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ALASKA MIGRATORY BIRD CO-MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

SPRING MEETING - ZOOM

VOLUME II

October 6, 2022

Members Present:

Ryan Scott, Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
Wendy Loya, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
Brandon Ahmasuk, Kawerak  
Cyrus Harris, Maniilaq  
Gloria Stickwan, Ahtna Intertribal Resource Commission  
Priscilla Evans, Chugach Regional Resources Commission  
Taquulik Hepa, North Slope Region, Barrow  
Coral Chernoff, Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak  
Gayla Hoseth, Bristol Bay Native Association  
Peter Devine, Aleutian/Pribilof Island Association  
Randy Mayo, Tanana Chiefs

Executive Director, Patty Schwalenberg

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P R O C E E D I N G S

(ZOOM - 10/6/2022)

(On record)

MR. LACEY: You cannot hold a meeting use these funds, however, if you do want to go out like Gayla was asking about, buying products and supplies, you can do that but it's not -- you need to do it this month because we want whatever action you take this month to be within the scope of the agreement. And so if you were to start buying supplies or materials for outreach in November, you know, that's going to be into the next grant period and so we don't want any type of overlap, anything of a audit -- in terms of an audit on the grant.

MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: I'm going to ask a question right there, Will.

MR. LACEY: Yes.

MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: We only have certain -- a certain dollar amount for our supply line items and a lot of the things that we weren't able to do with travel and hold the meetings, would we need to do a grant modification with you to allocate those travel funds to go towards supplies?

MR. LACEY: No.

MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Okay.

MR. LACEY: It's authorized.

MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Okay. Can we move any of those remaining funds towards wages and fringe (ph)?

MR. LACEY: Yes.

MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Okay. Okay, so I don't know if any other regions are in the same position of having left over funds and not able to spend down due to no meetings, I know that we're sitting on, you know, a lot of remaining funds and just want to be able to spend those down and not return them.

0101

1 MS. HEPA: Gayla, this is Taqulik.

2

3 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Go ahead.

4

5 MS. HEPA: I just wanted to make sure,  
6 yeah, I was -- I think I misunderstood the extension. I  
7 thought that we were able to meet between now and the  
8 end of December and finalize everything, including the  
9 reports before December 29. So that's not the case  
10 then, so we can't hold another meeting this fall?

11

12 MR. LACEY: Taqulik, that is correct.  
13 You cannot hold a meeting. The purpose of the  
14 extension was a.....

15

16 MS. HEPA: Okay.

17

18 MR. LACEY: .....there it's just to  
19 allow for this meeting, that should have been held in  
20 September according to the original award. So because  
21 it couldn't be held in September, we had to extend the  
22 grants to allow for the meeting. That was the main  
23 purpose of the extension. If you look at the scope of  
24 work, it says that these -- that the meetings that  
25 you're proposing to hold should have been held prior to  
26 the statewide, so, therefore, if you're holding a  
27 meeting after the statewide it's not within the terms  
28 of the current grant. Hopefully you understand -- I'm  
29 clear in what I'm saying right there.

30

31 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: But, now, Will,  
32 did you not say yesterday that they could hold meetings  
33 in the fall but they would be covered on the new grant;  
34 is that correct, or am I getting.....

35

36 MR. LACEY: Oh, I didn't mention that  
37 yesterday. But, yes, you can -- any meetings that you  
38 hold will be -- can be charged to the grants which I'll  
39 be talking about on the next slide. So if you're  
40 having a meeting, it's part of the new agreement that  
41 we hope to award by 1 November.

42

43 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Thank you. Go  
44 ahead, Patty, sorry, your hand is up.

45

46 MS. SCHWALENBERG: Through the Chair,  
47 sorry. So I just want to understand this correctly,  
48 Will. So for this meeting, this is going to not be  
49 included in the narrative report, the final narrative  
50

0102

1 report, it will go into the next grant agreements  
2 because the.....

3

4 MR. LACEY: Sorry for the confusion  
5 Patty.

6

7 MS. SCHWALENBERG: Yeah. Because I'm  
8 also confused about the financial report. Do we or do  
9 we not include expenses after October 1, like this  
10 meeting?

11

12 MR. LACEY: Okay. The report that's  
13 due 29 December is an interim report, and the period of  
14 performance is 1 October '21 to 30 September 2022. So  
15 you need to report all financial information and  
16 whatever your performance was during that period of  
17 performance, and that's what you report on 29 December  
18 2022. And then on 29 April, or before 29 April, you're  
19 going to do your final report and that's going to  
20 include everything. It's the final report. So you  
21 will have whatever expenses that you used to hold this  
22 meeting, any activity you've done through the remainder  
23 of the agreement which was 30 December 2022 because  
24 that's what it was extended to.

25

26 Did that answer your question, Patty?

27

28 MS. SCHWALENBERG: Oh, yeah, I was on  
29 mute, sorry. Thanks, that clears it up.

30

31 MR. LACEY: Okay. Does anybody else  
32 have any questions. I think I made that more confusing  
33 than it should be.

34

35 MS. HOSETH: It helped clarify and we  
36 could always ask questions if you wanted to continue. I  
37 just wanted to ask about -- I know on some of our other  
38 grants that we have is that we would have to get --  
39 you know, what funds are we moving to different line  
40 items over 10 percent. So with this one we don't need  
41 to do that or do we?

42

43 MR. LACEY: So if you're going to move  
44 between budget line items, if it's within the scope of  
45 work it's okay. If you are trying to move money into a  
46 budget line item that wasn't previously approved then  
47 you'd have to come to us and we'd have to -- you know,  
48 you do a grant note, we'd have to approve that budget  
49 reallocation. But budget -- budget submissions are

50

0103

1 estimates and it isn't totally expected, you know, to  
2 be accurate to the penny, it's just here's our budget  
3 narrative, this is what we expect to pay and that's  
4 what's on the award when we award it. But the 2 CFR  
5 200 explains what conditions would require a budget, an  
6 actual revision to the budget and just moving between  
7 them isn't enough to warrant a formal amendment, or  
8 even a notification. It's when it's not within scope  
9 that drives that requirement.

10

11 MS. HOSETH: Okay, thank you. And then  
12 you're available to help us if we have any individual  
13 questions on our grants?

14

15 MR. LACEY: Yes.

16

17 MS. HOSETH: Okay, thank you, Will.

18

19 MS. HEPA: Can I ask one question?

20

21 MR. LACEY: Yes.

22

23 MS. HOSETH: Go ahead, Taqulik.

24

25 MS. HEPA: Thank you. So we are  
26 planning on having a -- because we were not able to get  
27 to meet in September, we were planning on having our  
28 next regional management meeting the last week of  
29 November, first week of December and without an  
30 agreement in place, how do we reference that? Do we do  
31 like a -- I'm not sure, because it's in between  
32 funding, right?

33

34 MR. LACEY: So the award, when it's  
35 awarded, is going to state from 1 October to 30  
36 September, even though we haven't awarded the grant yet  
37 and the reason why it will have a 1 October date is  
38 because we posted the announcement and you apply to the  
39 grant before 1 October, and so any cost that you incur,  
40 if you were to incur a cost before you actually had the  
41 grant in hand, it's still chargeable to the grant. But  
42 unfortunately, you know, it's a reimbursement, because  
43 we haven't awarded it yet. So it'll be reimbursed back  
44 to you, you can pull down the funds once it's awarded.

45

46 MS. HEPA: Okay. We'll probably call  
47 you soon just to help walk us through this. Thank you.

48

49 MR. LACEY: Okay.

50

0104

1 MS. HOSETH: Yeah, I think that would  
2 be best. Thank you.

3  
4 MR. LACEY: I just tried to change  
5 slides on my presentation and my final slide isn't  
6 showing. I am going to have a brief disconnection so  
7 there'll be a brief interruption. Hold on, please,  
8 while I try to bring up that slide.

9  
10 (Pause)

11  
12 MR. HARRIS: Harold, any time you got  
13 any questions for Will, feel free. I know you guys do  
14 some pretty inside work, and I do the outside work of  
15 migratory birds, so I wish Neva was there with the  
16 finance department.

17  
18 HAROLD: Thanks, Cyrus. I'm kind of  
19 just watching and paying attention here and I guess  
20 whenever you and I meet tomorrow I'll get a better idea  
21 of what you need to include for the budget for the next  
22 cycle.

23  
24 MR. HARRIS: Okay, thank you. So we'll  
25 get Will's contact information before tomorrow.

26  
27 MR. LACEY: Do you all see my screen?

28  
29 MS. HOSETH: Yes.

30  
31 MR. HARRIS: Gotcha.

32  
33 MR. LACEY: All right. So next I want  
34 to talk about the new grant. The new grant is a --  
35 again, it'll be a five year agreement running from 1  
36 October through 30 September 2027. Applications are  
37 currently under review. When we talk about under  
38 review, what that means is I'm going to look at your  
39 applications and see if you -- if they contain all the  
40 mandatory requirements which were attached to the  
41 notice of funding opportunity. We also will be looking  
42 over the budget and if there's any concern with the  
43 budget we will be reaching out to each region to talk  
44 about it. Each line item on your budget submission  
45 will be reviewed by our ARD, and, again, if there's any  
46 need to reach back to you we will do so.

47  
48 I am waiting for applications from AVCP  
49 and Kawerak. I've been in communication with both  
50

0105

1 Jennifer and Brandon. They're aware of the dates that  
2 it's due by 31 October.

3  
4 Just as a reminder to both you,  
5 Jennifer and Brandon, please route your packages to us  
6 prior to inputting them into Grant Solutions, that way  
7 we can go ahead and do that review process in advance  
8 and when you submit it it'll be one and done.

9  
10 The estimated award date -- I'm sorry,  
11 I said 1 November, but the estimated award date is 1  
12 December. So what our plan, is this, we want to make  
13 sure that we get with each region and finalize their  
14 budgets by 15 November, and then that will give me a  
15 chance to do our part on the Fish and Wildlife Service  
16 side, to get the awards, the grants awarded by 1  
17 December.

18  
19 Is there any questions about that  
20 process?

21  
22 (No comments)

23  
24 MR. LACEY: Thank you.

25  
26 MS. STICKWAN: Did AITRC turn in their  
27 budget?

28  
29 MR. LACEY: I'm sorry, can you repeat  
30 the question?

31  
32 MS. STICKWAN: Did AITRC turn in their  
33 report?

34  
35 MR. LACEY: Well, we're talking about  
36 the new agreement that you all already applied for and  
37 we'll be looking at those budget narratives that were  
38 attached and if we have any questions or if we need to,  
39 you know, negotiate -- I don't know if that's the right  
40 word, but if we need to have a conversation about the  
41 budget it would be done by our -- by Wendy one on one  
42 and then when you come to that final number, I will  
43 need a new document. So I will return the grant  
44 solution submission, I will return it back to the  
45 organization so that you can attach any revised budget  
46 narratives and resubmit.

47  
48 Hopefully I'm answering your question,  
49 Gloria.

50

0106

1 MS. STICKWAN: I just heard you say AVCP  
2 and Kawarek hasn't turned in their applications, I was  
3 wondering about AITRC.

4  
5 MR. LACEY: Yeah, everybody else has  
6 submitted their applications.

7  
8 MS. STICKWAN: Thank you.

9  
10 MR. LACEY: So this year we did a  
11 separate agreement, AMBCC executive director agreement.  
12 Patty mentioned that earlier. The reason why it was  
13 separated out is because it's two different functions.  
14 That's why we had to make the change. The AMBCC grant  
15 is for the purpose of holding the AMBCC meetings. The  
16 executive director was a totally separate function and  
17 should never have been combined. So we had to separate  
18 it out just to make it correct in terms of proper  
19 granting. So we separated it out, it's awarded to  
20 CRRC, and we are hoping to have that awarded by 1  
21 November 2022. And like Patty mentioned earlier, it  
22 was a three year award.

23  
24 And that is the last item I have.

25  
26 As always, if anybody has further  
27 questions they are invited to contact me directly, I  
28 prefer it as a matter of fact, just working through one  
29 on one because every situation is different in little  
30 ways and it's a learning process for me when we do  
31 that.

32  
33 So, again, finally, if there's any  
34 questions that I might be able to answer.

35  
36 (No comments)

37  
38 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Does anybody have  
39 -- I think that if we have like specific questions  
40 within each region we could give you a call. I did  
41 have a question, though, if we were able to extend our  
42 current grants right now until October, how come we  
43 couldn't just get a no cost extension on those funds  
44 going into this next year because we've been holding on  
45 to this money for a couple years due to Covid?

46  
47 MR. LACEY: It was a five year  
48 agreement. That extension was -- we had to justify the  
49 extension and because the meeting was supposed to be  
50



0107

1 held and was part of the original terms of the  
2 agreement, but couldn't because a quorum couldn't be  
3 met in September, that was justification for the  
4 extension. Okay, so there has to be a reason to extend  
5 it, otherwise it's a five year agreement, it's going to  
6 close and we had to, you know, do a new five year  
7 agreement going forward.

8

9 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Okay. Go ahead,  
10 Taqulik.

11

12 MS. HEPA: I just want to make sure. I  
13 didn't look through all the materials that Patty sent  
14 but were these, your slides, included in the packet. I  
15 just want to print -- if you could please provide them  
16 so I could make sure I follow the instructions  
17 correctly and the timelines. Thank you.

18

19 MS. SCHWALENBERG: I didn't send that  
20 information out because there was about three  
21 presentations we received that did not make the packet  
22 so I'll send all those out.

23

24 MS. HEPA: Perfect, thank you, Patty.

25

26 MR. LACEY: Thank you, Patty.

27

28 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Go ahead,  
29 Jennifer.

30

31 MS. HOOPER: Hi, good morning. I have,  
32 I guess kind of a general funding question and I'm not  
33 sure if we're going to have any more discussion on the  
34 agenda. I guess I want to think about and look at our  
35 funding situation correctly. In preparing these new  
36 grant applications, I guess I want to assume that the  
37 expectation is that budget requests are going to be,  
38 you know, almost cut in half, because of this new  
39 virtual meeting scenario that we're in. Is that -- is  
40 that kind of a general accepted assumption moving  
41 forward with our current funding situation?

42

43 MS. LOYA: I might jump in here on this  
44 one, Will, is that -- so thanks for that question  
45 Jennifer. Yeah, we are -- I would anticipate that in  
46 past meetings Eric Taylor has conveyed that the Fish  
47 and Wildlife Service has had a declining budget  
48 overall, including the funding that we use to support  
49 AMBCC and I think I can say, with confidence, that the  
50

0108

1 Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service supports co-  
2 management, our Regional Director, Sara Boario supports  
3 co-management, I am here as the Assistant Regional  
4 Director supporting co-management, but unfortunately  
5 that doesn't necessarily change our budgets, but we are  
6 working to do that. And so I do think that we are  
7 looking to work with you. I wish I knew this better,  
8 there's a budget committee and we'll work together to  
9 be transparent and open about what's going on, we'll be  
10 working in the region to identify how to best fund this  
11 and our other co-management efforts, and -- but I do  
12 think that at this time moving towards one in person  
13 and one virtual statewide meeting was the goal in order  
14 to be able to save some money but also, in some ways to  
15 be inclusive of people that were not able to travel.  
16 And so there are pros and cons and we can certainly  
17 continue to discuss that as a group on how to move  
18 forward. But that is the intent right now is to have  
19 in-person and virtual meetings, split in half.

20

21 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Go ahead,  
22 Taqulik, I see you raising your hand. You're on mute.

23

24 MS. HEPA: Sorry about that. And thank  
25 you for that Wendy. Just for people to think about, is  
26 that -- so we missed the opportunity because the price  
27 quotes for our travel were really high during the month  
28 we wanted to go so we decided to postpone it thinking  
29 we were going to use those monies with the extension  
30 and that's not the case. But in using the money this  
31 fall is going to limit our ability to get together and  
32 talk about these very important issues because, you  
33 know, we have things that we need to communicate about  
34 this co-management organization and the things that  
35 we're obligated to with the regulations, the closures,  
36 so on and so forth, so it's a little bit confusing  
37 right now. But as we move forward with this back up of  
38 funds and the reduction of meetings is think about the  
39 operational effectiveness of this co-management  
40 organization because there is an obligation to bring us  
41 together to make sure that we're moving forward and  
42 doing the work that is needed to meet the requirements  
43 of why we are a co-management organization.

44

45 I just wanted to throw that out there  
46 because now I'm just a little bit of confused about the  
47 timing and are we going to have enough funds to do what  
48 we need to do.

49

50

0109

1 MS. LOYA: Yeah, let's make a time to  
2 talk with you and Will and I. Will is here to keep us  
3 out of jail, which is great, he keeps us doing the  
4 right things at the right timelines. Again, if we need  
5 to revise a particular region's proposal, I don't know  
6 if this can even happen, Will, but if Taqulik had  
7 anticipated using expiring five year agreement funds  
8 and that's not available, we will bring those back to  
9 the Fish and Wildlife Service or perhaps those funds  
10 could be included or modified in a future year. So  
11 there is the chance to meet this fall if you need to,  
12 we just need to figure out how to include that in the  
13 next agreement. And, again, while it may not come out  
14 quite before you meet, that money will be there to pay  
15 those costs, either after they come in or soon after  
16 they come in. So I think we can make it work.

17  
18 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: We need to have a  
19 budget committee. We need to call a budget committee  
20 probably as soon as possible, those of us who serve on  
21 the committee -- Patty, if you have that list of who  
22 serves on the budget committee because there's some  
23 real concerns. I mean we're operating at very minimal  
24 costs as much as we are operating right now and then to  
25 be asked to reduce our funding even more, the price of  
26 air travel out here is very expensive, food is very  
27 expensive, everything -- our costs are going up for  
28 transportation. And for us to have very little bit  
29 money coming from U.S. Fish and Wildlife for us to  
30 operate AMBCC, to now reduce us by how much -- I asked  
31 for more than -- for more than what was said on the  
32 grant award based on the information that, you know,  
33 for us to have these meetings and if we go to one  
34 virtual and one in-person. You know the information  
35 that we gather from the people that serve on the  
36 Councils of our regional councils are traditional  
37 knowledge bearers and they're traditional -- they need  
38 to be -- one thing that I was wanting to do -- and I  
39 think that we talked about this before, is adding in  
40 stipends for our Council members as they serve on these  
41 committees, the information that they share is not  
42 free. And a lot of the stuff that we share, you know,  
43 helps U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. So when we have  
44 that budget committee, information that isn't really  
45 shared to us regionally, is how much money is coming in  
46 to U.S. Fish and Wildlife for the AMBCC Program or for  
47 the Migratory Bird Program, how is that then disbursed  
48 out to all of regional organizations to have these  
49 meetings and to do the work that we're doing. But for  
50

0110

1 us to apply for very minimal funds is very hard and,  
2 you know, Will's doing a really great job helping us  
3 through the grant process and, you know, as we're going  
4 through this turnover with you sitting now for U.S.  
5 Fish and Wildlife Service, these are really big issues  
6 that we're facing. And if you don't really come out  
7 here and see how we live and how hard it is to travel  
8 and to get around, it is really hard.

9

10 MS. LOYA: And I completely understand  
11 and agree. And I think Patty -- thanks, Patty, for  
12 pulling up the budget committee. I think that's a  
13 great place to start but I also do hope that with the  
14 spring gathering that we can dig in as a team and  
15 figure out how to do this. The Federal government  
16 right now is under a continuing resolution through  
17 December so we won't know our budgets until maybe  
18 December, but it often gets further kicked down the  
19 road and, you know, you'll see -- we lost our AMBCC  
20 Coordinator position, you know, Eric's leaving. I'm  
21 not sure how we'll refill that position. So we have  
22 lost a lot of Staff that support AMBCC and we do need  
23 to figure out how to help from the Service and we also  
24 need to work with you guys to make sure you're meeting  
25 but we're also being strategic together to do it right  
26 but also use our money -- our limited funds to the best  
27 that we can.

28

29 I don't know if this will mean anything  
30 to everyone. We have to find the money to do this but  
31 we aren't given a line item that says money  
32 specifically for AMBCC in our budget, and so it comes  
33 out of more general funds to the -- to one of the  
34 programs in the region. And so we really need to  
35 figure out how to fine-tune that so it isn't -- this  
36 program isn't taking a hit. So there's a good  
37 conversation to be had with our leadership team and  
38 that's coming up. So you have my commitment to keep  
39 working on it and our leadership, it's just we're not  
40 the ones at the end of the day that pass the budget so  
41 we'll work together.

42

43 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Yeah, I like to  
44 hear that, you know, that we are going to work together  
45 as a co-management and the budget is really an  
46 important issue for everybody within U.S. Fish and  
47 Wildlife Service, ADF&G and Native Caucus. There's  
48 some -- I would say that we should probably have a  
49 budget meeting and looking at the people who are on the  
50

0111

1 list of the committee, maybe we can meet within maybe  
2 next week if that's not too short of notice. We could  
3 poll everybody and see if we could meet next week to  
4 kind of go over some of these things because we have  
5 some big concerns, and now that we're not going to get  
6 our award letter until December people are trying to  
7 have their fall meetings and kind of like what we  
8 talked about in our regional reports.

9  
10 And, you know, if we have any funding  
11 issues there's a lot of us that, you know, are tribal  
12 leaders and have connections to different organizations  
13 and different Federal agencies that we do work with  
14 directly that we could bring those concerns, so we  
15 could talk about that in the budget committee.

16  
17 This is really frustrating on our end.  
18 I'm sure it's frustrating on your end. But if you're  
19 able to run your program with \$20,000 you're not going  
20 to get very far.

21  
22 Anybody have any more questions or  
23 comments for Will.

24  
25 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: Thank you, Gayla.  
26 You said it very well. Thanks for being there as our  
27 Chair person. I had something, Will. You know I know  
28 that we're going through budget cuts, was it due to  
29 overspending or is it the funds were there and just get  
30 reappropriated elsewhere. I mean evidently the over  
31 spending didn't really come from the 12 regions but  
32 from somewhere else inside. So these are just  
33 questions running through my mind, and I'm not too sure  
34 if I'm on the right page or where we could make those  
35 corrections.

