migration routes, timing, and environmental triggers, including temperature and snowfall, with analysis of GPS collar data and local observations to explain changes in migratory behavior and its implications for management. (Teams part 6 recording, 13:26)

Migration Route Changes: Recent monitoring revealed that the majority of the Western Arctic Herd migrated down the Western coast, a shift from traditional central routes, resulting in increased caribou presence in villages like Noorvik, Kiana, and Selawik, and improved local access for subsistence hunters.

Timing of Migration: Analysis of GPS collar data showed that the average date for Kobuk River crossing has shifted from October 6th to October 27th over the past decade, with the first collared animal crossing occurring a month later than in previous years, indicating significant changes in migration timing.

Environmental Triggers: Matt Cameron explained that temperature cooling and first snowfall are the primary environmental drivers for fall migration, with local knowledge corroborated by scientific analysis. These factors are causing migratory movements to occur later each year.

Spring Migration Observations: Spring migration timing has remained relatively stable, with caribou driven by the need to reach calving grounds, although deep snow can delay movement. The group noted less variability in spring migration compared to fall.

Caribou Diet and Habitat Studies Using Camera Collars: Matt Cameron presented preliminary findings from the camera collar project, detailing caribou summer diet patterns, the importance of cotton grass flower heads, and the influence of environmental conditions such as snow depth and fire on forage availability, with input from Jack Reakoff and other local experts. (Team part 6 recording, 28:62)

Camera Collar Technology: The team deployed GPS collars with integrated cameras to collect video data on caribou diet and activity, starting in 2021 and expanding in 2023 to capture early spring diet. The project aims to convert video observations into qualitative data on diet composition.

Diet Composition Findings: Preliminary data showed a pronounced spike in consumption of cotton grass flower heads during calving season, with significant year-to-year variability linked to snow conditions and forage availability. The flower heads are identified as a critical protein source for calf production.

Environmental Influences: Group discussion on how deep snow and fire events affect the availability of cotton grass and other forage, with fire promoting regrowth and increased food resources, while snow can restrict access to preferred diet components.

Local Knowledge Integration: Local hunters contributed observations on caribou feeding behavior, migration, and the impact of environmental changes, supporting the scientific findings and emphasizing the importance of integrating traditional knowledge into research and management.

Kobuk and Koyukuk Moose Study

Kyle Joly announced a new moose ecology research project in the Kobuk and Koyukuk Rivers, detailing study objectives, collaboration with multiple agencies, and initial findings on moose movement, survival, and condition, with plans to expand research into diet, contaminants, and disease. (Team part 6 recording, 3:49:30)

Project Overview and Objectives: The new research project, funded by the National Park Foundation, aims to study moose survival, calf recruitment, habitat use, and movement in two distinct study areas, building on previous work from 2008-2013.

Initial Findings and Collaborations: Seventy collars have been deployed, with initial results indicating good moose condition and movement between study areas. The project involves collaboration with Park Service staff, Alaska Department of Fish and Game offices, and other Regional partners.

Expanded Research Components: The team plans to investigate moose diet, contaminants, and diseases, and will compare findings across a broad geographic range from the Chukchi Sea to the Dalton Highway.

26. Resources Update – Kim Jochum

(Teams part 7 recording, 03:29)

Project Compliance and Leadership: Kim outlined that all field projects for Gates of the Arctic in 2026 go through a compliance process, now led by Emily Johnson, the new environmental protection specialist and compliance lead at the park level.

Resources Team Composition: The Resources team consists of 13 dedicated staff, including archeologists, a historian, subsistence coordinator, compliance staff, and specialists in small mammals, large mammals, shallow lakes, and basic species support, working in collaboration with Arctic and Central Alaska Inventory and Monitoring Program Networks.

Budget and Planning Challenges: Kim described delays in project planning due to late budget allocations, which caused unpredictability and anxiety among staff, but confirmed that final funding was received, allowing all intended projects to proceed.

Youth Outdoor Adventure Permitting: Taqulik Hepa raised a question about a youth outdoor adventure project on the North Slope, clarifying with Marcy that the project did not require a Park Service permit as it was outside park lands.

Weather and Climate Summaries: Kim presented last summer and fall's weather and climate summaries for Gates of the Arctic, noting the use of four climate stations and the submission of seasonal reports, with the information shared to support project planning and community awareness. (Teams part 7 recording, 07:05)

- Seasonal Climate Reporting: Kim explained that climate summaries are submitted for each of the four seasons from four climate stations, with the latest available reports covering last summer and fall.

27. Subsistence Update – Marcy Okada

Secretarial Orders and Gateway Community Coordination: Marcy informed the SRC about Secretarial Order 3434, which focuses on strengthening coordination with gateway communities, and discussed the Park's approach to resident zone communities, reporting requirements, and the designation of Marcy as the official gateway community coordinator. (Teams part 7 recording, 07:41)

- Secretarial Order 3434 Overview: Marcy described the Order, issued in June 2025, which aims to improve coordination between Parks and gateway communities, with reporting requirements for interactions with Tribal Councils and special projects.