36  
37 MS. LOYA: Well, I might jump in and  
38 just provide a very general answer to that. In that,  
39 when your budget is held flat over time and inflation  
40 goes up, so the cost of people, the cost of space, the  
41 cost of travel, the cost of everything goes up, any  
42 money you have that doesn't go towards, yeah, fixed  
43 costs, starts to disappear and that's a little bit  
44 where the Fish and Wildlife Service is at. And so  
45 we're hopeful we'll be getting some funding increases  
46 that are strategic but sometimes those take a few years  
47 to be realized because of the way the budgeting process  
48 works. They're already contemplating -- apologize for  
49 the background noise -- they're already contemplating  
50

0112

1 the FY24 budget so it's difficult to know ahead. So I  
2 appreciate your patience, I appreciate your questions.  
3 I'm happy to explain it and I share your frustration  
4 and I know that it's our job to help figure out halfway  
5 through it with you.

6  
7 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Okay. And then  
8 also just to let everybody know that our budget  
9 committee is open to all the AMBCC members. So if you  
10 want, we could send that to everybody, and if you're  
11 not on that committee, you're welcome to join us.

12  
13 MS. SCHWALENBERG: Madame Chair.

14  
15 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Yes, go ahead,  
16 Patty.

17  
18 MS. SCHWALENBERG: You know I just also  
19 wanted to really thank the Fish and Wildlife Service  
20 for allowing Will to engage and stay engaged with the  
21 AMBCC. I know the Native Caucus have been asking for  
22 years to have someone from contracts and grants speak  
23 to the Council and that never happened, and since  
24 Will's been on he's been to every meeting. He's always  
25 Johnny on the Spot when you email him and, so, Will, we  
26 really appreciate you and very thankful that you're so  
27 engaged with the regions and the AMBCC.

28  
29 (In Native)

30  
31 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Yes, thank you,  
32 Will, and thank you Patty for recognizing Will. He's  
33 been very helpful. Especially with the new grant  
34 solutions that we have to work with now.

35  
36 MR. LACEY: Thank you, very much.

37  
38 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Well, if that  
39 covered -- does anybody else have anything else to talk  
40 about on budgets.

41  
42 (No comments)

43  
44 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Okay, hearing  
45 none, we could just jump back on our agenda and go to  
46 new business, the aerial waterfowl survey results.  
47 Julian.

48  
49 MR. FISCHER: Good morning everyone.  
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0113

1 Good morning, Madame Chair. Members of the Council.

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MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Good morning.

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MR. FISCHER: Visitors. Guests. Give me one moment while I pull up this presentation and share it on my screen. And I'm going to actually turn off my video because I'm having some connectivity issues and you might be able to hear my voice better if I just turn this off so please standby.

(Pause)

MR. FISCHER: Okay, and if someone could just let me know if you can see that first slide.

MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: We could see it.

MR. FISCHER: Thank you. Okay, good morning again. My name is Julian Fischer. I live in Anchorage here where I work for the Fish and Wildlife Service, Migratory Bird Program. And our program's charged with with monitoring the health of Alaska's migratory bird populations.

So within the Waterfowl Program we conduct aerial and ground-based surveys and our purpose really here is to track distributions, abundance of birds and to detect if bird numbers are changing over time. And the reason we do this work is to provide information to subsistence hunters, migratory bird co-management participants and others. And all of you are going to be making decisions that support subsistence harvest in the future so that's one of the large reasons why we are here collecting information.

Okay, so our program is comprised of a number of individuals shown here on the slide, the top row, are the waterfowl section folks who have a diverse set of skills including operating aircraft and aerial survey expertise, mapping distributions of birds, project planning, logistics, and coordination. We also work with other personnel in other portions of the Migratory Bird Program. You'll see Tamara Zeller there in the middle, she's our Outreach Coordinator but she also serves as an aerial observer on several projects. And we're further supported by the Quantitative Ecology Section shown down at the bottom there. Tammy Patterson manages our data. Chuck Frost, who's also on

0114

1 the call today is involved with the AMBCC quite a bit,  
2 he generates the abundance estimates from the data we  
3 collect. And Eric Gosness oversees the statistical  
4 analysis for the division as a whole. So everyone you  
5 see on the screen has an active role on the AMBCC or a  
6 support role. Not shown on this slide are additional  
7 folks in Migratory Birds who specialize in other bird  
8 groups such as land birds, shorebirds, raptors and  
9 seabirds as Robb Kaler will be presenting other  
10 information later on, he's in the seabird section.

11

12 But in this presentation I'll just be  
13 focusing on the waterfowl surveys that we conducted in  
14 2022.

15

16 Okay. So our work spans most of the  
17 annual cycle, starting in February where we conduct the  
18 Alaska portion of the Pacific Flyway winter brant  
19 survey. By spring we conduct the aerial breeding  
20 population surveys of migratory birds major production  
21 areas around the state. In mid- and late summer we  
22 conduct several goose and duck banding projects and  
23 then in the fall we have a final aerial survey at the  
24 Izembek Lagoon at a time when virtually all Pacific  
25 brant stage there during the month of October. Many of  
26 these surveys are cooperative with other partners, some  
27 of whom are on the call today, that are either within  
28 other divisions of Fish and Wildlife Service or other  
29 offices out of agencies and some are in other parts of  
30 the country. So I'm going to go through each of the  
31 surveys and some brief results of each. I want to  
32 point out that the results are also available on an  
33 annual report that's published by our headquarters  
34 office and that report can be reached at that website  
35 above. I would share it in the packet but it's  
36 hundreds of pages long so I provided the website.

37

38 Okay, so the first survey I'll describe  
39 is the winter brant survey so Pacific brant, they breed  
40 in Northwestern Russia, the high Arctic of Canada and  
41 Alaska and within Alaska brant colonies are found on  
42 the North Slope and the Yukon Delta. And there's  
43 probably some small colonies or lone pairs scattered  
44 along the Western coast line outside of these major  
45 areas. But by and large, within Alaska, most of the  
46 brant are breeding are on the North Slope or the Yukon  
47 Delta. In fall all of these birds migrate south to the  
48 Alaska Peninsula and then many continue on outside of  
49 the state going down as far as Baja Mexico. And come  
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1 January brant are pretty much in place at all their  
2 wintering sites and it's at that point that a  
3 combination of partners from Alaska to Mexico together  
4 conduct a winter brant survey and our office conducts  
5 the portion of that survey that occurs in Alaska at the  
6 Izembek Lagoon. So the result of the coordinated  
7 survey, the count across all those wintering sites is  
8 compared against thresholds that were defined  
9 originally in the Yukon Delta Goose Management Plan in  
10 the 1980s and now were then adopted in Pacific Flyway  
11 Management Plans, and states use that plan to determine  
12 whether harvest restrictions should be put in place  
13 during fall and winter in order to maintain stable  
14 populations for the long-term.

15

16 So looking at some results from that  
17 survey, the figure in the bottom left shows the counts  
18 of Pacific wintering brant across all survey areas from  
19 1981 to this just past winter. During that timeframe  
20 counts have varied between 100,000 to 200,000 brant  
21 with not a clear long-term positive or negative trend.  
22 Current three year average is roughly 150,000 brant,  
23 which is just 11,000 shy of the population objective.  
24 While there's no clear trend during the long-term,  
25 there is a clear increasing trend in the number of  
26 brant overwintering in Alaska. So the figure on the  
27 bottom right shows the total counts from 1981 to 2022  
28 and these bars are divided into the portion of brant  
29 that are in Alaska versus elsewhere in mid-winter. so  
30 as you can see through time the bars showing dark have  
31 increased, this is the number of birds that are  
32 overwintering in Alaska. So this winter we had an all  
33 time high, it's just been increasing year after year,  
34 we had 67,000 brant, which was comprising over 40  
35 percent of all Pacific brant in the continent in  
36 wintertime. So with the Lagoon generally no longer  
37 freezing over, brant have access to eelgrass throughout  
38 the winter and so more of them are remaining in Alaska  
39 and that strategy can be really successful for them  
40 because the geese are not subjected to that grueling  
41 energetic cost of flying all the way to Mexico. But  
42 remaining in Alaska does come with some risk. For  
43 example, if you had a long cold snap, it could freeze  
44 over the lagoon, it could force brant out of that  
45 lagoon into less productive habitats. Another risk  
46 we're thinking about, too, is that eelgrass could  
47 eventually become overgrazed if the goose numbers  
48 continue to increase and feed throughout winter months.  
49 Luckily USGS has established a monitoring program for  
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0116

1 eelgrass and that allows for periodic assessments of  
2 the health of eelgrass habitat.

3

4 All right, I've got a lot to cover so  
5 I'm going to move on to first of the breeding pair  
6 surveys.

7

8 So come spring one of the earliest  
9 arriving geese is the Dusty Canada goose, and dusties  
10 are a unique sub-species of Canada goose and they breed  
11 exclusively in Southcentral Alaska with the principal  
12 breeding ground on the Copper River Delta. Sub-species  
13 is relatively small population size and so it's  
14 actually closed to hunting in Oregon and Washington.  
15 Dusties are not closed to harvest in Alaska but the  
16 fall/winter hunting season is time to reduce take of  
17 dusties. For monitoring our office conducts an aerial  
18 survey in mid-May on the Copper River Delta and the  
19 State of Alaska, ADF&G conducts a ground-based  
20 assessment on Middleton Island, just off the coast of  
21 the Copper River Delta. And that combined count serves  
22 as a management index that's used in the Pacific Flyway  
23 to make decisions about fall and winter. And in this  
24 map on the bottom right you can see the transect lines  
25 that we fly in May.

26

27 Okay. So this figure shows the results  
28 from the survey that we started in 1985 and the results  
29 are shown up to the present. Population monitoring  
30 surveys indicate a general decline in the populations  
31 through 2009 which is followed by increases, there's  
32 stable counts since then. The current three year  
33 average is about 15,000. It's 'twice the limit that  
34 would trigger restrictive regulations in fall and  
35 winter.

36

37 Now, I'm going to move on to the  
38 waterfowl breeding population and habitat survey. It's  
39 a mouthful. This survey's been going on since the  
40 1950s, it's conducted throughout North America. It  
41 spans all the major production areas across the  
42 continent including Alaska with the exception of the  
43 North Slope. That survey was established originally to  
44 measure abundance of ducks as well as the abundance of  
45 spring pond habitat. So duck populations are highly  
46 variable from year to year. That variability comes  
47 from many factors ranging from the prior years nesting  
48 success, overwinter survival, how many birds were  
49 hunted that particular year, habitat conditions, many

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0117

1 more factors. So the Bpop, I'll just call it the Bpop  
2 survey here, breeding population survey, it's useful in  
3 detecting long-term trends and it's less useful in year  
4 to year comparisons. But those single year comparisons  
5 -- or single year counts, if they're combined with  
6 other factors including annual survival estimates which  
7 are calculated from leg banding projects, and harvest  
8 estimates that Bpop survey can be used to set bag  
9 limits and dates for fall and winter hunting.

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So our office conducts the portion of that Continental survey that occurs in Alaska and looking at some results from that, what I've shown here in this slide and in the next slide, I have two graphs for each of these species, the counts are from 1955 to 2022. The top graph shows the total count across the entire Continental North America here for mallards, widgeon, greenmintteal. The dotted line, I'm not sure you'll be able to see that on the screen here, this is a North American population objective. The bottom graph shows just the counts from within the State of Alaska. So on a continental scale the estimates of these three species are at or near the population objective. Within Alaska the estimates from 2022 were a t or above the long-term mean, yet the counts are not as high as they were about 10 or 15 years ago. So most of the ducks that breed in Alaska winter in Pacific Flyway states and drought conditions there have been pretty severe for several years now. This may have contributed to the lower numbers of these ducks returning to Alaska. State surveys, surveys that are conducted in the states during summer on the Pacific Flyway also have indicated that duck populations there have declined in recent years.

Okay, I'm going to just show a couple more species from this survey, these three duck species, the Northern shoveler, Northern pintail and scaup trends in Alaska and the rest of the continent are a little bit more in synch. One species, though, I want to highlight, this is one of particular concern on a continental scale is the Northern pintail here in the middle. The counts of pintail have been below objective for four decades now in the continent and so allowable harvest has been restricted in the fall and winter generally at one or two bird bag limits in the Lower 48 states. And on a continental scale the count this year was the lowest on record and it's actually approaching a point where hunting closures could be

0118

1 considered if the counts continued to drop. Within  
2 Alaska, however, numbers of pintail during the last two  
3 years are very close to the long-term average and they  
4 were actually up from the prior six years. Pintail is  
5 a very interesting species. So one reason why we might  
6 be seeing a few more pintail here in most recent years  
7 is because we've had drought conditions in the Canadian  
8 Prairies over the last couple years. So how could  
9 drought elsewhere actually benefit pintail. While I'm  
10 not suggesting that droughts actually benefit any  
11 waterfowl but in the case of pintail it's been shown  
12 that in years of low water in Prairie Canada pintails  
13 would actually generally nest there but in drought  
14 conditions they overfly that region and just continue  
15 north and west until they reach more productive nest  
16 and habitat. So drought in Canada doesn't really  
17 benefit pintail per se here but instead it just forces  
18 them to search out alternative nesting areas. So  
19 waterfowl are pretty adaptable in that way.

20

21 Estimates of scaup, they're also below  
22 the North American objective. The estimate of scaup in  
23 Alaska was the highest in roughly 10 years though it's  
24 still below the state's long-term average.

25

26 Okay, I'm going to step away from ducks  
27 for a minute. We use the breeding population survey,  
28 the Bpop survey also now to monitor trumpeter swans. A  
29 century ago trumpeter swans across North America were  
30 in serious trouble, actually even more than 100 years  
31 ago trumpeters had actually disappeared from the state  
32 of Minnesota and by the 1930s only a few dozen remained  
33 in the Lower 48 states. Swans here in Alaska had  
34 remained -- had a strong foothold, although their  
35 numbers had declined, but eggs from their nests from  
36 several sites in Alaska were actually used to  
37 reintroduce trumpeters to the state of Minnesota and  
38 with great success. Trumpeters are very strong there  
39 now. But in the '60s we started doing a once every  
40 five year survey and numbers continued to rise,  
41 distribution of trumpeter swans expanded and by 2020 we  
42 decided we could no longer justify a very expensive  
43 statewide survey of trumpeters. The conservation  
44 concerns had been reduced. Our costs were going up and  
45 our budget was flat or declining. And so we now use  
46 the breeding population and habitat survey, the Bpop  
47 survey to monitor the population size of trumpeters.  
48 The 2022 count was the highest in the history of the  
49 survey and this is really encouraging for the health of  
50

0119

1 trumpeter swans in Alaska.

2

3 Okay, moving.....

4

5 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Julian, could I  
6 just ask, what is the total population of the swans?

7

8 MR. FISCHER: Good question, Gayla,  
9 thank you for that. Are you asking about the total  
10 population size of swans in North America or in Alaska?

11

12 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Well, in Alaska  
13 to kind of go with the reports that we heard out during  
14 the regional council reports of possibly increasing the  
15 fall harvest.

16

17 MR. FISCHER: Okay. So in Alaska the  
18 last statewide survey, full statewide survey, I want to  
19 say the count was about 25,000. I'd have to pull that  
20 up and I'm going to make a note and send the most  
21 recent statewide survey report to you and just a sec.  
22 That was the last time we did a full statewide survey.  
23 The -- let me just go back to this one here. So the  
24 count this year, it was less than 20,000, however, this  
25 is not a full statewide survey. This is just sampling  
26 within major production areas. There are swans that  
27 have expanded outside of these areas that are actually  
28 sampled. So this is what we call an index. This is  
29 sampling a proportion, a consistent proportion of the  
30 state every year. So what we're looking for here more  
31 is the trend, rather than a total abundance estimate.  
32 But I do have an abundance estimate from 2015 and I'll  
33 send that to you.

34

35 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Thank you. If  
36 you could send it to the whole Council so that we could  
37 have that as we work forward to write a proposal.

38

39 MR. FISCHER: I'll do that, yes.

40

41 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Brandon has a  
42 question, go ahead, Brandon.

43

44 MR. AHMASUK: Yeah, thank you, Madame  
45 Chair. So the swan comments I had yesterday, I believe  
46 that was for tundra swans, not trumpeter swans. But  
47 the -- either way it's good to know both population  
48 estimates, population for Alaska.

49

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1 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Okay, thanks for  
2 that clarification Brandon.

3  
4 MR. FISCHER: Yeah, and, Brandon, I'll  
5 be bringing up tundra swans shortly.

6  
7 Okay. The coastal zone survey, this is  
8 the Yukon Delta. So this survey was designed back in  
9 the 1980s and it was set up during the recovery period  
10 of white-fronted and cackling geese after the Yukon  
11 Delta Goose Management Plan was first written in 1984  
12 and revised annually. So population thresholds defined  
13 in that plan are compared against the results of this  
14 survey. Those thresholds in that plan were then  
15 modified into the Pacific Flyway Management Plans of  
16 those species and is still used today. And then in  
17 2016, the AMBCC advocated for a shift in monitoring  
18 emperor geese from our former spring staging survey to  
19 using the results from this coastal zone survey. So  
20 now those three species all are monitored for  
21 management purposes with this Coastal Zone Survey.

22  
23 In addition, tundra swan populations  
24 are monitored through this survey and then combined  
25 with the North American Bpop survey to come up with a  
26 -- or I should say, portions of the Bpop survey along  
27 Western Alaska to come up with the statewide index of  
28 tundra swans.

29  
30 And then, finally, with the listing of  
31 spectacled eiders under the Endangered Species Act back  
32 in 1993 this survey was also adopted as the principal  
33 measure of recovery of the Western population of  
34 spectacled eiders. We typically do this in the last  
35 week of May, or into the first week of June, this  
36 depends on the timing of breakup, timing of initiation  
37 of nesting activity. This is information that we  
38 gathered from biologists in the field but also  
39 subsistence hunters on the Yukon Delta through  
40 coordination with the Refuge and the AVCP. It takes  
41 about a week to complete and it ranges from the mouth  
42 of the Kuskokwim to the mouth of the Yukon and roughly  
43 30 miles inland.

44  
45 Okay. So Pacific white-fronted geese.  
46 This population increased rapidly in the mid-1980s and  
47 that was boosted by a combination of harvest  
48 restrictions in the Lower 48 states at first and then  
49 increased food availability for these geese and  
50

0121

1 agriculture in winter, particularly from rice farms.  
2 The population really increased very quickly and a lot.  
3 And so over the last 10 years or so the population  
4 appears to have leveled off but it's still well above  
5 the population objective of 300,000. The current three  
6 year estimate is about 558,000.

7

8 Okay. Then we've got our cackling  
9 geese. Minima-cackling geese, a sub-species of cackling  
10 goose. They had a very similar trend to white-fronts  
11 with rapid growth following the harvest restrictions in  
12 the 1980s and by the '90s down in the wintering area,  
13 cacklers made a really significant shift in their  
14 distribution whereas they had previously wintered in  
15 California they shifted north to the Willamette Valley  
16 of Oregon primarily and they were attracted by new  
17 agricultural practices there. And the increase in  
18 cacklers and that agriculture industry began getting  
19 conflict, damage to crops were becoming an issue but in  
20 2016 the Flyway Management Plan was revised and there  
21 was a lot of negotiation about whether the objectives  
22 should be reduced. But with input from members of the  
23 AMBCC, particularly, AVCP, the plan retained that  
24 population objective of 250,000 that was originally  
25 established in the Yukon Delta Goose Management Plan.  
26 But it also set limits to keep the population within  
27 about 10 percent of that objective. So -- and you can  
28 see these lines here indicate where the objective is  
29 and where action would be taken to keep the population  
30 within a certain range. So bag limits for fall and  
31 winter hunting are increased when the population is  
32 above 275,000 cacklers and decreased when it drops  
33 below 225,000. The current three year average count is  
34 just below 217,000 so State agency managers have  
35 reduced bag limits in Oregon and Washington within  
36 areas where cacklers are concentrated and Alaska  
37 implemented a four bag daily bag limit for cacklers in  
38 fall and winter. And these more conservative harvest  
39 limits have been effective in the past to increase  
40 overall population sizes so we expect this will lead to  
41 cacklers rising again in the next couple years.

42

43 Okay. Emperor geese. So Dave touched  
44 on a lot of this yesterday so I'm not going to go into  
45 too much depth here but I'm happy to answer any  
46 questions. They're far less numerous than white-fronts  
47 and cacklers but emperors also increased in abundance  
48 starting in the mid-1980s and this growth continued  
49 with some dips and surges through 2017 when the harvest  
50

0122

1 was reopened after 30 years of closure. The counts  
2 dropped in four years after the hunt opened, the '22  
3 count was close to the average of the most recent  
4 decade. In fact the estimated population index of  
5 28,864 was above the upper threshold defined by the  
6 AMBCC Management Plan. And so while not required under  
7 the management plan, the AMBCC voted to retain the  
8 current harvest closure for emperor geese and that was  
9 after deferring to the Yukon Delta's region's request  
10 to do so. Yukon Delta region is really the primary  
11 nesting ground of emperors. As Dave mentioned also  
12 yesterday the State of Alaska plans no change to the  
13 500 bird quota to the fall winter registration hunt.

14  
15 Okay. Now, we're going to move to  
16 tundra swans. This is the Western population of tundra  
17 swans. There's actually two populations of tundra  
18 swans. There's an Eastern population that nests on the  
19 North Slope. These birds winter to the East Coast of  
20 the U.S., the mid-Atlantic. And then there's 'the  
21 Western population, these birds breed in Alaska from  
22 Kotzebue Sound to the Seward Peninsula and Yukon Delta  
23 and Bristol Bay and in winter these birds migrate to  
24 the Coastal states within the Pacific Flyway and some  
25 venture further inland along the Pacific Flyway. And  
26 it's the Western population that's shown in this graph  
27 and these counts are a combination of the Yukon Delta  
28 Coastal Zone survey and then portions of the North  
29 American Bpop survey. So tundra swans are above their  
30 population objective of 60,000 which is shown in the  
31 dotted line here. There's no positive or negative  
32 trend over this time period. The current three year  
33 average is 107,000 swans. I think that's all I've got  
34 on that slide.

35  
36 Now, spectacled eiders, this is a  
37 really interesting story. The last species that I'm  
38 going to describe related to this particular survey is  
39 the spectacled eider and they were listed as a  
40 threatened species in 1993 after their numbers dropped  
41 significantly over a number of decades. There's other  
42 populations of spectacled eiders as well, one on the  
43 North Slope of Alaska and then another breeding  
44 population in Arctic Russia. But this survey on the  
45 Yukon Delta is used to monitor the Western population  
46 of this species. So the data here generally are  
47 positive for spectacled eiders where estimates have  
48 increased over the last three decades. There have been  
49 three counts starting in 2015 where extremely low  
50



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1 numbers were reported, two of these were in the last  
2 two years. So in both 2021 and 2022 biologists on the  
3 Yukon Delta conducted ground-based studies as well on  
4 other species and these were long-term studies that  
5 folks had been involved with for a number of years and  
6 they indicated that the presence of nesting eiders and  
7 attending males was very low. So those were  
8 corroborated with these aerial estimates that we came  
9 up with. And an explanation for the low counts, one is  
10 that, well, the population declined precipitously.  
11 Another explanation is just that these birds did not  
12 come to the breeding grounds during those years, or  
13 came at very low numbers or they arrived and they  
14 quickly departed to sea. Causes of that could be that  
15 they had poor energy reserves as a result of really  
16 challenging winter conditions. Spectacled eiders  
17 winter in the openings in the pack ice in the Bering  
18 Sea, but ice conditions have become less table.  
19 They've been highly variable from year to year, they've  
20 been less predictable. So we are planning a winter  
21 survey this March and we hope to generate a revised  
22 world population estimate and to map the current  
23 distribution of eider use of the Bering Sea during  
24 winter. So we hope to find out more about that.  
25 Looking further at the situation with breeding birds on  
26 the Yukon Delta this past summer, we really want to  
27 understand what's going on with nesting here and so we  
28 implemented a new methodology for counting nests of  
29 spectacled eiders in their core breeding area. We used  
30 a system called distance sampling and it involves  
31 walking to find transect lines within plots that are  
32 distributed across the breeding habitat. There's a lot  
33 of data entry that has gone on and there's data  
34 checking that's still occurring. I don't have results  
35 from this effort yet but I will in the spring meeting  
36 and I'll share that at that time.

37

38 So after the Yukon Delta our air crew  
39 heads to the North Slope where we conduct the final  
40 breeding pair survey of the season. Similar to other  
41 breeding surveys the air crew conducts these flights  
42 across a set of established transect lines. We have  
43 four sets of transect lines and the crew alternates  
44 between the four sets each year. The survey is a  
45 multi-species survey but I'm just going to touch on a  
46 couple of these species in the interest of time.

47

48 First I want to display our results for  
49 lesser snow goose. So snow geese are a colony nesting

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1 species. They don't -- they're not spread widely  
2 across the landscape so when birds are clustered in  
3 colonies transect surveys are not the best way to  
4 monitor the populations. Our estimates in snow geese  
5 are really imprecise because most transects do not pass  
6 over those small but concentrated snow goose mountains.  
7 For that reason you see long error bars around the  
8 estimates. Nonetheless counts of snow geese are rising  
9 and they've really increased since the start of the  
10 survey design which was designed in 2007. And while  
11 our survey was not designed for such species like snow  
12 geese, the North Slope Borough with ABR, Inc., has  
13 conducted colony surveys that were designed  
14 specifically to project growth in species such as snow  
15 geese, and they recently published a paper summarizing  
16 their results which showed substantial increases in the  
17 numbers of adults and goslings along the Western  
18 portion of the North Slope. USGS has also been working  
19 in the Colville River Delta and during their time up  
20 there has witnessed some amazing growth of the snow  
21 goose populations.

22  
23 So we're generally glad to see when  
24 populations increase but we do become concerned about  
25 over abundant geese. Snow geese in other parts of  
26 North America particularly the Central Arctic of Canada  
27 have increased dramatically in recent decades and that  
28 has resulted in damage to habitat. The photo at the  
29 bottom left shows the effect of over grazing by snow  
30 geese in Canada. And what that photo is showing is a  
31 plot where a fence was erected to prevent grazing by  
32 geese. And what it shows is outside of that fence the  
33 sedge habitat was significantly transformed by grubbing  
34 of foraging snow geese while the sedge habitat remained  
35 intact within in the fence. So USGS is keenly aware of  
36 the concerns related to the over abundant goose issue  
37 and has recently published papers regarding snow geese  
38 on the North Slope and has studies ongoing to help us  
39 understand the current state and the predicted future  
40 states of geese on the North Slope. They have shown  
41 that the growth rates of brant and snow goose goslings  
42 are high. Goslings are healthy but growing at high  
43 rates and they have remained high despite the size of  
44 the growing snow goose populations. That's an  
45 important observation so there's no -- doesn't appear  
46 to be any impacts on goslings at this point. It also  
47 examined changes in the nutritional content of foraged  
48 plants with the warming climate and they predict that  
49 food sources will remain abundant and nutritious for  
50

0125

1 geese at least in the short-term. So food is not  
2 limiting for snow geese or brant and so there is  
3 potential for these populations to continue to grow.

4  
5 In Progress is a publication by USGS  
6 that indicates that to-date nesting success of brant  
7 has not been negatively affected by the growing snow  
8 goose population on the Colville River Delta. So  
9 damage to the tundra, it has not been documented yet,  
10 but we are highly supportive of studies that would help  
11 determine whether management actions are needed to  
12 reverse the growth of snow goose colonies and growth  
13 within those colonies.

14  
15 Okay. So.....

16  
17 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Before we move on  
18 Brandon has a question.

19  
20 MS. SCHWALENBERG: And there's a  
21 question in the chat as well.

22  
23 MR. FISCHER: I can't see the chat so  
24 if someone could read the question or.....

25  
26 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Okay, we'll go to  
27 Brandon and then we'll go to the chat after Brandon.

28  
29 MR. AHMASUK: Yeah, hi. Thank you,  
30 Madame Chair. On the spectacled eider population,  
31 sorry, we're going backwards a little bit. I am -- so  
32 I mean there was -- Julian, I believe you mentioned the  
33 population declined a little bit. I am a little bit  
34 concerned with -- in particular with this year's fall  
35 storm that hit Western Alaska, you know, jeez, Bristol  
36 Bay up to -- all the way up to North Slope. I am  
37 worried about nesting areas being destroyed or, you  
38 know, heavily impacted. Is there, I guess, is there  
39 going to be any kind of study for nesting site health?

40  
41 MR. FISCHER: Thank you for the  
42 question, Brandon. And thank you for your concern, I  
43 share your concern, I think many folks in -- that study  
44 and watch these birds are concerned about this as well  
45 as all the species that nest on the Coastal areas. I  
46 think the storm is a wake up call, I think we've had a  
47 number of wake up calls recently. Spectacled eiders  
48 are a very Coastal oriented species, especially on the  
49 Yukon Delta, less so on the North Slope but also

50

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1 generally close to the Coast. There are annual studies  
2 conducted by the Yukon Delta Refuge. There's also  
3 studies on the -- in brant colonies both on the North  
4 Slope and on the Yukon Delta. We had that experimental  
5 distance sampling study last year, which was not really  
6 looking at habitat per se, but just densities overall.  
7 We don't have a budget for that yet but I believe that  
8 the work on the Yukon Delta, by the Yukon Delta Refuge  
9 is an annual work plan so I hope to see that going  
10 forward. We don't have budgets or work plans in place  
11 yet to -- for me to directly answer precisely what  
12 we're going to be doing next year.

13

14 But, yes, Brandon, we're concerned  
15 about the health of those Coastal breeding birds  
16 especially after storms like Typhoon Merbok.

17

18 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Go ahead, Karen.

19

20 MS. PLETNIKOFF: What -- is it going to  
21 be just one more year of, you know, 1,500 birds or less  
22 than 2,000 birds before we do some sort of management  
23 action or what -- can you tell us what the next steps  
24 will be to protect this population?

25

26 MR. FISCHER: Yeah, thanks, Karen. The  
27 -- I think I mentioned a couple minutes ago, this  
28 winter we are planning a winter survey of the world  
29 population of spectacled eiders. The way this is  
30 accomplished is by marking a subset of spectacled  
31 eiders with transmitters, which was accomplished by a  
32 number of partners from the Yukon Delta and the North  
33 Slope and then those birds head to the middle of the  
34 Bering Sea. By mid-winter they settle into their  
35 wintering areas and from the distribution of those  
36 birds we can design a survey around that area and so we  
37 should be coming up with a total population estimate  
38 from that work. That will be compared with prior  
39 estimates of the same type of survey. Last time in  
40 completion, about 10 years ago, and then we'll have a  
41 better understanding of whether the estimates that  
42 you're looking at on the screen right now reflect just  
43 the breeding population, the birds that were present at  
44 the breeding grounds or if there was a, you know, a  
45 wholesale decline in the population. One thing that is  
46 notable about this figure is you see that estimate in  
47 2015 was a major departure from the overall trend. The  
48 subsequent year we were right back up on track with the  
49 rest of the main counts. So it appears that in that

50

0127

1 year, it was an aberration, the birds were not present  
2 or if there was something else going on that led to  
3 that low count, and we're hopeful that that is the case  
4 in these last two years and that the birds will be back  
5 on the breeding grounds. Ultimately if they stop  
6 breeding, the population, of course, will crash.

7

8 So we'll learn a lot more this March  
9 when we're actually out with the birds over the entire  
10 World population where all of them congregate.

11

12 Okay, I'm going to -- are there other  
13 questions or should I kick back in here.

14

15 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: There was  
16 questions, Lili asked a question about with the fencing  
17 area on the snow geese, what is the red thing out of  
18 the enclosure?

19

20 MR. FISCHER: Oh, okay, sorry, I should  
21 have explained that more. That's a different  
22 vegetation type that is -- I think it's salecornia(ph),  
23 it's a different type of vegetation that's not useful  
24 for geese. They've pretty much eaten themselves out of  
25 house and home there. But the other aspect of the  
26 overgrazing in that picture is that it affects other  
27 species as well. There were documented declines in  
28 useful habitat for songbirds in the areas that snow  
29 geese had passed through in Central Canada. So they  
30 were having widespread impacts on not just goose  
31 habitat but also songbirds.

32

33 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Okay, I think we  
34 captured everything in the chat.

35

36 MR. FISCHER: Okay. So I'm going to  
37 continue on here with white-fronts from the North Slope  
38 survey. So earlier I had talked about Pacific Greater  
39 Fronted geese on the Yukon Delta. On the North Slope  
40 we have an entirely different population of white-  
41 fronted geese. The white-fronted geese on the North  
42 Slope, they actually spend their winter in the Central  
43 and Mississippi Flyway states. They don't mix with the  
44 Pacific population at all. So the bulk of them end up  
45 wintering in the Gulf of Mexico region heading further  
46 south down into the highlands of Mexico. So on the  
47 North Slope estimates have generally raised between 150  
48 to 250,000 since the survey was redesigned in 2007 with  
49 the exception of a few high counts about five years  
50

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1 ago. There's no apparent trends in these estimates  
2 within that timeframe. In the -- on the right side,  
3 I'm showing an estimation method or the results of a  
4 different type of estimation method called Lincoln  
5 Peterson estimation and what this is, is it relies on  
6 banding geese and then recovering those birds from  
7 hunter harvested or found dead birds and combining that  
8 with some other information to come up with a total  
9 population size. Now, this is for the entire continent,  
10 this is not for the North Slope specifically. And so  
11 those estimates of the mid-continent population of  
12 white-fronted geese throughout North America are now in  
13 the range of about 2 million birds. So we contribute  
14 to that banding effort in Interior Alaska, where also  
15 mid-continent greater white-fronted geese occur and  
16 then USGS also bands geese on the North Slope for the  
17 same purpose and then we also work with the Canadian  
18 Wildlife Service who does their part by banding this  
19 population in their major breeding areas in Canada.

20

21 Okay, brant on the North Slope. So far  
22 less numerous than snow geese, brant are also colony  
23 nesting species. And our estimates are less precise  
24 for other species because of that. So detecting a  
25 positive or negative trend over the short period is  
26 difficult. A complicating factor is that our  
27 monitoring of breeding brant is that many Yukon Delta  
28 geese migrate to the North Slope in June if the  
29 breeding conditions are poor down in the sub-Arctic.  
30 So these geese are not alternating their breeding sites  
31 like pintail can sometimes do if the conditions are  
32 poor in other locations but, instead, brant will come  
33 to the North Slope in mid-summer if they are either too  
34 young to breed or if they were in poor body condition  
35 and did not breed, or if they initiated a nest and it  
36 failed so a portion of those birds come to the North  
37 Slope. And so the timing that they arrive on North  
38 Slope is variable. So when we conduct our survey up  
39 there we may be actually counting a combination of  
40 North Slope breeding birds and Yukon Delta breeding  
41 birds. Nonetheless there are indications that numbers  
42 of brant are increasing on the North Slope in some  
43 colonies. Also in molting goose survey that we conduct  
44 in the Teshekpuk Lake area shows that numbers of  
45 goslings have increased through time, at least in that  
46 one portion of the North Slope.

47

48 I am going to jump over to tundra  
49 swans. This is now the Eastern population of tundra

50

0129

1 swans. These are the birds that breed on the North  
2 Slope and then migrate south to the mid-Atlantic states  
3 and they join the Canadian breeding tundra swans there.  
4 So our aerial estimates of swans appear stable with no  
5 change detected. The population index in 2022 was  
6 12,000 swans within our survey area on the North Slope.

7  
8 Okay, I'm going to check in with two  
9 species of eiders on the North Slope. So king eiders,  
10 they're a very important species for subsistence  
11 hunters. The graph on the left shows the numbers of  
12 the king eiders on the breeding grounds of Alaska from  
13 2007 through 2018. The numbers were generally between  
14 15 and 20,000, whereas the most recent two years of  
15 counts were in the range of about 10,000. The cause of  
16 that change is just not known. North Slope hunters are  
17 likely harvesting some king eiders that breed on the  
18 North Slope but it's likely that the majority of the  
19 harvested birds come from the breeding grounds further  
20 east in Canada where king eiders are more numerous.  
21 I'm unaware of any annual or periodic monitoring of the  
22 Canadian breeding king eiders so I -- I don't know what  
23 is -- what's going on with the breeding populations  
24 there and if that's affecting the hunting in the North  
25 Slope. So I'm interested to hear from North Slope  
26 hunters about their hunting success, and, particular,  
27 whether hunting success was good or bad for king eiders  
28 over the last couple years.

29  
30 On the right side here we've got  
31 spectacled eiders showing from 2007 to present. These  
32 eiders are part of the Northern Alaska population. And  
33 similar to the pattern we saw with the Western birds on  
34 Yukon Delta, the count in 2022 was low. In fact it was  
35 the lowest since the survey was designed in 2007, and  
36 the cause is not known. But as I mentioned before it's  
37 reason for concern and we're looking forward to seeing  
38 what's going on on the wintering grounds this upcoming  
39 winter. Again, it could be that these birds were just  
40 in poor shape and were not -- did not have the  
41 resources to breed and so they didn't show up to breed  
42 on the North Slope in high numbers as they have in the  
43 past.

44  
45 Okay, last species group I'll touch on  
46 for the North Slope are the three species of loons that  
47 occur there. Council, these three species are highly  
48 variable. Both yellow-billed loons and red-throated  
49 loons migrate to Eastern Asia in winter and may be  
50

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1 subjected to contaminants on the wintering grounds.  
2 That's one concern we have for the North Slope breeding  
3 of yellow-billed loons. In Alaska loons are generally  
4 not a focus for subsistence harvest, in general. But  
5 loons can be caught in fishing nets of subsistence  
6 fishers on the North Slope. Concern about loons  
7 prompted a new survey effort this year that our office  
8 participated in by providing an aerial observer.  
9 Analysis is being led by USGS with partners with the  
10 Refuge system. It was a helicopter based survey using  
11 a plot design which is much better suited for loons. I  
12 don't have any results to show at this time. Those are  
13 -- as I understand they're being worked on now and  
14 they'll be reported when fully reviewed and there is a  
15 plan to repeat that survey in 2023.

16

17 Okay. The next survey that our office  
18 is involved with is happening right now. You may have  
19 seen Heather Wilson and Tamara Zeller present on the  
20 meeting yesterday morning and I think may be tuned in  
21 right now as well, I'm not sure. But we're here back  
22 at the Izembek Lagoon where we started this  
23 presentation. Now that fall migration's underway  
24 Pacific brant from Russia, Canada and Alaska have all  
25 funneled down through the Bering Sea and are arriving  
26 at Izembek Lagoon based on abundant eelgrass beds  
27 there. And they'll be there through October and likely  
28 many into November before departing and then, of  
29 course, a very large proportion of them will remain  
30 over the entire winter. But this month of October is  
31 really the primetime to measure the size of the entire  
32 Pacific population before they depart. So for decades,  
33 Refuge Staff and our office have conducted low level  
34 surveys of grant at the lagoon during that fall staging  
35 period similar to what has been done in winter. What's  
36 different, however, is that in fall the flocks are very  
37 large and mixed with other species of geese, like  
38 cackling geese, emperor geese and a number of species  
39 of ducks, so the counts are difficult. Replicate  
40 surveys are done in fall to try to reduce the variation  
41 in those annual estimates but they're still sources of  
42 bias that can't be ruled out. And so to improve the  
43 estimate of the population size and to increase safety  
44 of the air crews and reduce disturbance of feeding  
45 geese we initiated a photographic survey of Izembek  
46 Lagoon. It's conducted at 1,500 feet. This work has  
47 been completed and is continuing in close partnership  
48 with USGS who led the survey design and the analysis  
49 portion, while our office conducted the survey flights  
50



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1 and the data collection. We use a program called  
2 Aviatrics, it creates a flight plan over standardized  
3 transects and the program automatically triggers two  
4 high definition cameras when the aircraft passes over  
5 predetermined points, essentially taking a photograph  
6 every few seconds. It takes about three hours to  
7 complete the survey and it requires a pilot and a photo  
8 technician onboard. The imagery is high quality and it  
9 allows a trained observer to identify species and count  
10 geese within each photograph. The image on the left  
11 is, at first glance, it just appears like a grey image  
12 but then you can see white dots in it, but when a  
13 portion of that photograph is expanded you can clearly  
14 see birds and distinguish cackling geese from brant,  
15 here's a group of four brant and a single cackling  
16 goose. So because that camera is tripping every couple  
17 seconds a single survey yields about 10,000 photos  
18 which can be an overwhelming workload to sort through  
19 after a survey. However, we implemented a machine  
20 learning process by essentially training a computer to  
21 identify which photos contain geese versus those that  
22 did not, thereby reducing the workload by almost 90  
23 percent. Ultimately if we had an automated counting  
24 system it would be ideal, but in the interim we're able  
25 to successfully reduce the manual counting birds to  
26 just those photographs that contain birds.

27  
28 Most importantly, however, the  
29 preliminary analysis of this work indicates that the  
30 typical low level surveys of large flocks during this  
31 migration period are generally under estimating the  
32 population size. So the results of this work were  
33 written up by a USGS researcher, Emily Weiser, along  
34 with other USGS and Fish and Wildlife Service co-  
35 authors. It's currently being reviewed for  
36 publication.

37  
38 So our air crew is down in there in  
39 position right now and will be collecting an updated  
40 estimate of the population over the next two weeks as  
41 weather allows.

42  
43 And I'll conclude there.

44  
45 You know Alaska's really large. Those  
46 millions of birds, hundreds of species, and here I just  
47 summarize the population counts for just a small  
48 subset, the waterfowl and just a few key production  
49 areas and staging areas. If you have interest in  
50

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1 information that I didn't describe about specific areas  
2 or species, please let me know. If our office does not  
3 have that information, I'll do my best to track it down  
4 for you, it may not exist, but, you know, if there's  
5 interest in information that we are currently not  
6 collecting there's always the potential to write  
7 proposals, work with partners, et cetera.

8  
9 So, anyway, I'll stop but I'm happy to  
10 take any questions. Thanks very much, Madame Chair.

11  
12 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Thank you,  
13 Julian. Does anybody have any questions or comments on  
14 Julian's report.

15  
16 MR. DEVINE: Yes, Madame Chair, it's  
17 Peter.

18  
19 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Go ahead, Peter.

20  
21 MR. DEVINE: Yeah, Julian. Last spring  
22 I was commenting on the frequency of the storms that  
23 are coming through and I was wondering if you could  
24 have a comparison picture for our spring meeting, you  
25 know, to show if there's any loss on the Barrier  
26 Islands and Izembek. Just make note of that and have  
27 that available, if possible.

28  
29 MR. FISCHER: Yes, sir. I made a note  
30 of that question and concern that you had at the spring  
31 meeting and at that time we had photos from our fall  
32 survey for 2021 and after this upcoming survey we'll  
33 have the same for 2022. I'm very interested in the  
34 same thing there. And, so, yeah, I'd be happy, it'll  
35 be very interesting to look at some comparisons. And  
36 with that photo survey that'll allow us to actually  
37 document potential changes of that type. So, yeah, I  
38 will, again, make a note of it and bring those up in at  
39 our next meeting.

40  
41 Thanks.

42  
43 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Thank you. And,  
44 Patty, if you could also make a note of that so we  
45 could keep track of that.