- Resident Zone Community Alignment: The SRC discussed the overlap between the term ‘gateway communities’ in the Order and the Park’s resident zone communities, agreeing to link the concepts for funding and coordination purposes.
- Coordinator Designation and Reporting: Mark Dowdle designated Marcy as the official gateway community coordinator, responsible for ensuring engagement and reporting on community interactions, as required by the Order.
- Community Awareness and Permitting: Taqulik and other SRC members emphasized the importance of communicating the existence and implications of Secretarial Orders to local communities, especially regarding permits for activities such as backcountry trips.

Subsistence Harvest Surveys and Project Updates: Marcy updated the SRC on the Upper Kobuk harvest surveys funded by the Park Service and conducted by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) Division of Subsistence, noting the completion of the survey in Kobuk, delays in Shungnak, due to community issues, and the extended timeline for reporting. (Teams part 7 recording, 13:00)

- Kobuk and Shungnak Survey Status: Marcy reported that the Kobuk harvest survey was completed in March, while the Shungnak survey was postponed due to water and sewer issues in the community, with plans to attempt the survey next year. The ADFG team prefers to conduct surveys in winter when residents are more available, but noted that recall periods for harvest data become less reliable as time passes, leading to the decision to delay the Shungnak survey. The harvest survey project is scheduled to wrap up in January 2029, with additional time granted for completion and a forthcoming report expected.

Dall’s Sheep Traditional Cultural Landscape Study: Marcy mentioned this ongoing study for Allakaket and Alatna, led by Dr. Annette Watson, with plans for her to present findings at a future SRC meeting. (Teams part 7 recording, 15:02)

Subsistence Management Plan Working Group Formation: Marcy proposed forming a working group or subcommittee, ideally including the Chair and Vice-chair, to update the Subsistence Management Plan, with the group to meet virtually or in-person and report back to the full SRC for adoption. (Teams part 7 recording, 15:33)

- Working Group Structure: Marcy suggested that a small working group or subcommittee, preferably including the Chair and Vice-Chair, would be most effective for revising the subsistence management plan, rather than involving the entire Commission.
- Meeting logistics: The group discussed options for meeting virtually or in-person, with some members preferring virtual meetings for convenience and others favoring hands-on, in-person collaboration, potentially coinciding with future SRC meetings.
- Review and Adoption Process: The plan is for the working group to review and revise the management plan, then present recommended changes to the full Commission for discussion and formal adoption.

Recap of Past SRC Meetings and Village Visits: Marcy provided a historical overview of past SRC meetings and village visits, listing locations and years to refresh members’ memories and highlight the frequency of meetings in Anaktuvuk Pass and other communities. (Teams part 7 recording, 19:21)

- SRC Meeting Locations and Frequency: Marcy listed previous SRC meeting locations and dates, noting repeated visits to Anaktuvuk Pass due to its status under park management, and mentioning other villages such as Allakaket, Ambler, and Shungnak.

Community Engagement and Inclusion Initiatives: Member Raymond Woods and other SRC members advocated for increased participation from local people and elders in SRC meetings, suggesting the use of available funding to invite non-members and emerging leaders to share perspectives and strengthen representation. (Teams part 7 recording, 23:12)

- Inviting Non-Members and Elders: Member Raymond Woods proposed inviting local people who are not SRC members, including elders and emerging leaders, to attend meetings and speak for their communities, using available funding from absent council members to support their participation.
- Funding and Logistics: The group discussed reallocating travel funds from SRC members who cannot attend to sponsor community representatives, emphasizing the value of their input even if they do not have voting rights.
- Youth and Next Generation Engagement: SRC members highlighted the importance of involving younger, knowledgeable individuals to observe and learn from SRC meetings, ensuring the transmission of experience and leadership to future generations.

Collaboration with Agencies and Stakeholders: Marcy and other participants acknowledged the collaboration between federal, state, and local agencies, including the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and emphasized the need for continued scientific research and agency involvement in subsistence management. (Team part 7 recording, 28:40)

- Agency Participation and Responsibilities: Marcy noted the involvement of Alaska Department of Natural Resources and Bureau of Land Management in discussions about land management and subsistence impacts, stressing the need for BLM to be more engaged in managing lands and supporting subsistence users.
- Scientific Research Needs: Participants called for more comprehensive scientific work on caribou and other wildlife, including composition work and documentation of small, medium, and large goals, to inform management decisions.
- Interagency Collaboration: The meeting highlighted ongoing collaboration between federal, state, and local entities, as well as nonprofits, to address subsistence issues and ensure community interests are represented.

These minutes will be formally considered by the Gates of the Arctic National Park Subsistence Resource Commission at its November 2026 meeting in Fairbanks, and any corrections or notations will be incorporated in the minutes at that meeting.

A more detailed report of this meeting, copies of the transcripts, and meeting handouts are available upon request. Call Subsistence Coordinator, Marcy Okada at 907-519-6078 or email marcy_okada@nps.gov.