46  
47 MS. SCHWALENBERG: Yep. And I've just  
48 had a request for a short break.

49  
50

0133

1 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Okay. Do we want  
2 to finish Julian -- I was going to take a break right  
3 after Julian's presentation. Karen has a question.

4  
5 MS. PLETNIKOFF: I'd just like to ask  
6 that we plan to have presentations about species that  
7 we're currently not able to access or have conservation  
8 plans on them. Just as a general practice, we'd like  
9 to understand the most endangered species that are part  
10 of this discussion. Both of those eiders are of  
11 interest to us, inherently of interest to us, and have  
12 significant problems. And their problems could be the  
13 same kind of problems that might be coming for other  
14 species, whether that's habitat or food sources. So we  
15 would be benefitted by understanding what the specific  
16 risks that are impeding recovery on. So we can plan to  
17 have a presentation on an annual basis of those species  
18 in recovery.

19  
20 MR. FISCHER: That's a great idea,  
21 Karen. We have an endangered species program within  
22 the Fish and Wildlife Service. I'll contact the  
23 endangered species coordinator and request that such a  
24 presentation can be provided at the spring meeting.

25  
26 MS. PLETNIKOFF: Thanks so much, that  
27 sounds perfect.

28  
29 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Thank you for  
30 bringing that up Karen. And we'll also make note on  
31 that. Does anybody else have any questions for Julian.

32  
33 (No comments)

34  
35 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Thank you,  
36 Julian. We're going to take a little break, you guys  
37 want to do 10 minutes, would that work, come back at --  
38 in 10 minutes-ish. Thank you.

39  
40 (Off record)

41  
42 (On record)

43  
44 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Okay, everyone.  
45 We were able to get a quick snack.

46  
47 MR. SCOTT: Well, Wendy, it looks like  
48 you're official.

49  
50

0134

1 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Thanks for that  
2 letter.

3  
4 MS. LOYA: Yeah, thanks for your  
5 patience in the process and excited to be here.

6  
7 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Nice, thank you,  
8 we're happy to have you. And then Julian will be your  
9 alternate when you need to step away.

10  
11 MS. LOYA: Correct. And that might  
12 happen here at the end of this meeting, so I'll drop it  
13 in the chat if I need to leave.

14  
15 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Okay. Just so  
16 everybody knows, Wendy, we've received her letter of  
17 appointment for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and in  
18 that letter her alternate is Julian Fischer.

19  
20 Okay, so we'll go to John Pearce with  
21 USGS.

22  
23 MR. PEARCE: Thank you, Chair. Thank  
24 you everyone for the invite to come and present today  
25 and provide some updates to USGS activities. So let me  
26 share my screen here. Can everyone see that okay?

27  
28 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Yes.

29  
30 MR. PEARCE: Is it the full  
31 presentation or does it look like multiple screens?

32  
33 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: It says USGS  
34 Alaska Science Center on it.

35  
36 MR. PEARCE: Okay, great. So, yeah, so  
37 thanks very much again. I just wanted to brief  
38 everyone on a few activities that we've been up to this  
39 past year and I was here in the spring and gave a  
40 similar update so some of the things that I'll say  
41 today -- I'll repeat some of that information but just  
42 wanted to make you aware of these.

43  
44 And I like to start talks, just to kind  
45 of give everyone a reminder about what USGS is and what  
46 we do. I think sometimes there's some confusion about  
47 different Federal agencies. So just to remind everyone  
48 that USGS is a non-regulatory science agency in the  
49 Department of the Interior, so we don't manage lands,  
50

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1 we don't manage resources, we are strictly a science  
2 agency and we really strive to provide science  
3 information to partners, especially those in Department  
4 of Interior. So as you heard in Julian's presentation  
5 we do have a lot of requests from Fish and Wildlife  
6 Service to help with analysis and surveys and fieldwork  
7 on important topics that Fish and Wildlife Service is  
8 tracking or is interested in. And then we also hear  
9 from you all in meetings like this and other meetings  
10 about important topics that people are interested in  
11 and so we try to develop science around those questions  
12 to address things that we think are going to come up in  
13 the future. And I really try to do as best a job as I  
14 can in sharing information out to everybody -- everyone  
15 about what we're learning and so I do regularly come to  
16 this meeting. I go to the WCC in Bethel when I can.  
17 Go to North Slope Borough meetings to let people know  
18 what we're doing on the North Slope. But we're always  
19 trying to do better at outreach and letting people know  
20 what we're doing both before projects start and once  
21 they're finished. So if you would like to get more  
22 information from our office or from other USGS offices,  
23 please, just let me know and provide some emails and I  
24 can send regular updates. We do a weekly highlights  
25 email and I can cut and paste specific highlights on  
26 studies that I think you'd be interested in and send  
27 those directly to you because it's mostly for  
28 Headquarters office but I like to send those to  
29 partners in Alaska so they know what we're up to.

30  
31 So as far as moving through this  
32 document, I mentioned this in the spring meeting but  
33 the spring and the fall of this year, USGS has been  
34 airing a PSA, a public service announcement, on public  
35 radio stations about bird bands. And this started --  
36 this kind of idea started a few years ago when we were  
37 working with an ANSEP student from the Bethel area and  
38 he said that hunters are really curious about bands but  
39 they're not really sure what to do with them, and if  
40 they're legal to have and he thought it would be great  
41 to have better outreach by USGS about what bird bands  
42 are and why we use them. So we visited some different  
43 communities on the Yukon Delta in collaboration with  
44 Brian Daniels and the Yukon Delta Refuge and Jacob and  
45 I visited with AVCP in Bethel about some different  
46 ideas for outreach materials about bands, and then we  
47 also used this PSA that aired this spring and it's  
48 airing again this fall and then it won't go next year,  
49 I think we'll just do it this year. But once, you  
50

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1 know, we released that PSA, and then people then submit  
2 bands that they might harvest and those -- if they're  
3 banded under our permit and I get an email summary that  
4 a hunter has reported one of our bands to USGS and then  
5 I followup with a map that's shown on the screen there  
6 that shows the hunter where the bird was initially  
7 banded and then where they recovered it and I send  
8 information about why we banded this bird, what the  
9 study is about that this bird was banded as part of --  
10 and we get some really good responses back from people.  
11 This spring we had some great emails from people about  
12 the spring conditions and what they were seeing in  
13 migratory birds and thoughts about the highly  
14 pathogenic Avian influenza. We also had some emails  
15 from people that appreciated the information because  
16 they learned new things about birds that they didn't  
17 know. For example, one person who shot a brant on the  
18 Yukon Delta said he was not aware that they molted on  
19 the North Slope of Alaska which is where the band was  
20 originally put out. So it's been a great way to have  
21 conversations with hunters for those that do respond  
22 and so we'll continue to do that into the future.

23

24 And then I just wanted to share a list  
25 of recently completed work that involves USGS Staff in  
26 '21 and '22.

27

28 The first one is a comparison of  
29 indices to infer population dynamics of black brant.  
30 So this was a review paper basically did some analysis  
31 to look into all the different surveys that Julian  
32 showed in his presentation for Pacific black brant and  
33 try to understand so which ones are providing different  
34 kinds of information and are there few that are really  
35 best tracking population processes in this species. So  
36 this is just one step in a long series of conversations  
37 that we've had over the past few years and I'm sure  
38 that we'll continue into the future about how best to  
39 monitor brants through different types of surveys and  
40 applies to other species as well.

41

42 Another paper used telemetry data to  
43 find that there's really strong evidence that black  
44 scoters in North America are two disjunct populations.  
45 So there's a population in the West Coast that breeds  
46 in Alaska and Western Alaska and then also a population  
47 that breeds in Northeastern Canada and to the West of  
48 Hudson Bay and there's a lot of evidence that those two  
49 populations don't intermix. Not only in telemetry data  
50

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1 but also genetics data that was part of a separate  
2 study. So that's just a paper on the telemetry data.

3  
4 We also published a paper on  
5 prioritizing habitats based largely on abundance and  
6 distribution of waterfowl in the National Petroleum  
7 Reserve and this was a study that was requested by BLM.  
8 And it really just provides analytical framework for  
9 BLM to use. The Arctic Coastal Plains survey data that  
10 Julian presented to help them determine sort of where  
11 the best habitats are for Arctic nesting and molting  
12 geese as the BLM contemplates oil and gas development  
13 and lease sales and other stipulations up in the  
14 National Petroleum Reserve.

15  
16 We were part of a publication this  
17 spring called Highly Pathogenic avian influenza is  
18 emerging disease threat to wild birds in North America  
19 and oddly enough this paper was published right before  
20 the outbreak started in North America so this had been  
21 -- came about because of observations of increasing  
22 high pathogenic Avian flu in Europe and Asia and  
23 concerns that this might spread into North America. So  
24 it's a review article. So if you're interested in  
25 Avian flu, this goes into all the different details  
26 about how it spreads and what the most likely species  
27 are and other processes involving the virus. And then  
28 it also talks about how best to be informed and  
29 prepared and take action as appropriate around highly  
30 pathogenic flu. So that came out right before the  
31 current outbreak.

32  
33 And then there were two papers that  
34 USGS Staff were involved in. And Karen VanHemert's on  
35 the phone and can answer specific questions about these  
36 papers that deal with paralytic -- or with harmful  
37 algae bloom toxins, if there's questions on those. The  
38 first was titled Paralytic Shellfish Toxins Associated  
39 with Arctic Tern Mortalities in Alaska and dealt with  
40 an Arctic Tern Mortality event in 2019 at two colonies  
41 in Southeastern Alaska. The second one is a broader  
42 review paper about harmful algae blooms in the Alaskan  
43 Arctic and it really does a great job of reviewing how  
44 algae blooms form, how they circulate and kind of like  
45 what the downstream effects might be and sort of where  
46 this might be going in the future of the Arctic. And  
47 so it's a real good thorough review of the issue.

48  
49 And then lastly I just want to mention  
50

0138

1 that we've released a lot of historic data just  
2 recently on our webpages so we're in the process of  
3 archiving old data that were collected by our Staff  
4 back when we were part of U.S. Fish and Wildlife  
5 Service and making these available to the public so  
6 there's some older data from the Yakutat area from a  
7 study that was conducted there in 1980 just to  
8 understand more about migratory birds of the region.  
9 Also some long-term studies that were done in the  
10 National Petroleum Reserve around Teshekpuk Lake  
11 beginning in 1974 so all this data is now available at  
12 that website. And then lastly we had a major update on  
13 all the eelgrass assessments that we've been doing over  
14 the years and so we've created a new web page where all  
15 these reports and data are now available.

16  
17 This took about two years to get done.  
18 These reports were largely unpublished to the Fish and  
19 Wildlife Service reporting on status of these studies  
20 that were done in the mid-2000s and so we've now made  
21 them all publicly available as well as the data and as  
22 Julian mentioned, we continue to do eelgrass  
23 assessments and Julian and I are actually meeting next  
24 week to talk more about this and how we're going to do  
25 this into the future. There is a standardized sampling  
26 protocol for Izembek Lagoon that's being published by  
27 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and USGS and so we're  
28 going to get together next week and just talk about how  
29 to get started on that standardized protocol and move  
30 forward. But we continue to sort of see how important  
31 eelgrass is and want to provide those assessments  
32 because of their importance to the habitat especially  
33 for black brant at Izembek Lagoon. So this map just  
34 shows all the different places where we've conducted  
35 assessments in the past and then the website is there  
36 up at the top.

37  
38 and then lastly I just want to talk  
39 about field work that was completed in 2022. We had  
40 planned to start the first one, a status of spectacled  
41 eiders on the Kashunuk River on the Yukon Delta, we had  
42 planned to start that a few years ago but due to Covid  
43 we cancelled that two years in a row so this year we  
44 were finally able to get out there and conduct that  
45 field work. And that's just to assess sort of density  
46 changes of spectacled eiders nesting over time and we  
47 also collected blood samples from nesting female eiders  
48 to check for lead levels and to see if those had  
49 dropped over time as was predicted by a former USGS  
50



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1 study many years ago. So that's in the works as far as  
2 analysis go this winter. We've also been doing a lot  
3 of status assessments of seabirds and other birds in  
4 the Lower Cook Inlet and Kachemak Bay area through  
5 regular surveys and checking on seabird colonies. A  
6 lot of that work is also associated with ongoing  
7 studies of harmful algalotoxins, testing samples  
8 working with partners such as Robb Kaler and many of  
9 you on this phone call. We also are in the middle of a  
10 study understanding the status of loons on the North  
11 Slope, mostly red-throat and Pacific. There have been  
12 some recent declines in red-throats and we were  
13 concerned about it and wanted to find out more so  
14 that's an ongoing study that BOEM, Bureau of Ocean  
15 Energy Management, has funded us to do.

16  
17 And Julian mentioned that we're working  
18 on snow geese on the North Slope, so, yeah, we continue  
19 to work on the Colville Delta looking at just the  
20 population dynamics of snow geese and brant, but also  
21 working with white-fronted geese and Pacific cackling  
22 geese as well. And then we have a number of studies to  
23 try to evaluate potential impacts of snow geese to  
24 habitat and other species on the Colville. And as  
25 Julian said thus far we don't have any evidence that is  
26 taking place but we've been doing some of those studies  
27 since 2018 and we'll continue those into the future.

28  
29 And then we're also working in the  
30 Teshekpuk Lake area to evaluate possible impacts of  
31 helicopter disturbance to molting geese in the  
32 Teshekpuk Lake area so that's something that BLM  
33 requested us to do and now has been started last year  
34 and will continue again this year. And then as Julian  
35 said we're working on a study with Fish and Wildlife  
36 Service to use photo imagery to estimate numbers of  
37 black brant so that's ongoing but the initial paper is,  
38 I think, in final review at a journal so that should be  
39 available soon.

40  
41 And then we're also putting  
42 transmitters on black brant at Izembek Lagoon. The  
43 Bureau of Ocean Energy Management asked us if we could  
44 assist with a study to understand the potential sort of  
45 intersection of black brant migrating down to the Coast  
46 of California and potential off shore wind development  
47 in Northern California in an area that BOEM is  
48 considering leasing, so there's no development there  
49 yet but if it happens, sort of what's the potential for  
50

0140

1 black brant to be in an area where there would be off  
2 shore wind energy development. So that data will help  
3 us answer that question for BOEM.

4

5 So that's my update. I know Caroline  
6 has to leave at 11:20 so if there's questions about  
7 harmful algae blooms she's here to help with those  
8 questions. But I just want to say thanks, again, and  
9 that your ideas are always welcome to USGS. You know  
10 we really want to work collaboratively with folks and  
11 we'd love to hear ideas in places where we are working,  
12 or in ways that we can help with other questions, so,  
13 yeah, just keep us posted. So thanks very much.

14

15 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Thank you, John,  
16 for your presentation. Does anybody have any  
17 questions.

18

19 (No comments)

20

21 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: I have a  
22 question, John, for working with the Native Caucus and  
23 with the regional reports and doing a statewide  
24 eelgrass, I seen that with the areas that you guys have  
25 done eelgrass studies, is there a way that we could  
26 expand to different regions around Alaska, is there any  
27 kind of funding that we could possibly together on?

28

29 MR. PEARCE: Yeah, I was really curious  
30 about Brandon's questions yesterday and it would be  
31 nice to hear more information about that and find out  
32 who's involved there and how we can have a conversation  
33 about that.

34

35 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Is that something  
36 that we would want to do as a Native Caucus form maybe  
37 an eelgrass, like a working committee to learn more  
38 about it in the cities that have been going and see  
39 where we could add that across the state, maybe  
40 partnering with USGS.

41

42 MR. AHMASUK: Madame Chair.

43

44 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Go ahead,  
45 Brandon.

46

47 MR. AHMASUK: So yes I did bring up the  
48 eelgrass, you know, for the Safety Sound Bonanza  
49 Channel area. But I'm wondering if at this -- in this

50

0141

1 arena, I guess, maybe broadening it a little bit more,  
2 to more like a -- I don't know, maybe like an ecosystem  
3 type committee. I mean I don't want to just rule out  
4 -- or I mean have a particular group just for eelgrass,  
5 you know, when there's so many different areas that  
6 need to be studied as well. I mean, yes, eelgrass is  
7 very, very important. The -- anyway, just a  
8 suggestion, you know, maybe more of a broader area that  
9 would -- at least for the purposes of this Council, an  
10 eco-system type committee.

11

12 So the USGS guy, he popped off my  
13 screen, I don't know what happened to him. The -- I  
14 don't know if you wanted to have a one on one  
15 conversation about the Safety Sound Bonanza Channel  
16 area but it's also my understanding that Imuruk Basin  
17 area just north of Nome, east of Teller, also may have  
18 some eelgrass. But with this change in climate and  
19 this new storm that we just had, you know, this very,  
20 very big storm, wondering if eelgrass could have been  
21 carried to other areas, you know, making it --  
22 expanding its territory, I guess.

23

24 So just I don't know if it's eelgrass  
25 but I'm going to give an example, so the Sunaq River,  
26 just west of Nome where my family's Native allotment  
27 is, when I was growing up the river mouth area never  
28 used to have aquatic plants but now it does, so much so  
29 that when I'm driving through there with my jet boat I  
30 get a bunch of weeds caught up in my intake on my jet  
31 -- the jet intake. You know with climate change,  
32 different things happening maybe aquatic plants are  
33 moving in different areas.

34

35 So, anyway, just a suggestion.

36

37 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: That sounds good.  
38 If we were wanting to form another committee, Patty,  
39 would we do it in the form of a motion if we wanted --  
40 I think that that's really good to identify areas that  
41 we need to have studied or different projects about the  
42 concerns that we have.

43

44 MS. SCHWALENBERG: Yeah, that would  
45 need to be a motion.

46

47 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Brandon, do you  
48 want to make one.

49

50

0142

1 MR. AHMASUK: I lost the wording but I  
2 guess make a motion to form an ecosystem committee for  
3 the purposes of, you know, gathering information.

4  
5 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Do we have a  
6 second.

7  
8 MR. HARRIS: Second.

9  
10 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Seconded by  
11 Cyrus. Any further discussion on that or do we want to  
12 identify who wants to be a part of that committee now  
13 and we could start having a meeting.

14  
15 Lili you want to be on there.

16  
17 MS. NAVES: Well, I think about this  
18 committee and I think that's a very interesting action  
19 by the AMBCC and this ties to some discussions that  
20 we've heard in the past that it's an interesting idea  
21 if a committee can relate it to the eelgrass interest  
22 but we have discussed it in the past about the  
23 possibility having the AMBCC, a committee that discuss  
24 priorities for the Council in terms of information  
25 needs and research in general, which are priorities for  
26 the AMBCC and the eelgrass could be one of those. So I  
27 wonder if the AMBCC would consider having kind of a  
28 broader committee that addresses this priority  
29 information need and the research topics for the AMBCC  
30 to consider.

31  
32 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: I think that  
33 would be good. Would it fall under this committee that  
34 we just formed, we could think of a name of it, but I  
35 think that we do need -- we've identified a need that  
36 we need to form a committee to have further discussions  
37 in committee.

38  
39 Anyone interested in serving on the  
40 committee.

41  
42 (No comments)

43  
44 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Okay, we got  
45 Liliana.

46  
47 MR. AHMASUK: Since I mentioned it I'll  
48 put my name in there.

49  
50

0143

1 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Okay. Brandon.  
2 Chuck, did you want to be on there, is that a hand that  
3 you want to be on there.

4  
5 CHUCK: Yep, thank you. Sorry, I  
6 couldn't find unmute.

7  
8 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: That's okay.

9  
10 MS. CHERNOFF: This is Coral, I'll be  
11 no there.

12  
13 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Okay, Coral. I'd  
14 be happy to be no there. And Patty.

15  
16 MS. SCHWALENBERG: Yes.

17  
18 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Not to add more  
19 to your -- not to add more, but maybe you as well.

20  
21 MS. SCHWALENBERG: Sure.

22  
23 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: I think it would  
24 be good topics that we could talk about in there. I  
25 don't know if, Ryan, if you wanted to be a part of that  
26 or somebody -- or we got Lillian.

27  
28 MR. SCOTT: I think I'm pretty  
29 committed to various other committees at this point.

30  
31 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Okay. Any  
32 further discussion or anybody that wanted to join.

33  
34 MS. PLETNIKOFF: Madame Chair, this is  
35 Karen. I'll confer with our representative, Peter  
36 Devine, on  
37 whether or not we want to be on there but it sounds  
38 like this also might have some of the discussion about  
39 things impacting those endangered species that could be  
40 valuable so we might.

41  
42 Thanks.

43  
44 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Yeah, I think you  
45 would be a great addition to that committee. Brian, is  
46 that a hand that you wanted to be a part of that.

47  
48 MR. DANIELS: Yeah, that's correct. I  
49 mean I feel like someone from the Yukon Delta should be  
50

0144

1 present too to have ideas as well given our status of  
2 importance for waterfowl.

3

4 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Okay.

5

6 MR. DEVINE: I'll raise my hand, Madame  
7 Chair.

8

9 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Okay, great,  
10 Peter, thank you.

11

12 MR. DEVINE: And I think anybody with  
13 eelgrass and bumblebees should be on there.

14

15 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Okay. If there's  
16 no other discussion with the motion on the floor all  
17 those in favor of the formation of the committee that  
18 we'll come up with a name at another time, signify by  
19 saying aye.

20

21 IN UNISON: Aye.

22

23 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Those opposed  
24 same sign.

25

26 (No opposing votes)

27

28 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: The motion  
29 carries and maybe we can meet sometime in -- I don't  
30 know before the end of the year to have discussions. I  
31 know we're in busy meeting season so.

32

33 MS. SCHWALENBERG: Yeah, and if anyone  
34 else is interested from other regions or other partners  
35 just send me an email and I'll add you to the list.

36

37 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Okay. Well,  
38 thank you, John, for that update and the formation of  
39 the committee from your report.

40

41 MR. PEARCE: You're welcome, thanks  
42 everyone.

43

44 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Yeah. Next we  
45 have Robb Kaler with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service the  
46 seabird die-off update.

47

48 MR. KALER: Hello. Good afternoon --  
49 actually good morning still. Yep, Robb Kaler, let me  
50

0145

1 pull up my screen that I hope to share. All right, how  
2 does that look, can you see my opening slide 2022  
3 Alaska Seabird Update.

4

5 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Yes.

6

7 MR. KALER: All right, great. Yep,  
8 Robb Kaler, so I'm with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
9 based here in Anchorage on Den'ina lands and I am in  
10 the seabird program. Liz Labunski is also on the call  
11 here and this slide is just highlighting -- the  
12 information I get to share today is based on a lot of  
13 collaboration and contributed, you know, very little --  
14 a lot of my time but very little in being able to  
15 actually get this information so these are the partners  
16 that have contributed immensely. And so I also want to  
17 highlight that the AMBCC regional representatives, as  
18 well as Patty, our Executive Director, has also helped  
19 immensely with the communication of this information.

20

21 And so as I mentioned, this is a huge  
22 collaboration between all the partners including  
23 Coastal communities, tribes, State and Federal agencies  
24 and so without that I'd have very -- Liz and I would  
25 have very little information to share today so Qu yana.

26

27 I'll just quickly kind of focus on the  
28 seabird die-off. So historically seabird die-off  
29 events in Alaska were typically associated with either  
30 strong ElNino events where we get a pulse of warm water  
31 into Alaska and/or with Avian disease events. So this  
32 timeline and apologies to those that are on the phone  
33 and can't see this, but I'll try to describe it, it's  
34 basically a timeline breaking down since the 1970s  
35 moving across, left to right, and showing some circles  
36 and indicating the species that had been affected  
37 during those die-offs. Prior to 2015, the majority of  
38 those species or the main species affected were murren,  
39 common murren and thick-billed murren. However, since  
40 2015, I think as all of us know on this -- during this  
41 Council meeting, we've had a very large amount of die-  
42 offs. 2015/2016 a you can see, the large circle, the  
43 Gulf of Alaska where almost one million birds, and  
44 particular murren were affected and died and those were  
45 largely murren. And then since 2017, these events have  
46 mostly occurred in the Bering Sea and up into the  
47 Chuckchi and throughout the Aleutians as well and  
48 Bristol Bay. So this figure is just kind of a quick  
49 summary, kind of illustrating that annually, since

50

0146

1 2015/16 we've had seabird die-off reports in Alaska.

2

3

4 And so working with our partners as I  
5 mention, across the Coastal communities, the State and  
6 other Federal partners, along with our partners at  
7 Coastal Observation and Seabird Survey Team based in  
8 University of Washington COSST, this figure is a  
9 combination of maps and, again, apologies to the folks  
10 that are just on the phone, but going back to 2017 in  
11 the upper left and then down to this year, 2022, in the  
12 lower right, and, again, information, these are data  
13 provided by communities, the tribes, the State and  
14 Federal partners and then COSST. So COSST does beach  
15 surveys using costters, they're COSST participants and  
16 so augmenting some of the opportunistic reports that we  
17 receive from the communities. So the upper left corner  
18 of each map you can see the year of the map, what it's  
19 indicating and then the lower right of each of those  
20 maps shows the total number of carcasses reported. So  
21 I'll emphasize that by the time we get a report of a  
22 carcass washed up on a beach and that the tide hasn't  
23 switched and then erase the beach of any indication of  
24 a die-off so these are very minimal numbers. But you  
25 see that the large number of birds across certain years  
26 but you also see that the size of the circles indicate  
27 that the magnitude of those die-offs, of those reports,  
28 and then the duration of the event is also indicated by  
29 color. So it's kind of a complicated figure but, you  
30 know, I will share this with Patty so that she can  
31 share it out with everybody so you can kind of mull  
32 over what I'm trying to describe here. But the main  
33 thing is trying to capture the duration of these  
34 events, often beginning -- we get reports sometime in  
35 May or June and then the duration going into August,  
36 September and sometimes October. And then that  
37 geographic extent, the cover that we're seeing. In  
38 many years we see it from the Bering -- or sorry, the  
39 Northern Bering south into the Aleutians and into the  
40 Bristol Bay area so the color of those circles indicate  
41 the month the report was received.

41

42

43

44

45

46

47

48

49

50

So in 2022, here it says the total reports were about 200, since I made that figure -- or since I was coordinating with our partners at COSST to make this figure we've gotten additional, so we're about 250 seabird carcasses that have been reported this year in 2022. And the majority of those being murrens and gulls as well as kittiwakes.



0147

1                   So in addition to the reports that we  
2 get for carcasses we're also coordinating with our  
3 partners to collect carcasses for sending to the USGS  
4 National Wildlife Health Center and then also  
5 coordinate with the USGS Alaska Science Center who does  
6 -- looking at the saxitoxin, so this table -- oops,  
7 sorry -- this table summarizes the results and I just  
8 want to -- you know, I'll walk you through this and,  
9 again, apologies to the folks on the phone that can't  
10 see this, but across the top are the years and here  
11 I've got 2017 to 2021 and as you all know the last  
12 three years have been especially challenging going  
13 through a global Covid pandemic limiting our abilities  
14 to conduct full necropsies on carcasses and then, you  
15 know, ultimately determine the cause of death and then  
16 in 2022 highly pathogenic avian influenza in terms of  
17 guidance on how to handle, who should handle and what  
18 to do with those carcasses. I know that was brought up  
19 during the regional reports yesterday and some of the  
20 confusion.

21  
22                   So the next row below that, total  
23 reports. Again, as I emphasized by the time we get a  
24 report of a carcass, these are minimum numbers that  
25 we've received. So in a year like 2020 where we had  
26 about 330 reports to a maximum 2019 where we had 9,000  
27 or more reports and that was a large die-off of  
28 shearwaters.

29  
30                   And, again, the next row shows the  
31 number National Wildlife Health Center, those are the  
32 carcasses that we were able to get from our partners,  
33 frozen and then shipped to Anchorage, and from  
34 Anchorage shipping those to Madison, in Madison they  
35 collect tissues that come back to Anchorage to the  
36 Alaska Science Center to test for saxitoxin and demoac  
37 acid. So at the Health Center they're also testing for  
38 avian influenza and I just want to point out that as of  
39 2021 very few cases of avian influenza had been  
40 detected and the primary cause of death, cause of  
41 mortality was emaciation and starvation so there are  
42 some reports of harmful algae bloom concentrations that  
43 were positive but in typical -- in general, and  
44 Caroline, I think she had to drop off actually -- but  
45 anyways, working with Caroline VanHemert at the USGS  
46 Alaska Science Center, currently below detection levels  
47 for saxitoxins.

48  
49                   We continue to try to identify disease  
50

0148

1 because when birds are compromised because of lack of  
2 food they can become more susceptible to disease.

3

4 And then you see in the other line, the  
5 other, that's indicating some of these birds that we  
6 got, we didn't know that they had died of predation but  
7 that's one -- and also birds that have succumbed to  
8 poor body condition are probably more susceptible to  
9 predation.

10

11 So, I don't know, should I pause for  
12 questions on that or should I just keep plowing  
13 forward.

14

15 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Does anybody have  
16 any questions before Robb moves on.

17

18 (No comments)

19

20 MR. KALER: I know this is a lot of  
21 information but I just wanted to make sure.

22

23 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Oh, Ryan has one.  
24 Ryan has one.

25

26 MR. SCOTT: Hey, Robb, looking at the  
27 text, it says tested positive for AIH1096 but isn't it  
28 -- is that the low path AI?

29

30 MR. KALER: Yes, exactly. I should  
31 have empha -- yeah, so H10N6 is a low path and this is  
32 like one of the points that I think John -- JP, John  
33 Pearce, had just touched on was they came out with a  
34 review paper just before the 2022 HPAI but, yes, that  
35 is a low path. In fact that's a great suggestion Ryan  
36 to just update that and emphasize that, that is a low  
37 path, not a highly pathogenic avian influenza.

38

39 MR. SCOTT: Thank you, sir.

40

41 MR. KALER: And, sorry, this figure is  
42 a little -- sorry I should update this figure to  
43 indicate that more -- but, yeah, making clear that what  
44 I'm talking about there, the hits have been a low path  
45 avian. And when we say low path, we're speaking -- a  
46 low pathogenic ability and I'm sure somebody else on  
47 the call could put this more articulately but we  
48 consider highly pathogenic is it's highly pathogenic  
49 poultry farms and other, you know, concerns for  
50

0149

1 commercial farms. So, yeah, thanks for that question.

2

3 Yeah, any other questions on that  
4 before I move on.

5

6 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Dave, go ahead.

7

8 MR. SAFINE: Thanks, Robb. Just a  
9 quick question, I'm just curious about the role -- or  
10 your thoughts about the role -- in 2019 we had that big  
11 heatwave in Alaska and I noticed, you know, an elevated  
12 number of birds reported, any links with that or is  
13 that just pure coincidence?

14

15 MR. KALER: No. Great segway, I did --  
16 so, you know, I've got a slide stack and I'm trying to  
17 keep this real specific but that's a great question.  
18 Yeah, 20 -- so we had a marine heatwave in the Gulf of  
19 Alaska, 2014, 2016, that was one of the reasons.....

20

21 (Teleconference interference -  
22 background noise - participants not muted)

23

24 MR. KALER: I'm hearing an echo. But  
25 yeah great question. Yes, there was another heatwave  
26 up in the Bering and that definitely linked to this  
27 die-off of shearwaters, absolutely. I do have a figure  
28 for that so Liz Labunski -- Cathy Kulitz has recently  
29 retired but they are still working on papers compiling  
30 that and that's putting observers on vessels off shore  
31 at sea counting pelagic birds, complimenting other, you  
32 know, marine studies and absolutely there was another  
33 smaller, not as big as what was titled as the Blob,  
34 2014/2016, but, yes. And I do have a figure -- but,  
35 yeah, you saw -- you could see a decrease in numbers of  
36 birds in the Southern Bering and actually moving  
37 further north, probably tracking the colder and more  
38 productive waters so, yeah, thanks for that question,  
39 Dave. And maybe next time I'll include that. In fact,  
40 I think in the spring I had that slide showing Liz and  
41 Cathy's results of kind of the distribution of seabirds  
42 and the population numbers.

43

44 Thanks.

45

46 Okay. So this time last year, I'll  
47 remind everybody, and what I'll say is that only to  
48 concerns regarding Alaska seabird populations, and, in  
49 particular, seabird die-offs, during the fall AMBCC

50

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1 meeting last year, there was a motion to create a  
2 seabird subcommittee. I volunteered to temporarily or  
3 act as Chair for that committee and I know many of us  
4 wear a lot of hats and some of our hats fit and some of  
5 us, we leave our hats in our closet and we forget, so  
6 I promise to do better and be better at all of this.

7

8 So what I've listed here is who I  
9 believe are the AMBCC regional representatives that  
10 stepped up and expressed interest in joining a seabird  
11 subcommittee. I've talked -- you know, I've emailed  
12 with some of you, I've spoken with some of you, but  
13 I'll just kind of quickly pause here. If you see your  
14 name on the screen, and apologies again to the folks  
15 that are on the phone and can't see the screen, Robb  
16 Kaler, he's the acting Chair, and he's not done great  
17 but, you know, he's doing what he can.

18

19 We've got Gayla from the Bristol Bay.

20

21 We've got Jack and Brandon from the  
22 Bering Strait/Norton Sound.

23

24 Coral from Kodiak.

25

26 Cyrus, I don't know if you know, but  
27 from Northwest.

28

29 And then, Jennifer.

30

31 And I'm wondering first anybody who  
32 I've just called out if you'd like not to be involved  
33 or -- and then secondly, the folks that might be  
34 interested in joining that so I can jot that down.  
35 That was one of my challenges after the fall 2021  
36 meeting was not remember exactly who offered to join  
37 this subcommittee.

38

39 (No comments)

40

41 MR. KALER: Okay, so this is all  
42 captured in the notes. So moving forward on that. We,  
43 of course, have the Alaska -- U.S. Fish and Wildlife  
44 Service Alaska Maritime, they do intensive monitoring  
45 at about eight sites across Alaska for seabirds and  
46 that's monitoring at colonies. And the idea in, you  
47 know, the late '80s was, you know, let's put some of  
48 our eggs in certain baskets and try to represent  
49 seabird reproduction, populations, and feeding across

50

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1 the, you know, an expansive range as Alaska, of course.  
2 And so some of the -- some of those sites have been  
3 reduced in past years due to the lack of funding but  
4 we're also getting some reports so Brandon, for  
5 example, reported to -- emailed Eric Taylor and myself  
6 regarding his observations in early June from Sledge  
7 Island so that's west of Nome, and he had reported --  
8 and Brandon, thanks very much for that report, too --  
9 the numbers of seabirds, and I think particularly murre  
10 numbers were poor. And, Brandon, of course, his family  
11 and Brandon have been eggging that island for many years  
12 and so that knowledge is really helpful. The island  
13 itself is part of the Alaska Maritime National Wildlife  
14 Refuge but it's not a site that they monitor so  
15 information -- opportunistic information and all the  
16 reports are really important so I -- basically I've --  
17 I've recorded that as poor. You know I think Brandon  
18 said 10 percent of birds that they'd typically had  
19 seen. And this, of course -- you know, Brandon has  
20 said that the last two or three years.

21

22 Hi Brandon, I see your hand up. I'll  
23 call on you. Through the Chair -- Madame Chair.

24

25 MR. AHMASUK: Yeah, thank you, Madame  
26 Chair. Thank you, Robb. You mentioned Sledge Island,  
27 it is part of the Aleutian -- Bering Sea/Aleutian  
28 National Maritime Wildlife Refuge but you also  
29 mentioned that it's not monitored. Is there plans  
30 going forward to have it monitored on a regular basis?  
31 So I mean it is -- I mean you spoke a little bit of my  
32 family's involvement, you know, I'm going to add more  
33 to it so I mean it's not just several years, it's  
34 multi-generational, you know, five, six generations of  
35 my family that has been out there, possibly even more,  
36 you know, but I mean just what I'm aware of. But,  
37 anyway, is there going to be suggestions, attempts, to  
38 have it monitored on a regular basis?

39

40 MR. KALER: Yeah, thanks for the  
41 question, Brandon. No, is my immediate response. And  
42 that's something that perhaps we can work on maybe  
43 through a tribal wildlife grant. But right now Alaska  
44 Maritime National Wildlife Refuge, their sites -- they  
45 used to monitor annually nine sites, they're down to --  
46 I think it might even be down to seven where they  
47 annually get a field crew out there for, you know, 90  
48 days. Other sites were infrequently, so once every  
49 five years. We do have an Alaska Seabird Conservation  
50

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1 Plan that highlights the -- you know, intent to focus  
2 our resources on monitoring, even if infrequently, once  
3 every five years, we have not had the resources to do  
4 that and so, yeah, if you -- I know you're spread very  
5 thin, Brandon, you wear more hats than I do, but maybe  
6 something that we can work on is that tribal wildlife  
7 grant looking for ways and really empower the local  
8 folks to help, you know, support -- I guess not help,  
9 but to support that effort. But, yeah, in the  
10 foreseeable future, no, I don't see Alaska Maritime  
11 having the resources as they're dropping other field  
12 sites unfortunately due to -- I know it's a broken  
13 record -- but lack of funding. So we are seeking out  
14 other opportunities but I appreciate that question.

15  
16 MR. AHMASUK: Thank you for that. It  
17 is concerning, I guess, Sledge Island it's not huge,  
18 it's only -- what is it, four or five miles long, maybe  
19 seven, eight miles in circumference, you know, it's not  
20 huge, it's fairly small, it is troubling to know that  
21 when it does get hit it gets hit hard. You know so we  
22 do have a seabird colony east of Nome here, Bluff area,  
23 you know, between here and Golovin, the conversations I  
24 had with Jack earlier this spring, that particular  
25 colony seemed to be doing quite well. But how many  
26 miles, I guess, or how much cliff area -- I'm guessing  
27 there's way more cliff area than Sledge Island. St.  
28 Lawrence Island, Diomedea, this last spring, you know,  
29 their colonies seemed to be -- at least the reports I  
30 got, they seemed to be doing okay. But, again, Sledge  
31 Island, I don't know why -- I haven't heard reports in  
32 particular from King Island, you know, it's just  
33 another one of our islands out here. But, again,  
34 Sledge Island seems to get hit really hard, you know,  
35 with the seabird die-off but it would be nice to know  
36 if there's going to be attempts to monitor it, more on  
37 a regular basis. The way I look at it, I guess, it's  
38 an indicator, you know, for other seabird colonies, is  
39 it going to be happening -- so, anyway, thank you.

40  
41 MR. KALER: Yeah, thanks. I see Liz,  
42 you have your hand up, through the Chair.

43  
44 LIZ: Yes, thank you. I just wanted to  
45 add -- I just want to let folks know that although  
46 we're not actively going to the colonies to look at the  
47 overall abundance of birds on shore, we have been  
48 conducting off shore marine bird surveys in that  
49 region. I was actually just out on a ship about two  
50

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1 weeks ago. So we have a survey that started near  
2 Nunivak Island and we went north as far as King Island.  
3 So I actually was off shore King Island, like I  
4 mentioned, about two weeks ago, and I was really  
5 surprised there was a lot of birds that are out there.  
6 I saw murrets flying to the island carrying fish so  
7 that, you know, indicated that they still have chicks  
8 that were on the cliffs at that time. So I just did  
9 want folks to be aware that we have been doing those  
10 surveys and this has been in cooperation with the NOAA  
11 fisheries program that's going out and they're looking  
12 at small juvenile fish in the region and also looking  
13 at plankton and the oceanography, water temperature,  
14 salinity and those types of things.

15

16 So we hope to continue that work in the  
17 future. I just did want to let folks know there is some  
18 other work being done in the region.

19

20 MR. KALER: Yeah, thanks, Liz. And,  
21 yeah, I should have included at least one slide on the  
22 At Sea Program. Sorry for that. But, yeah, any  
23 questions for Liz on that, I mean the At Sea work. Of  
24 course it's in collaboration with the larger vessels.  
25 I'll just have a quick pause there.

26

27 (No comments)

28

29 MR. KALER: All right. So, yeah, as  
30 Brandon mentioned, yeah, so Bluff, that's a large  
31 colony and it is much larger. I think if you look at  
32 the -- there's a seabird colony register managed by  
33 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the numbers of murrets  
34 in particular from Sledge are about 5,000 historically  
35 and the counts are old, we have not updated those  
36 counts. And I think from Bluff, the colony that  
37 Brandon mentioned that's to the east of Nome is  
38 substantially larger, larger cliffs. And then what  
39 I've written here in bold is good, and that was based  
40 on information that Brandon had gotten from Jack and  
41 others. So that was positive, that was kind of No.  
42 especially after Brandon reported that Sledge Island  
43 was not good, that it was poor, as I've indicated here,  
44 Bluff was good so that's great.

45

46 And then talking with Heather Renner,  
47 normal -- normal from St. Paul and St. George Island.  
48 So that's where they do have a long-term monitoring  
49 camp. And I don't know if Peter Devine's on the call

50

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1 and wants to address any of that. But currently based  
2 on reports from Heather it seemed like breeding and  
3 population counts were normal.

4

5 Peter, are you interested in commenting  
6 on that, through the Chair.

7

8 MR. DEVINE: No, I have nothing to  
9 comment on.

10

11 MR. KALER: All right, thanks. Thanks  
12 Peter. And, Brandon, has also mentioned St. Lawrence  
13 Island, I don't have a note here from Diomedes. But I  
14 mean those are two really important sites particularly  
15 for auklets, least and crested auklets. I know those  
16 are subsistence foods and, yeah, I rely heavily on  
17 Brandon for that -- for getting those reports.

18

19 So as I mentioned, tribal wildlife  
20 grants, maybe that's something that we can help  
21 coordinate to get people on the ground and collect  
22 information on the reproductive success or population  
23 numbers, particularly from St. Lawrence Island and  
24 Diomedes on the auklet populations that have  
25 historically numbered in the millions, very large  
26 colonies.

27

28 Cape Lisburne, that's a site managed by  
29 -- or monitored by Alaska -- sorry, Alaska Maritime  
30 National Wildlife Refuge. They have downsized their  
31 Staff, again, broken record, talking about how we have  
32 fewer funding -- fund opportunities in Fish and  
33 Wildlife Service. So they went up there to Cape  
34 Lisburne and put time lapse cameras, unfortunately some  
35 very carefully placed cameras got knocked over by  
36 bears. So this year I don't think they have much  
37 information on the reproductive success or the  
38 population of murrelets, mostly murrelets but there's also  
39 kittiwakes at Cape Lisburne.

40

41 And then following up, this came up  
42 yesterday, Jack Fagerstrom, he had commented about the  
43 concern about the number of pink salmon and how pink  
44 salmon -- so there is a long running discussion, at  
45 least among the marine and seabird researchers about  
46 how augmenting pink salmon populations through  
47 hatcheries is going to impact the predator/prey  
48 relationship, essentially a top down, or a bottom up  
49 impact to the birds and to the marine mammals and then

50



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1 to the fish. So in Alaska, hatchery salmon, which are  
2 mostly pink and chum and full disclosure I'm not a  
3 fisheries biologist, but they are released at later  
4 life stages and I think that's what Jack was  
5 emphasizing, in later life stages, so in the Lower 48  
6 they're released as smolt and in Alaska, and this is  
7 according to some of the information from Prince  
8 William Sound Aquaculture Corporation, they call it  
9 salmon ranching but those -- the salmon are released at  
10 a later life stage and I think what Jack was reading  
11 about, perhaps in Popular Mechanic, was that they're  
12 going to be consuming more because when they're  
13 released they are larger. So, again, not a fisheries  
14 biologist but I'll emphasize that I think in addition  
15 to, you know, that competition you've got this rapidly  
16 changing marine ecosystem, you know, warming  
17 temperatures, most rapidly increasing in the Northern  
18 Bering which is coupled with reduced sea ice extent and  
19 the duration of that sea ice and that results in a  
20 decrease in that biom -- the sea ice algae, the lipid  
21 rich sea ice algae associated with the sea ice. So you  
22 got a quickly changing food web.

23

24 And then I do have -- yeah, Shishmaref  
25 on Sarichef Island, the, you know, recent -- I think  
26 we've already talked about it so I won't go on, but,  
27 yeah, 30 September a social media post on the, you  
28 know, a lot of bird food, a lot of fish food being  
29 washed up on that beach there and then kind of looking  
30 at that timewise, you know, Typhoon Merbok made  
31 landfall on the 17th and then it looked like this  
32 report was on the 30th. So, NOAA, Stephanie Zador,  
33 with NOAA Fisheries, you know, she's interested in that  
34 and Liz has also elevated this report or this  
35 observation to some of the crews that are at sea right  
36 now.

37

38 Hi, Brandon, I see your hand up,  
39 through the Chair.

40

41 MR. AHMASUK: Yeah, thank you. So  
42 talking about the seabird die-offs, the plankton and  
43 what not and then you also mentioned auklets, I did  
44 want to mention that our bird rep from Savoonga, he  
45 noted when they were trying to harvest auklets, you  
46 know, after they catch them they're gutting them and  
47 what not, but he noticed that whatever it is that they  
48 normally eat wasn't present and that they were eating  
49 something different. I don't think that he noted that

50

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1 the body condition of the auklets was different, maybe  
2 they're a little as -- not as fat maybe but just noting  
3 that they weren't eating -- at least from their, you  
4 know, traditional knowledge, that years and years of  
5 harvesting these birds they weren't eating the same  
6 resource. So, anyway, thank you.

7  
8 MR. KALER: Yeah, thanks. And that's  
9 really -- you know, that's the type of information that  
10 I think is most informative with regard to these  
11 changes in the food web, you know, what are the shifts  
12 and, you know, maybe that's something, again, that we  
13 can focus on as we do a tribal wildlife grant and  
14 really paying, you know, paying people for their  
15 service and observations and I think that's an  
16 important step so thanks for that, for sharing that.

17  
18 I know I'm taking up a lot of  
19 everybody's time and this is -- you know, Brandon, you  
20 had brought up yesterday concerns about seabird  
21 bycatch, I didn't mean to punt to the NOAA seabird  
22 folks but -- and then that's really kind of Liz' -- one  
23 of Liz' specialties too so I just went in, this is a  
24 2007 to 2015 report. I'll let Liz talk more about it  
25 but the point here emphasizing that it's really the  
26 Northern fulmers, if you can see on -- if you see my  
27 arrow, and, again, apologies to the people on the phone  
28 but, yeah, almost 4,000 Northern fulmers taken annual  
29 average, so that's pretty substantial. And then murre  
30 -- so on the left side of this figure is the bycatch  
31 from halibut, you know, from the groundfish and halibut  
32 fishery and then on the far right is the hook and line  
33 fishery. So I will punt that to Liz, if you want to.

34  
35 MS. LABUNSKI: Yeah, I can speak to  
36 this really quickly. And my apologies for not being on  
37 the call yesterday, Robb and I had concurrent meetings  
38 so we're dividing and conquering. So I can speak a  
39 little bit to the general topic of seabird bycatch and  
40 our participation as Fish and Wildlife Service.

41  
42 So I serve on a joint committee that's  
43 headed by NOAA and it has partners from U.S. Fish and  
44 Wildlife Service and also the State of Alaska and the  
45 State of Washington where annually we meet to discuss  
46 seabird bycatch and all the Federal fisheries. So this  
47 would include the groundfish fisheries that Robb  
48 mentioned, which would be hook and line, longline  
49 fisheries, any pot fisheries and also trawl fisheries.

50

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1 So those are the fisheries that are managed by a  
2 Federal entity, and that being NOAA. And so we meet  
3 annually to discuss the annual bycatch rates, the data  
4 that's been collected annually on these vessels, and so  
5 these two tables that Robb put up summarize some of the  
6 recent results by species. And what we look to see is  
7 if there's any specific concerns that we have, you  
8 know, for a species bycatch that's happening or  
9 sometimes there could be specific events that cause  
10 spikes in bycatch, but generally speaking as Robb  
11 mentioned, Northern fulmers and shearwaters, in  
12 particular, those are the birds that you typically see  
13 get caught in these off shore fisheries. And I think  
14 -- and just to explain these tables a little bit more,  
15 the total numbers that we're seeing, these are the  
16 extrapolated numbers that from the data that is  
17 collected annually on fishing boats. So NOAA has a  
18 sampling strategy where they know how many vessels are  
19 actively fishing and they can statistically figure out  
20 how many boats need to be sampled to get an accurate  
21 estimate where they can extrapolate the numbers as to  
22 the amount of birds that may be taken annually by  
23 species.

24  
25 And so the link that Robb has put up  
26 here is a NOAA bycatch site where these reports are  
27 annually published and information is available to the  
28 public. And if anybody is interested on this topic,  
29 you know, I'm happy to talk about it more perhaps in  
30 the April meeting, or if anybody has any specific  
31 questions. I see Brandon's hand's up, I can hopefully  
32 answer the question.

33  
34 MR. AHMASUK: No, not so much a  
35 question -- well, a question, yes, Robb, Liz, thank you  
36 for this graph, you know, very helpful, but just so I'm  
37 understanding fully, this is on the U.S. waters side,  
38 correct?

39  
40 MS. LABUNSKI: Correct. This is all  
41 U.S. waters, correct.

42  
43 MR. AHMASUK: Okay. Again, very  
44 useful, thank you for the information. Yesterday I  
45 mentioned the bycatch of, you know, our seabirds,  
46 again, I knew this was years ago, I do not recall where  
47 I read the information, maybe it was on the Russian  
48 side or maybe it was worldwide about how many murres  
49 were caught as bycatch. It was in the millions. But,  
50

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1 anyway, but this is very helpful for our region. But  
2 another thing that got brought -- I mean it just -- it  
3 reminded me when you mentioned shearwaters and fulmers,  
4 so if I can add this to my regional report.

5

6 At least to the Nome area and I think  
7 other areas, we're having a lot more shearwaters in our  
8 area, something that we never used to see and it's,  
9 again, climate change, warming waters, species moving  
10 north, it is something that we're seeing more and more  
11 out here. So, anyway, thank you.

12

13 MS. LABUNSKI: Yeah, thank you,  
14 Brandon, for mentioning that. And I'll just let you  
15 know for information on shearwaters, we have been  
16 working with researchers from Australia and New Zealand  
17 where shearwaters go to breed so they come -- so  
18 shearwaters come to Alaska during their winter period  
19 to feed and then they return back home to the Southern  
20 Hemisphere. So we have been actually working with  
21 researchers that tag the shearwaters in Australia and  
22 New Zealand and they've been following the birds this  
23 year, in particular, with satellite transmitters, so if  
24 I find out any information on where the birds went,  
25 perhaps movements that have been different than the  
26 researchers have seen in the past I'd be happy to share  
27 that information also with the group next year.

28

29 And I'm just going to mention really  
30 quickly on the topic of bycatch.

31

32 The bycatch tables that we're seeing  
33 here, those are for the Federally-controlled fisheries,  
34 and so mention what fisheries they included, but I just  
35 wanted folks to know that this does not include -- this  
36 estimated seabird bycatch mortality associated with  
37 gillnets. So those would be, you know, set nets that  
38 are used to catch salmon, those are near shore  
39 fisheries that fall under the State of Alaska's  
40 management and there have been few studies that have  
41 actually looked at the seabird bycatch rates in these  
42 gillnet near shore fisheries. But one of the things  
43 that we were working on, just last year we received a  
44 NFWF grant to pull together all the available data that  
45 we have in the State of Alaska on marine bird bycatch  
46 associated with gillnet fisheries. So we have been  
47 working cooperatively with NOAA who has all this  
48 seabird bycatch data to pull all the information  
49 together for regions in Southeast Alaska, Yakutat,

50

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1 Kodiak, I think Lower Cook Inlet and also there is some  
2 data from Unimak Pass. So our goal is, with this  
3 grant, is to compile all this information and  
4 potentially identify regions where there might be a  
5 higher risk of seabird mortality or marine bird  
6 mortality and also potentially identify risk factors.  
7 So that is something that we are actively working on  
8 and hopefully we'll have some preliminary information  
9 available next year.

10

11 So I'll stop talking but thank you for  
12 all your time.

13

14 MR. KALER: Yeah, thanks, Liz. Are  
15 there any other questions about everything that we just  
16 spoke about with regard to bycatch?

17

18 (No comments)

19

20 MR. KALER: Otherwise I'll -- I know  
21 people are getting hungry, almost lunchtime.

22

23 And I only have not very much more.

24

25 So wrapping up.

26

27 Additional concerns for seabirds, the  
28 rapidly changing marine ecosystem includes vessel  
29 traffic, including the amount of sea ice that is  
30 allowed for increasing shipping of liquid natural gas,  
31 which I mentioned yesterday but also the fishing fleets  
32 that are also moving further north. And I think as  
33 Brandon kind of highlighted -- pointed out, what we're  
34 talking about is the Alaska side. We don't have much  
35 information from the other side of the Bering. And so  
36 with the migration of commercially valued fish like  
37 Pacific cod, walleye, pollock, we're seeing  
38 catcher/processor boats remaining further north than  
39 previously had been able to due to sea ice so the U.S.  
40 is required to remain south of the Diomed Islands,  
41 little Diomedes, but fishing fleets on the other side of  
42 the Bering are not.

43

44 Additional concerns, pollution,  
45 plastics and contaminants, including bio-toxins, like  
46 saxitoxins have also increased. Touched on how some of  
47 the recent cruises have found high levels of  
48 potentially the cyst-causing saxitoxins associated with  
49 paralytic shellfish poisoning increasing further north.

50

0160

1 There's been some really great Bering -- Gay Sheffield  
2 with Alaska Sea Grant has been doing some really neat  
3 science, straight science presentations, getting some  
4 awesome presenters who have talked about that so  
5 there's a lot of information if folks are interested.  
6 And then invasive species associated with warming  
7 conditions as well, also of concern. And then lastly,  
8 of course, climate change, and the loss of sea ice.

9  
10 So with that, here are Liz and I's  
11 email addresses. I put up my cell phone there too, if  
12 people have questions. And, yeah, thank you for your  
13 time, Qu yana.

14  
15 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Thank you, Robb.  
16 Is there any additional questions, that was a great  
17 presentation. We always enjoy your section of the  
18 agenda.

19  
20 (No comments)

21  
22 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Is there any  
23 other questions for Robb or Liz.

24  
25 MR. DEVINE: Madame Chair.

26  
27 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Go ahead, Peter.

28  
29 MR. DEVINE: Yeah, I don't have a  
30 question but I was getting on this LEO conference  
31 probably about 10 days ago and there was a person from  
32 NOAA Fisheries on and they said that when Merbok came  
33 through it formed -- or reformed 230 miles away from  
34 Atka. And the reason that it formed -- or reformed and  
35 intensified was the Bering Sea in the middle was seven  
36 degrees warmer than the year before.

37  
38 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: That's  
39 interesting.

40  
41 MR. KALER: Yeah, I'll just quickly add  
42 that, yes, it's the warm water, you know, that's the --  
43 the warm water that we're seeing in the Bering, that's  
44 why it's reforming, I believe. And I'm not an  
45 oceanographer, but, yeah, thank you, Peter, I think  
46 that's a great point. That warmer water is why these  
47 typhoons might rebuild and why we're seeing the storms.  
48 So I think Brandon can attest, I think there's another  
49 storm building up -- Merbok was a 948 millibar low,  
50

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1 which is an amazing -- you know, that's a low, low  
2 pressure and I think right now there's a 958 or a 968,  
3 I forget, but, anyways, yeah.

4  
5 Thanks Peter.

6  
7 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Anything else.

8  
9 (No comments)

10  
11 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Well, it's just  
12 now 12:00 o'clock, we could take a lunch. We don't  
13 really have much left on our agenda. I know that we'll  
14 probably spend quite a bit of time with Angela with her  
15 present -- she's next on the agenda and then we have  
16 public comments and our Council and Staff comments.  
17 did you guys want an hour lunch and come back at 1:00  
18 today.

19  
20 IN UNISON: Yes.

21  
22 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Okay. Angela,  
23 you had something.

24  
25 MS. MATZ: Hi, Madame Chair, thank you,  
26 yes. Would be happy to present after lunch. I wanted  
27 to add that Mike Brooke from ANTHC is also going to be  
28 presenting with me on the data visualizations that they  
29 did after avian influenza so it'll be two of us  
30 presenting during the avian influenza section.

31  
32 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Okay, great. So  
33 we'll start up right at 1:00 o'clock with your  
34 presentation and we'll take an hour lunch today. Patty  
35 said that she's going to leave the meeting link open  
36 during lunch and we'll see you guys back here in an  
37 hour.

38  
39 (Off record)

40  
41 (On record)

42  
43 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Is everybody back  
44 from lunch.

45  
46 (No comments)

47  
48 (Pause)

49  
50

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1 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Are you sitting  
2 in now Julian for Wendy, or is Wendy still on?

3  
4 MR. FISCHER: Madame Chair, I am on the  
5 job. Wendy is on an aircraft right now returning to  
6 Alaska.

7  
8 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Okay. Okay,  
9 thank you.

10  
11 (Pause)

12  
13 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Patty, are you  
14 back?

15  
16 MS. SCHWALENBERG: Yes, ma'am.

17  
18 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Okay.

19  
20 MS. SCHWALENBERG: Here's the rest of  
21 our agenda.

22  
23 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: So it looks like  
24 we have the avian influenza update, public comments and  
25 then our roundtable Council and Staff comments and I'll  
26 transfer the gavel to Ryan and we should get done here  
27 within a couple of hours, I would think.

28  
29 MS. SCHWALENBERG: Yep.

30  
31 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Okay. Well,  
32 we'll go ahead and start. Angela, are you ready for  
33 your presentation?

34  
35 MS. MATZ: Yes. Yep, we sure are. I  
36 think Mike Brooke from ANTHC is also on. I just wanted  
37 to say hello to everyone again and thank you, Madame  
38 Chair, and members of the Council for asking for this  
39 information and allowing us to provide it. My name is  
40 Angela Matz, in case I didn't meet with you yesterday.  
41 I am the Oil Spill Response Coordinator for U.S. Fish  
42 and Wildlife Service in Alaska. And it's under that  
43 job that I became affiliated with our avian influenza  
44 response this summer.

45  
46 Mike Brooke is also on. Mike, do you  
47 want to take a moment and introduce yourself, please.

48  
49 MR. BROOKE: Sure. Thanks, Angela. Hi

50



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1 everybody. My name is Mike Brooke. I'm with Alaska  
2 Native Tribal Health Consortium. Among other things I  
3 work on the LEO Network. A lot of you, I think, are  
4 probably familiar with that but I was able to  
5 collaborate a bit with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service  
6 through the HPAI outbreak which we'll be able to talk  
7 about and go a little bit deeper into today. So, thank  
8 you, it's a pleasure to be here today.

9

10 MS. MATZ: Thanks, Mike. So I am going  
11 to turn off my video because I have poor connectivity  
12 and we also just had that earthquake, did everybody  
13 else feel it and I don't want things to start shaking  
14 again but I do have poor connectivity. I'm going to  
15 stop my video but share my screen. So I would like  
16 everybody to let me know when they can see it.

17

18 MR. FISCHER: I can see it Angela.

19

20 MS. MATZ: Okay, thank you, Julian. So  
21 I want to give you an update on highly pathogenic avian  
22 influenza or HPAI, on the efforts that the Fish and  
23 Wildlife Service and other agencies took this year to  
24 deal with HPAI in Alaska. I have, myself, and Eric  
25 Taylor, on this slide, that's because we've traded off  
26 giving this presentation to different management groups  
27 but there are plenty of other people who helped with  
28 the response who could also be listed on this slide,  
29 primarily Dr. Bob Gerlach, who's the Alaska State  
30 Veterinarian. He and Eric Taylor were really the  
31 driving forces behind the response that we were able to  
32 mount in Alaska this year.

33

34 So what I want to do is first of all  
35 talk about what is avian influenza, this is a pretty  
36 high level talk and discussion but there are plenty of  
37 other people on here who could help us get into more  
38 details if we needed. I'll talk about the outbreak  
39 history both across North America and Alaska, talked  
40 about how we tracked it and some of the resulting  
41 geographic distributions of HPAI in Alaska. Look a  
42 little more in-depth at the migratory bird species and  
43 groups affected. I do want to talk about risk to  
44 humans but I want to caveat that by saying that U.S.  
45 Fish and Wildlife Service is not a Human Health Agency  
46 and the information that I will present to you comes  
47 from Centers for Disease Control, as well as the State  
48 Department of Health, the Alaska State Department of  
49 Health. We'll also talk a little bit about risk to

50

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1 pets and other mammals. And then our expectations for  
2 fall and winter, which that's a little bit of a black  
3 box, so that'll be a good segway into Mike's  
4 presentation where he took some of the information that  
5 was collected this year and mapped it for us. And so  
6 he'll head straight into that after we're finished.

7

8 So what is HPAI/H5N1.

9

10 All flu viruses, including avian  
11 influenza, avian influenza is either a disease or the  
12 virus avian influenza. This virus infects poultry and  
13 wild birds. And avian influenza, we know that flu  
14 viruses mutate, they change over time, pretty rapidly  
15 which is why we're encouraged to get a flu shot every  
16 year because the human flu season, the genetics are  
17 different from year to year. So they're -- the  
18 different genetics result in different types of avian  
19 influenza viruses and here are a couple of the ways  
20 that they are classified -- the major ways that they  
21 are classified.

22

23 And I see that we're not there yet --  
24 there we go.

25

26 So the first way that they're  
27 classified is with the protein groups that are on them.  
28 There are two different main protein groups, the  
29 hemagglutinin, and the (indiscernible) which results in  
30 the H and the N numbers. And then they're also  
31 classified by pathogenicity, which is -- Robb mentioned  
32 this earlier, it's the ability to produce disease in  
33 domestic chickens and that's a combination of both how  
34 transmissible the virus is and then how bad it is for  
35 the chickens, so a highly transmissible and fatal avian  
36 influenza, that's true in chicken, then it's called  
37 highly pathogenic. Otherwise it's low pathogen, or low  
38 pathogenicity AI, we often don't 'even use the low  
39 pathogenicity AI, we just call it AI if it is not  
40 distinguishable -- if it is -- if we are trying to  
41 distinguish it from HPAI.

42

43 Many avian influenza viruses occur  
44 naturally in wild birds without causing illness. And  
45 you saw in Robb's presentation that some of the  
46 seabirds that have been submitted for necropsy over the  
47 past several years did detections of avian influenza,  
48 these were low path variants.

49

50

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1                   A further way to characterize avian  
2 influenza viruses is where they're thought to  
3 originate, or where they're thought to come from. So  
4 we might have European strain, North American strain,  
5 Asian strain, Eurasian strain, but what the important  
6 point is for that is -- the important points for those  
7 is that we can -- there's some tracking of maybe the  
8 origination of the current strain of the virus.

9

10                   So, again, I want to repeat that the  
11 HP, the highly pathogenic, is determined by its ability  
12 to produce disease in chickens and the current global  
13 outbreak of HPAI is -- started as a European strain and  
14 so it was called EAHPAI and it's an H5N1 virus.

15

16                   So for this outbreak history, the  
17 current outbreak happened -- well, it began in 2020.  
18 And we had -- we all remember previous global outbreaks  
19 of HPAI, particularly in 2004 and 2014 and 2016. In  
20 2004 that one was of concern for humans as well as many  
21 species of birds. This current outbreak was first  
22 detected in North America in December of '21 and it was  
23 in Eastern Canada. It spread westward across the  
24 continent in both domestic and commercial poultry  
25 flocks and also in wild birds. We knew it was coming.  
26 We had our first detections in Alaska with birds that  
27 were migrating to the state in late April in 2022 and  
28 then also in domestic mixed poultry flock in the Mat-Su  
29 Valley. Many of the chicks that come up to Alaska are  
30 for people who have backyard flocks of chickens do come  
31 from the Lower 48. But we also had a lot of migratory  
32 birds arriving at that time. So those were the first  
33 two detections in late April. We had more detections  
34 over the summer with 79 confirmed cases in wild birds  
35 and tested in many more, over 300 wild birds have been  
36 tested. So what Fish and Wildlife Service did was work  
37 with an interagency group comprised of State and  
38 Federal agencies and Alaska Native Tribal Health  
39 Consortium to address HPAI in coordinating carcass  
40 collection. Our goals in this, which we developed  
41 these goals understanding that our resources were  
42 extremely limited. We received no extra funding to  
43 conduct this work this year in spite of the immense  
44 concerns we had for wild birds in Alaska. But our  
45 goals were to track the spread, geographically, and  
46 track species affected by it usually affected means  
47 killed by it and then also to provide information to  
48 subsistence hunters and that information was developed  
49 in full partnership with Human Health agencies.

50

0166

1                   So the collaboration that occurred  
2 included these agencies and all of the organizations  
3 and all of them have different missions and brought  
4 different expertise to the response. So, for example,  
5 as I mentioned before, the Human Health agencies were  
6 the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium and the  
7 Alaska Department of Health. At USGS, Dr. Andy Ramie  
8 is an expert in Avian flu genetics and he kept us up to  
9 date on the different ways that the virus might be  
10 anticipated to change, in the ways, in fact, that it  
11 did change, and then many, many other folks brought  
12 their individual and agency expertise to this group.

13

14                   I want to reiterate our goals here were  
15 to track the spread geographically, track which species  
16 it affected and to provide information to subsistence  
17 hunters.

18

19                   So the way that this worked, or didn't,  
20 depending on where you were was to take -- to try to  
21 centralize reporting. We'd already had a sick and dead  
22 bird hotline set up under the U.S. Fish and Wildlife  
23 Service Migratory Birds Program. That was used in  
24 2014, '16 for that avian influenza outbreak. It hadn't  
25 been staffed as much as we staffed it this summer,  
26 since then. But we did bring it up -- we had one  
27 person detailing full-time into an avian influenza  
28 response position. That was (Indiscernible). She  
29 coordinated calls from the hotline as well as carcass  
30 collection efforts across the state. We then -- and  
31 then that addresses Item No. 2 there, we coordinated a  
32 lot of cargo shipments from across the state,  
33 everywhere from Southeast up to Utqiagvik for testing.  
34 Whether or not we could collect carcasses depended on  
35 how many birds, the carcass conditions, the carcass has  
36 to be in very good condition in order for it to support  
37 swabbing for avian influenza and because -- we'll talk  
38 about the risk to humans, which is pretty low, but  
39 because we were working in a little bit of uncertainty,  
40 we wanted to be very precautionary and proactive and  
41 not ask anybody besides agency personnel to collect  
42 carcasses for us.

43

44                   When we have those carcasses collected,  
45 we dropped them at the Office of the State  
46 Veterinarian, which is actually in the Department of  
47 Environmental Conservation. They took samples, sent  
48 them off and posted confirm cases on their website.

49

50

0167

1                   In the past we probably would have --  
2 well, we definitely would have coordinated more with  
3 the National Wildlife Health Center, which is the place  
4 where Robb was able to send many of the seabird  
5 carcasses in the past for avian influenza testing. But  
6 they had a couple of situations that led us to work  
7 more directly with the State Office of the State  
8 Veterinarian to get more timely results back. It still  
9 took about two or three weeks. But National Wildlife  
10 Health Center had a main necropsy room go down and they  
11 also were overwhelmed with avian influenza testing from  
12 the Lower 48 as well. So we were really lucky that the  
13 Office of the State Veterinarian, Bob Gerlach, in  
14 particular, was able to take on almost the entirety of  
15 testing for the state of Alaska.

16  
17                   So I just looked at the State website  
18 yest -- well, two days ago and these are the species  
19 affected to-date. There's a couple of caveats with  
20 this slide. What it doesn't show is the total amount  
21 of birds affected. There's no way that we could do  
22 that -- that we could say this is only an index of the  
23 birds that were affected, instead what we use it for is  
24 to look at what species, or species groups have been  
25 affected the most. So even though it says 77 birds  
26 were affected, that, out of 300 plus carcasses tested,  
27 it does -- that's always an under estimate, just like  
28 the mortality estimates that Robb presented, it's  
29 always an under estimate. These are good carcasses  
30 that we were able to get in and get tested and that  
31 came back positive, and by good I mean in good  
32 condition, that were not scavenged or not dehydrated  
33 that were suitable for testing.

34  
35                   So what we see here is that there are a  
36 wide variety of birds that were affected. Bald Eagles  
37 as elsewhere in North America were hit particularly  
38 hard and we know that this is a vast under estimate of  
39 the number of Bald Eagles affected, particularly on the  
40 Aleutians, in Kenai, many, many, many Bald Eagles were  
41 dying from HPAI so many got -- at several points we  
42 could not accept any more for testing. There was a  
43 Snowy Owl from the North Slope, water birds. Of course  
44 we know that avian influenza tends to affect waterfowl  
45 in particular and that was the case here in Alaska. We  
46 did have ravens affected, one crane tested positive,  
47 and then also gulls, terns and yeagers tend to be  
48 affected as well. So in the domestic category that's  
49 84 birds compromised into four flocks. Three of those  
50

0168

1 flocks, I think, from the road system here in Anchorage  
2 and north, and one was from Aniak. And then  
3 interestingly we did have two red foxes carcasses test  
4 positive for this virus and that was the assigned cause  
5 of death.

6  
7 So the total to-date, and remember  
8 these are confirmed cases, total wild birds to-date is  
9 77 but we all know that that is an under estimate of --  
10 and we don't have an accurate estimate for the true  
11 number of animals that were affected.

12  
13 So Mike will get more into this,  
14 specifically for Alaska, but this is a map that's put  
15 out by the USGS, their surveillance website, the link  
16 on there is still active. I checked it on Monday. And  
17 you can see the cases across North America, both in  
18 commercial flocks and non-commercial poultry flocks, in  
19 wild birds and the in wild mammals. If you look up at  
20 that blue diamond here in Interior Alaska, that is  
21 actually not from there, it should be further west,  
22 that is an error that hasn't been corrected for several  
23 weeks so I'm going to send them an email after this to  
24 make sure they correct the location of that mammal.

25  
26 So we did see a wave kind of come up  
27 from the Southwest and Southeast and kind of follow up  
28 along the Coast and up through Interior as the  
29 migratory front of birds passed. This map does not  
30 show you that timeline but that's where the -- that's  
31 how the detection's kind of rolled out. And it  
32 definitely was related to the migratory front of birds  
33 as they got further and further north.

34  
35 So I want to talk about risk to humans,  
36 because, of course, it's something that we're very  
37 concerned about but, again, I need to tell you that  
38 U.S. Fish and Wildlife is not a Human Health agency and  
39 the information I'm presenting to you comes from both  
40 the CDC avian influenza website, which hasn't been  
41 updated since April 28th, the same information is on  
42 there as of Monday as was on there as of last April.  
43 And the CDC considers this -- the risk to humans to be  
44 very low. This is a different H5N1 virus, avian  
45 influenza virus, than was seen in earlier outbreaks and  
46 particularly in the 2004 and 2014 outbreaks. And there  
47 are only two reported cases in the world, one case  
48 reported in the U.S., and both of these people had very  
49 mild symptoms. This is what we understand from the CDC  
50

0169

1 but at the beginning of this I emphasized that there  
2 was great uncertainty and actually a lot of fear about  
3 whether this flu could be of more risk to humans than  
4 the CDC was saying, and for that reason we took a very  
5 precautionary approach to collecting carcasses. We did  
6 not want members of the public -- we did not want to  
7 ask members of the public to collect carcasses for us.  
8 And while that probably reduced the number of carcasses  
9 that we tested it was also prudent -- we considered  
10 that a very prudent way to go about meeting our goals  
11 for the response.

12  
13 So we took this information and when I  
14 say, we, I mean the Human Health folks on the  
15 interagency group and developed hunter information for  
16 subsistence hunters. This information was shared with  
17 as Brandon indicated in the spring, and, in particular,  
18 we wanted to let people know that the risk was low but  
19 you should still exercise caution. Not -- you know,  
20 and these are good steps, not just for avian influenza,  
21 but for other potential, as you know, it's good game  
22 handling. Nobody that I've ever talked to is excited  
23 to harvest game that appears to be sick or is found  
24 dead, unless one is starving.

25  
26 Wearing gloves is useful and I  
27 recognize it's not always possible in rural situations.  
28 Washing hands and cleaning your equipment is always  
29 good game handling procedure, as is not eating,  
30 drinking or smoking while you're handling game and the  
31 most important thing, in particular, for this virus and  
32 other viruses is that it can be killed with heat. So  
33 guidance was to cook game and then eggs, thoroughly, to  
34 an internal temperature of 165 degrees. And the eggs  
35 part only came in later in the summer when we received  
36 results of some studies showing that the avian  
37 influenza could survive on the outside of eggshells.

38  
39 This was the handout that was sent out  
40 to AMBCC members. You all should have seen this in the  
41 spring, and that was developed by the interagency group  
42 of folks that is represented here. The State of  
43 Alaska, the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, all  
44 of those folks contributed to this.

45  
46 We also shared the information on this  
47 flier via an email to the over 200 tribes in Alaska.  
48 It was shared on State and Federal agency websites  
49 through Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, Bird  
50

0170

1 TLC, I think, which is a rehabber here in Anchorage  
2 shared that, the State Troopers shared it. We shared  
3 the information, versions of it through -- also through  
4 newspaper and radio interviews, particularly Dr.  
5 Gerlach spent a lot of his time this summer on the  
6 radio answering interview questions, and then we've  
7 also shared the information in presentations like this  
8 to a number of management groups.

9

10 So talking about risks to other  
11 animals. Many people are concerned about pet dogs in  
12 areas of the state where people depend on subsistence  
13 and are more attuned to their entire ecosystem. There  
14 are concerns about other mammals. And so it's true  
15 that multiple species of scavenger mammals have been  
16 infected during this outbreak and so it's been  
17 detected, infections in red fox, infections leading to  
18 death in red fox, raccoons, striped skunks, possums,  
19 bobcats, coyotes, harbor seals, grey seals and mink.  
20 It, so far, hasn't been detected in any dogs in North  
21 America, but if your dog is a scavenger and consumes an  
22 infected bird that is a risk. It has not been detected  
23 in marine mammals in Alaska. Although avian influenza  
24 viruses can be found in marine mammals in both the low  
25 path and high path. And this version of HPAI was  
26 detected in seals in Maine. In fact, NMFS called an  
27 unusual mortality event for seals in Maine because of  
28 the high levels of the current HPAI found in seals that  
29 were associated with a die-off. So in Alaska, what the  
30 National Marine Fisheries Service has done is earlier  
31 in the summer they were testing for it, those people in  
32 the stranding network were collecting samples for HPAI,  
33 what they're currently doing because it hasn't been  
34 found, what they're currently doing is archiving  
35 samples from each stranding event and that could be,  
36 you know, one animal, and they're monitoring. So if  
37 they see a mortality event that has large number of  
38 animals of the same species associated together in a  
39 small window of space and time, then they will send  
40 samples for HPAI assessment. So they're in a little  
41 bit of a holding pattern right now because they didn't  
42 detect it from the more active sampling earlier in the  
43 summer.

44

45 One question that people really want to  
46 know is how long can this survive in the environment.

47

48 Flu viruses can be removed, can be  
49 disinfected with detergents, disinfectants like a 10

50



0171

1 percent bleach solution and then heating and drying  
2 will also inactivate them. That's true for many  
3 viruses. But avian influenza viruses can persist in --  
4 especially in cool and wet conditions that, you know,  
5 that are throughout Alaska, like for instance, soil,  
6 feces and pond water, they can persist on feathers for  
7 varying amounts of time. So while we can take steps to  
8 disinfect our clothing, ourselves by washing our hands,  
9 our equipment that we use to harvest game and in our  
10 case to collect samples, we can disinfect all of that,  
11 but this virus can persist in the environment.

12

13 So our expectations for fall and winter  
14 2022/2023 it's not -- we don't know what is going to  
15 happen and we don't have indications except that this  
16 will likely not go away by next summer and this is  
17 based on what they've seen in multiple migration cycles  
18 in Europe where this current outbreak is thought to  
19 have originated.

20

21 We have seen additional mortality  
22 throughout the staging and migratory -- fall migration  
23 period. We have seen, but nothing like the numbers  
24 that we saw when birds were first returning to Alaska  
25 in June and July. There are additional mortalities and  
26 some additional detections.

27

28 One concern is that for birds that  
29 winter in California and, Julian, I thought you had a  
30 really great description of where -- of where all of  
31 our bird species winter, but for those that go to  
32 California, for example, they were going to be  
33 concentrating in the few remaining wetlands and that  
34 may result in additional mortality. We don't know. We  
35 do not know what the effect of this years outbreak on  
36 migratory bird populations that nest in Alaska is. And  
37 when you combine it with things that are going on in  
38 the Bering Sea, for that region, when you combine it  
39 with additional ship strikes and oil spills in  
40 Southcentral and Southeast Alaska, and with all of the  
41 habitat losses in the Lower 48 and worldwide where  
42 migratory birds -- where migratory birds that nest --  
43 winter -- you know, it's -- we have to put it in the  
44 category of another hardship for migratory birds in  
45 North America.

46

47 I don't think we're going to be able  
48 parse out specifically the effect -- a specific effect  
49 of HPAI from this season on species. And while we

50

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1 would love to have that, I guess what I would say is  
2 that the people on this call are -- including our  
3 partners from USGS and the folks in Migratory Birds and  
4 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service are the people to be  
5 able to do that.

6  
7 So this slide is thick with words and  
8 what I wanted to do is be able to provide you a lot of  
9 resources. I sent the PDF of the slide show in and  
10 that can be shared. The links should be active in the  
11 PDF if it's shared electronically to you. I shared it  
12 with Patty so I'll put my email in the chat and if  
13 these links aren't active for you I can definitely send  
14 them again and I can answer any other questions you  
15 might have. If I can't answer them, I can try to  
16 direct you to someone who can. Again, my role in this  
17 was to help coordinate the response. Moving forward I  
18 probably won't be nearly as involved because we're  
19 moving in to more of a long-term issue than an  
20 emergency response.

21  
22 So that is all I have.

23  
24 Madame Chair, I wonder if you want to  
25 take questions now. I think it might be very useful to  
26 see what Mike has to present before we take questions  
27 but I want to leave it up to you and the Council to let  
28 me know what you'd like.

29  
30 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Well, I see  
31 Brandon has his hand up and this is, of course, a  
32 concern that we have across the state of Alaska and the  
33 world, basically with this avian influenza. Brandon,  
34 did you want to wait for your question or do you want  
35 to ask Angela now?

36  
37 MR. AHMASUK: I prefer to ask Angela  
38 now.

39  
40 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Okay.

41  
42 MS. MATZ: Okay. What I'm trying to do  
43 is end the slide show so hold on one second, Brandon,  
44 please. There we go, okay.

45  
46 Brandon, yes, please, go ahead.

47  
48 MR. AHMASUK: Okay. So thank you,  
49 Angela, for all of that. It is appreciated. So my  
50

0173

1 question, you know, in the essence of preventative  
2 measures. So fully understanding, you know, the  
3 agencies don't want just anybody picking up dead birds,  
4 you know, to help prevent spreading it, you know,  
5 especially amongst people, but I'm wondering going  
6 forward, as a preventative measure, is there going to  
7 be training offered to individuals in the villages to,  
8 you know, when birds show up dead in the villages to go  
9 out and pick them up, dispose of them and/or get them  
10 out for testing. So this last spring, more or less  
11 that's what happened, is, you know, we had birds of all  
12 kinds, not just waterfowl, not just seabirds but, you  
13 know, shorebirds, the little songbirds, what not, you  
14 know, showing up in the village but then, you know,  
15 kids are curious, you know, they're wanting to pick  
16 them up or bring them to mom and dad and say, hey, look  
17 what I found and/or, you know, dogs possibly picking  
18 them up, eating them and what not, so, anyway, as a  
19 preventative measure going forward, is there going to  
20 be like training offered to individuals, supplies given  
21 to them, you know, possibly even some kind of  
22 compensation to, you know, just even for reporting,  
23 getting a better idea, at least within the village  
24 level of what they're seeing? Anyway, thank you.

25

26 MS. MATZ: Brandon, thank you. I need  
27 to tell you that all of those ideas are not new and I  
28 very much respect you and thank you for bringing them  
29 up here in this meeting. I need to emphasize two  
30 things and as Robb said, it's a bit of a broken record,  
31 it's where we're coming from. First of all no agency  
32 in the state with the exception of USDA has received  
33 additional funding to support any response for HPAI  
34 this year. We did this all out of existing funds and  
35 it did take funds away -- funds and time away from  
36 other priorities that were previously budgeted for.  
37 And the reason -- this is my opinion, but I have  
38 watched things played out, and I think the reason is  
39 because it is of such low risk to humans. We saw much  
40 greater inputs of money and resources, even in 2014  
41 when the particular variant of HPAI was of more risk to  
42 humans. So that being said I don't think that there is  
43 a mechanism forward -- there isn't a mechanism  
44 currently to do what you're asking. We don't  
45 anticipate receiving funds to support this unless the  
46 risk to humans change.

47

48 What we can do, and I would urge the  
49 Council to ask for what you've just asked for. There

50

0174

1 are other things that cause bird die-offs. I think if  
2 the risk to humans doesn't change one of the things  
3 moving forward is to make sure that the COSST surveys  
4 and the way that the seabird carcasses are collected  
5 for the seabird die-off in the Bering Strait, those  
6 protocols, supplies and procedures can easily be  
7 expanded statewide to address other concerns. So there  
8 are a number of ways to do this. I think it's more  
9 powerful coming as a request from the AMBCC and perhaps  
10 the Native Caucus than it is -- as long as the human  
11 health evidence points to it continuing to be very low  
12 risk for humans, I think that's the way to do it. Food  
13 security. Regime change in the Bering Sea. All of  
14 these things were brought up in conversations this  
15 summer and continue to be brought up. These are issues  
16 for all of rural Alaska, although I think in the Bering  
17 Strait region it's particularly keen and particularly  
18 bad because of the regime shifts and the bad weather  
19 you guys are getting slammed with, so that kind of  
20 information can be provided but right now we don't have  
21 resources to provide that except on a very limited  
22 scale. We did send out carcass collection kits to  
23 Raphaela Stimmelmayer in the North Slope Borough and she  
24 was able to coordinate carcass collections. We sent a  
25 carcass collection kit to Gay Sheffield and she was  
26 able to send in a few carcasses as well. But in  
27 general I think you're always going to find agency  
28 folks who -- unless we have a training program and  
29 people spending time training, and then being in a  
30 documented position to do the collection we're not  
31 going to ask members of the public, including tribal  
32 members, to collect sick and dead birds. That is not  
33 prudent and I don't believe that we could ask to do  
34 that.

35

36 However, a training program is  
37 something that I believe that the AMBCC should ask for.

38

39 MR. AHMASUK: Okay, thank you.

40

41 MS. MATZ: Thank you.

42

43 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: If I can, with  
44 that training, how many years ago there was going to be  
45 a training for us to learn how to properly collect  
46 birds and that was when Eric was there and I don't  
47 know, Julian, if you are familiar with that program  
48 with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service but there was a --  
49 there was a training that was set up -- I don't know if  
50

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1 anybody signed up for it, but I remember getting email  
2 notices. I think I was going to sign up and then  
3 something fell through. I don't know if it happened or  
4 if it did happen; do you know of anything like that  
5 within U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?

6

7 MR. FISCHER: Madame Chair. I do  
8 recall discussions within the AMBCC about interest in  
9 training and this was at the point that -- it might  
10 have been back in like 2006 or '08, when we had an  
11 interagency monitoring plan for detecting avian  
12 influenza. When that particular outbreak passed, there  
13 may have been loss of momentum on the training program  
14 but honestly I shouldn't speak any more on this because  
15 I don't have direct knowledge on that. But that's my  
16 vague recollection.

17

18 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Maybe if we could  
19 have it as a follow up item because I know that there  
20 was, at one point, we were going to be trained within  
21 our regions of how to collect birds within the regions.

22

23 Go ahead, Angela.

24

25 MS. MATZ: I also wanted to emphasize  
26 that in addition to training as to how collect birds we  
27 need to be cognizant of the agency capacity to accept  
28 those. So I'm not sure what the response for next  
29 summer is going to look like. If the risk to humans  
30 remains pretty low we are going to be working very much  
31 with a shoestring budget and I hope the National  
32 Wildlife Health Center will be able to support us more  
33 and towards the end of this summer they were able to  
34 support us more so that we weren't, you know, filling  
35 Bob Gerlach's funnel with only avian influenza cases.  
36 He has a lot of other work to do besides avian  
37 influenza. But in addition to being able to properly  
38 collect the birds we have to make sure that the other  
39 end is available, where those birds are flowing in,  
40 what are they being tested for, and that is a function  
41 of agency capacity as well.

42

43 If I may, I would like to have Mike go.  
44 I think he has -- he provides a really good picture  
45 that's Alaska specific, and this might spark more  
46 questions on behalf of the Council. So, Madame Chair,  
47 if that's okay to transition to Mike, I would suggest  
48 that.

49

50

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1                   MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: All right, thank  
2 you, Angela, and thank you for your good overview on  
3 your presentation. Go ahead, Mike.

4  
5                   MR. BROOKE: All right, hi, again,  
6 everybody. I'm Mike Brooke with ANTHC. Thanks for the  
7 opportunity today. What I was going to touch on today  
8 is what I've been referring to as opportunistic  
9 surveillance for HPAI. So basically everything that  
10 we've kind of done has been under the umbrella of  
11 opportunistic surveillance so I wanted to kind of walk  
12 through some of the things that we did and some of the  
13 ways that we visualize data.

14  
15                   During this summer's outbreak, this is  
16 how you can get in touch with me if you want to reach  
17 out.

18  
19                   One of the things I do over at ANTHC is  
20 the LEO Network, the Local Environmental Observer  
21 Network. I'm sure a lot of you know about it. If you  
22 don't, you can -- this it here, this is LEO  
23 Network.org. You can go out there and check it out.  
24 Again, it's the Local Environmental Observer Network.  
25 This is something that's not Alaska only but it's very  
26 concentrated in Alaska, it's something that we started  
27 at ANTHC.

28  
29                   What this is, if you don't know, is a  
30 place for people to share observations of unusual  
31 environmental events. So unusual is the key thing.  
32 These are things that people have not been expecting.  
33 So, for example, just in the last week we've got  
34 reports of dead otters near Seldovia, we've got a  
35 landslide in Juneau, we've got oyster and mussel  
36 harvesting changes on the East Coast of Canada, a  
37 potential invasive dandelion in Nunivut in Canada,  
38 another landslide in Yukon and then we're into a lot of  
39 reports about the storm in Western Alaska, so Merbok.

40  
41                   So as you'd expect, observations of  
42 unusual bird behavior was something that we got a lot  
43 of in the spring. So the first one that we got was  
44 this one. So Gay Sheffield was not the observer but  
45 somebody related this to her and she reported it in to  
46 us. Incredibly this was observed from a plane. So  
47 that is very unusual for us to have an observation from  
48 an airplane. But somebody was flying in a small plane,  
49 probably a thousand, or 2,000 feet up and saw five or  
50

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1 six swans floating in a strange way in a pond and this  
2 is something that this person had never seen before.  
3 We don't know if they were dead. We don't know if they  
4 had HPAI because we didn't go and collect them, you  
5 know, and that kind of stuff. But it was, you know,  
6 the first unusual sort of signal of strange bird  
7 behavior that hit the LEO Network. So this was May  
8 5th. So that pretty much hits with when it was  
9 starting to pop everywhere else.

10

11 Now, this is a LEO post, this is a LEO  
12 observation. And LEO is a first signal kind of a  
13 system. This is the type of thing where, again, it's  
14 that whole bit about being unusual. And so once  
15 something is kind of known and it's out there it  
16 doesn't tend to get reported into LEO, so consequently  
17 -- you know, this is -- this is something where  
18 somebody observed something and we go and we often have  
19 photos and we maybe have videos and we have -- we get  
20 subject matter experts involved, in this case Angela  
21 and Andy, we link it to other things and we reference  
22 all kinds of support materials and that kind of stuff.  
23 It becomes a mini publication. But to call -- it's not  
24 the type of surveillance you would want to do for  
25 something that's ongoing and so that's when we have to  
26 lean on other information sources and that's really  
27 what we did. But just to finish up with LEO, what we  
28 got over the rest of the summer was observations of  
29 what were probably HPAI, some confirmed, some not, from  
30 elsewhere in Alaska and other parts of the North and  
31 various other places. These are in wild birds. And so  
32 we had this ability to sort of understand first signals  
33 that were popping in other places, but you can tell,  
34 this is definitely not the way you would understand the  
35 full scope of an outbreak like that. You need  
36 something else for that. And that's where the U.S.  
37 Fish and Wildlife hotline came in.

38

39 So Angela already showed this one.

40

41 This is the AMBCC handout, it touts the  
42 hotline number and the email address. This is a very  
43 similar handout that was specific to the Bering  
44 Straits. I don't know if Gay Sheffield put this  
45 together or somebody else there but, again, touting the  
46 hotline, so pointing people at the hotline. So in the  
47 spring, I think Eric was answering the hotline, it  
48 started to -- the hotline started to light up and  
49 people were starting to report these things. So you

50

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1 can see there's a big difference between surveillance  
2 and LEO, which is sort of -- if something's unusual  
3 tell us, it doesn't really matter what it is versus  
4 this, which is, here's a thing that's going on, we want  
5 to know about it and here's specifically how to report  
6 it. So what ended up happening was a lot of calls to  
7 the hotline and that got reflected in very much an  
8 operational data set and I'm only showing it -- this is  
9 a the spreadsheet from Fish and Wildlife that was  
10 shared with me. The only reason I'm showing it is to  
11 remind everybody what real world data looks like. It's  
12 something that you might have to some work to get your  
13 head around and it's not something that you can glance  
14 at and think, okay, now I get it, now I see what's  
15 going on here. So what we did was we decided that we  
16 wanted to be able to understand this data set a little  
17 bit better. Ideally we'd like to be able to map  
18 things, we'd like to be able to graph things and that  
19 kind of stuff. So that's what we tried to do. We  
20 tried to understand this by really upping our ability  
21 to geocode these types of locations, the ability to  
22 understand, of course, time, and the ability to  
23 understand species groups. And so we did that and that  
24 allows us to do all kinds of interesting things. So  
25 this is a map of that spreadsheet. And there's  
26 actually a lot more dots than it looks like on here  
27 because they tend to be reported in clusters, and so  
28 there's a lot of stacked up dots. Sometimes you have  
29 to go in pretty deep to start to see them  
30 differentiated. This is Golovin, for example, four  
31 dots, but once you're zoomed out it's hard to see. But  
32 what we have the ability to do is now map these, our  
33 geocoding capability is quite reliable. I think it's  
34 about 95 percent for that data set that I showed you  
35 which is better than I thought we'd be able to do. A  
36 lot of those are not even community names, they're  
37 names of camps, they're names of rivers, they're names  
38 of things like that. So being able to geocode those  
39 was a challenge. But what this allows us to do is to  
40 go and, for example, filter this in a lot of different  
41 ways and we can look at, for example, we can look by  
42 species group. So this is going to be really a fruit  
43 salad of colors here. But what you can see is these  
44 are the groups that we have in this data set and we are  
45 able to go and tease out where they are if we really  
46 want to. This is a useful thing for us to do. One of  
47 the things that is probably even more useful is that  
48 we're able to filter by species and bird condition but  
49 in the tribal health system we have a very important  
50



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1 thing that we find ourselves needing to do very often,  
2 which is to understand what tribal health regional  
3 partner is at play, so who is the regional health  
4 provider in a given place. And we're able to do that  
5 because we know what communities, what THOs. And so  
6 we're able to do things like that and filter by that.  
7 We're able to do the same thing with boroughs and  
8 census areas, which is another way of grouping things  
9 geographically. We use less in the tribal health  
10 system but it's used all over the place in State and  
11 Federal agencies. We're able to filter by date and  
12 other things like that. So given that, we're able to  
13 look at this in a number of different ways. Here's  
14 what our raw data looked like. We are able to -- let's  
15 see, we're able to look at, for example, details behind  
16 any of these things, you can see they all get geocoded.  
17 We're able to, for example, look at an equivalent plot  
18 to what Angela showed earlier, which is, these are the  
19 species that have been reported through this system.  
20 This is a few hundred calls to the hotline that have  
21 been vetted insofar as what you can do over the phone.  
22 These are not confirmed cases, by any stretch. Some  
23 may have been confirmed after the fact, but that is not  
24 a criterion for inclusion in this data set, it is only  
25 plausible HPAI as can be ascertained over the phone.  
26 So very much, again, an opportunistic -- opportunistic  
27 data set, but one that I think you can get your head  
28 around a lot better when you see it in a form like  
29 this. That's what I've found when I have shown this to  
30 various people.

31  
32 Now, there's a third data stream and  
33 that's the confirmed cases. So we talked about that.  
34 This is Dr. Gerlach's office. Those are being tracked  
35 on this website so here are the confirmed cases, I  
36 think Angela said 79 -- I think that's the number as of  
37 right now. We've got species, we've got where and that  
38 kind of stuff. So, again, we wanted to be able to see  
39 -- look at these things somewhat equivalently with the  
40 rest of those -- with those other data streams. And  
41 when you're dealing with geospatial data like this and  
42 a couple different geospatial data sets it's tempting  
43 to combine them and we decided not to do that. We  
44 thought that the criteria for inclusion in this data  
45 set versus the other one are so radically different and  
46 the way that things find their way into each one, you  
47 would not want to combine them. You gain nothing by  
48 doing that. And I think that you confuse people. So  
49 we prepared a separate visualization of that. That's  
50

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1 what this is. So this is taking Dr. Gerlach's data set  
2 and showing it in ways that had value for our  
3 constituents. The ability to see how these things  
4 light up on the map is useful right off. The fact that  
5 as far as confirmed cases go -- this is the Bethel  
6 census area, you can see this bar is the longest,  
7 that's the Bethel census area. But interestingly,  
8 there's also a time component to this. When did things  
9 hit this data set and we do try to look at that a  
10 little bit. The Bethel census area has not been kind  
11 of the main focus of these positive cases the whole  
12 time, it was a bit of a latecomer. And so you can see,  
13 for example, North Slope and Bethel come in about  
14 halfway through, or two-thirds of the way through this  
15 sort of timeline of cases. Now, why is that? Is that  
16 because the birds weren't there or is it because the  
17 response to this outbreak wasn't looking there at the  
18 time. Well, I think it's probably both. But what's  
19 interesting about that is it sheds light on not only  
20 the movement of the birds, but also the way that the  
21 response looks in various places and the way, for  
22 example, more populated places are going to tend to  
23 have these things tested much faster or, and I think  
24 Angela brought this up, places that have a U.S. Fish  
25 and Wildlife Service camp nearby where they can get a  
26 good carcass. They're going to have the positive test  
27 results. So these are all biases built into all of  
28 these data sets. And, you know, on some level it  
29 becomes discouraging. It's sort of like, well, of  
30 course, we don't have randomly sampled data, we don't  
31 have exhaustively sampled data, we have a ton of biases  
32 built into this and is it -- is there any hope. But I  
33 think that there is actually. I think that the ability  
34 to take some of this stuff and to get it into a  
35 glanceable format, something like this, I have found  
36 great value in that. So that's kind of -- to me that's  
37 one of the takeaways. One of the lessons learned from  
38 going through this exercise and collaborating a little  
39 bit with a Federal agency and a State agency and then  
40 sort of shopping this around within ANTHC, on various  
41 webinars, I've kind of shown this around quite a few  
42 times. And some of those lessons that I've learned.  
43 One is that even if you have just a small amount of  
44 data, it's worth it to aggregate it into some --  
45 visualize it and aggregate it in some way that makes it  
46 easier digest, glanceable, so that might mean a map,  
47 that might mean one of these charts. If we're talking  
48 about species, we can look at this, this is going to be  
49 consistent with what Angela already showed, the Bald  
50

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1 Eagle. Did this thing hit the Bald Eagle harder,  
2 probably a little bit, but probably largely it's that  
3 when somebody sees a dead Bald Eagle they notice, it's  
4 not a miss-able bird. And so, you know, interesting  
5 things like that.

6  
7 It's great to have that in a digestible  
8 form. And it almost doesn't matter how little data you  
9 have you get benefit from doing that.

10

11 The other lesson that I learned from  
12 this is that this idea of opportunistic, maybe it's an  
13 Alaska thing, but people expect opportunistic data.  
14 They don't get thrown by it. As a matter of fact, this  
15 idea that just because you don't have a dot right there  
16 on the map means nothing happened, people don't assume  
17 that, they assume, okay, well, you know, there's  
18 biases, you know, this is Alaska, you can't possibly  
19 cover everywhere. And so I think people get that.  
20 There's an intuition to that and that was what I found.  
21 When I would show this I would go into a big song and  
22 dance about the biases inherent in this thing and  
23 people didn't need to hear it they got it immediately.  
24 That was just my experience. It may not be like that  
25 everywhere. We took great pains to talk about what  
26 this was not, and I found that a lot of people got that  
27 already.

28

29 And then the last takeaway I would say  
30 before I stop, is just that this opportunity to kind of  
31 be a little bit transparent about data and show it in a  
32 way that's sort of very digestible is a great awareness  
33 raising tool. So it gives you -- every time I show  
34 something like this it's an opportunity to talk about  
35 other aspects of this. For example, the hotline. For  
36 example, safe handling of birds. The things that  
37 Angela already went over. Data literacy are huge.  
38 People -- helping people interpret something like this  
39 and having it be a little bit of an opportunity to get  
40 to talk through this idea of biases and negatives  
41 versus knows and all that kind of stuff is huge it's a  
42 great opportunity to do that and it's been rewarding to  
43 get to do it.

44

45 So I want to thank U.S. Fish and  
46 Wildlife and the State Vet of Alaska for allowing us to  
47 collaborate a little bit on this. I think it's been  
48 really useful for us. I think it's a blueprint for,  
49 you know, the next time we have something like this. I  
50

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1 think there's a lot of opportunities between everywhere  
2 from the LEO Network to things that are lot more formal  
3 than that to be able to do this kind of opportunistic  
4 surveillance and to do it in a way that has some value  
5 to people that live in the community.

6  
7 So I'm going to stop right there,  
8 thanks for your time today.

9  
10 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Thank you, very  
11 much, Mike, for that good overview. And when -- how  
12 often does that LEO Network meet, is it monthly?

13  
14 MR. BROOKE: So LEO Network, I mean  
15 it's available online all the time but we do -- we have  
16 a quarterly webinar.

17  
18 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: A quarterly,  
19 okay.

20  
21 MR. BROOKE: And if you join -- if  
22 you're from Alaska and you join we automatically put  
23 you on a list and send you emails about that. We had  
24 our -- I think we had our last one about a week ago so  
25 it's going to be a little while until the next one.

26  
27 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Okay, thank you.

28  
29 MR. BROOKE: I see a hand up.

30  
31 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: I see Julian, go  
32 ahead Julian.

33  
34 MR. FISCHER: Yeah, hi, thanks. Mike,  
35 thanks for the presentation. I'm wondering if those  
36 visualizations that you showed, are those available  
37 online and, if so, are you tracking who's observing  
38 them, where they're from and what questions they have.  
39 I'm curious about -- the reason I ask that question,  
40 I'd like to know in your opinion what -- who's  
41 benefitting from it and in what ways. You mentioned  
42 having the conversations about data literacy but in  
43 terms of them understanding maybe risks to their health  
44 or their birds who's observ -- who's watching these  
45 visualizations at this point?

46  
47 MR. BROOKE: Yeah, so I mean it is  
48 available online. Those visualizations are available  
49 online and we've made them available via -- we have a  
50

0183

1 quarterly one working group that I know some of you on  
2 this call also attend that. And these are available  
3 via that website, that was just the place that we  
4 decided to put them because that's kind of how this got  
5 going, this collaboration got going. So that's where  
6 they are, so they are available online. That's one  
7 group where we've shopped this around and kind of got  
8 this collaboration going. The LEO Network, the  
9 webinars, which were just mentioned is another place  
10 where we have presented this. So that's something  
11 where LEO members from Alaska get together online and  
12 we talk about this kind of stuff and have presentations  
13 of -- from various subject matter experts. The last  
14 one we talked all about the storm in Western Alaska but  
15 the one before that we talked about HPAI at length.

16

17 So I think that's a good opportunity,  
18 that's a good audience to get together.

19

20 Other groups within ANTHC that work on  
21 issues, for example, food security, we've looped them  
22 in on this kind of stuff.

23

24 I'm trying to think of other cases. We  
25 had an AdHoc HPAI kind of working group that spun out  
26 of that one health group -- a lot of overlapping  
27 people, some people that are on this call and that was  
28 a place that we used that kind of stuff.

29

30 I think that what I would like is if,  
31 you know, we were building this as we went and so I  
32 would hope that maybe -- if this happens again, maybe  
33 next summer, we would be better prepared and be able to  
34 have something that's a little bit more polished and a  
35 little bit more -- that we could sort of be tracking  
36 from the beginning as opposed to always playing catch  
37 up and perhaps be able to have something a little bit  
38 more present in the way that we would promote it is  
39 probably via the LEO Network.org website which gets  
40 quite a bit of traffic, has a lot of search engine  
41 presence and that kind of stuff. So that's kind of our  
42 way. That would be our way of getting the word out  
43 about that kind of thing.

44

45 MR. FISCHER: Okay, just a followup,  
46 Madame Chair, if I may. So you mentioned your  
47 preferred route would be through the LEO Network but  
48 earlier you mentioned that ongoing situations like an  
49 outbreak are not well suited for the LEO Network, did I

50

0184

1 misunderstand that or.....

2

3

MR. BROOKE: No, you're exactly right.

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MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Any more questions for Mike or Angela. Oh, Angela.

MS. MATZ: Yes, Madame Chair, I didn't want to interrupt. I did want to say that someone, and I forget who it was mentioned yesterday that elders had not been harvesting waterfowl because they were afraid of the avian flu. And I want to reiterate a couple of things, Number 1, that the disease is still considered low risk to humans as of the CDC's website checked on Monday. But that always, and especially having ANTHC involved and having them share information with the tribal health regional organizations, that people

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1 should be reaching out to their health care providers  
2 if they have questions on it. I think that's really  
3 important to remember and I know the capacity for all  
4 things varies across the state, but I was particularly  
5 struck by that comment and I wanted to make sure that  
6 people did know that they should reach out to their  
7 health care provider if they have a question about the  
8 risks from avian influenza.

9

10 Thank you. And, thank you, everyone,  
11 for the time today. I don't mean to cut it off, I'm  
12 happy to take more questions but I also did want to say  
13 thank you.

14

15 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Thank you very  
16 much. Any more questions or feedback for Angela or  
17 Mike. Julian, you still have your hand up, are you --  
18 do you have anything more to add?

19

20 MR. FISCHER: No, that's a remnant  
21 hand, I'll lower it. Thank you.

22

23 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Just wanted to  
24 make sure. Thank you guys very much for that good  
25 overview presentation. I hope you guys will -- are you  
26 guys planning on being at our spring meeting as well.

27

28 MS. MATZ: If requested, I feel certain  
29 that Migratory Birds will support a presentation there.  
30 I'm not sure who it would be from Fish and Wildlife  
31 Service but, again, that is something that if you want  
32 it you should definitely request it.

33

34 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Okay.

35

36 MS. MATZ: I think we.....

37

38 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: I think it would  
39 be good for an update in the spring, if we're going to,  
40 you know, not knowing if it's going to go away or if  
41 it's going to get in -- if it's going to increase or  
42 not.

43

44 MS. MATZ: I agree. And is it also --  
45 you know we didn't see the first confirmed cases until  
46 late April so depending on when the meeting is, is it  
47 also okay to provide updates via email to the AMBCC  
48 rather than.....

49

50

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1 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Yes.

2

3 MS. MATZ: Okay. Okay. So, Julian,  
4 that is something that Mike should also take into  
5 account, it's just we may not have information based on  
6 the migratory schedule and what we saw this year at the  
7 time of the scheduled spring meeting so I just wanted  
8 to make sure that an alternative way was sufficient.  
9 Okay.

10

11 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: No, that would be  
12 good and the information that you provide would match  
13 with that new committee that we just formed.

14

15 MS. MATZ: --

16

17 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Thank you.

18

19 MS. MATZ: Thank you.

20

21 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Thank you, Mike  
22 and Angela. Okay, that looks like we've completed new  
23 business. We're down to other business, and does  
24 anybody from the public have any comments.

25

26 (No comments)

27

28 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: None. Okay. So  
29 now it's Council and Staff comments. Usually we do a  
30 roundtable kind of overview of the meeting. I'll start  
31 with you, Ryan.

32

33 MR. SCOTT: Thank you, Madame Chair.  
34 It was really good to see everybody again as was  
35 expressed many times I wish it could have been in  
36 person and am definitely looking forward to that as  
37 soon as we can. It's always an amazing amount of  
38 information that we learn both from people on the  
39 ground in the communities that they live and places  
40 that they practice subsistence lifestyles and all the  
41 way up through the agencies and then something like  
42 what we just heard tracking HPAI from all over Alaska  
43 and to the Lower 48.

44

45 Just very grateful and thank you to  
46 everybody for being able to join us and to Patty and  
47 Michael for putting it all together and want to -- I  
48 know she's not on here but I want to welcome Wendy once  
49 again as a new member and, yeah, looking forward to

50



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1 seeing folks this coming spring.

2

3

Thank you.

4

5 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Thank you, Ryan.  
6 Julian, you just hopped in this seat a little over an  
7 hour ago, did you want to give any closing comments for  
8 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

9

10 MR. FISCHER: Sure, I'll be brief.  
11 Just on behalf of Wendy Loya and the Fish and Wildlife  
12 Service, thanks everyone for participating in this.  
13 I've been involved in these meetings for many years and  
14 it's always clear to me that we all share a lot of  
15 values regarding migratory birds and we're all in this  
16 with the same intent, for conservation of migratory  
17 birds. So I love hearing the reports from the  
18 different regions. It's always fascinating. I learn  
19 something every time. Thanks also for ideas about  
20 other information to present. That really helps focus  
21 these meetings so appreciate it.

22

23 I also want to say on behalf of Eric  
24 Taylor on his way out of Fish and Wildlife Service, he  
25 has remarked numerous times to me how much he has loved  
26 working with all of you. So I just -- it's unfortunate  
27 he couldn't join us for this meeting this time, but he  
28 holds a very deep warm place in his heart for all of  
29 you.

30

31 And with that I guess I'll just end  
32 there, look forward to seeing you all in person next  
33 time we meet.

34

35 Thanks.

36

37 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Thank you. And  
38 if you do keep in touch with Eric, if you could let him  
39 know that we missed him at our meeting today.

40

41 We'll cut into our roundtable  
42 closeouts, Peter, do you have any closing comments.

43

44 MR. DEVINE: Yes, thank you, Madame  
45 Chair. Thank you everybody for all the great input and  
46 all the information we got and look forward to seeing  
47 everybody in the spring meeting.

48

49 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Thank you, Peter.

50

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1 I'm glad you were on with us today and looking forward  
2 to seeing everybody in the spring as well.

3

4 Jennifer, or is it Martin.

5

6 MR. ANDREW: Yeah, Martin here. I'm  
7 very glad that I got to join today. You know I always  
8 look forward to these meetings because, you know, I'm  
9 always learning something new and, you know, just  
10 always looking forward to these types of meetings and  
11 looking forward to seeing everybody in the spring.

12

13 Thank you, Madame Chair.

14

15 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Thank you. I'm  
16 glad you were able to join us today as well.

17

18 Priscilla.

19

20 MS. EVANS: Camai.

21

22 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Hi.

23

24 MS. EVANS: Hi.

25

26 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Did you -- if you  
27 had.....

28

29 MS. EVANS: Oh.

30

31 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: .....any closing  
32 comments for our couple day meeting that we had or.....

33

34 MS. EVANS: No. I just can't wait to  
35 sit with everybody this spring. Thank you for all the  
36 information and hope everybody has a good fall on their  
37 hunts.

38

39 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Thank you.

40 Gloria.

41

42 MS. STICKWAN: I just want to say thank  
43 you for the information and it's always good to listen  
44 and hope to see all in the spring. And I just wondered  
45 if we could do something, get a small gift for Eric.

46

47 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Yeah, that would  
48 be nice but we could have the email thing that goes on  
49 after the meeting.

50

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1                   Brandon.

2

3                   MR. AHMASUK: Yeah, thanks everybody.

4       Thanks for the information. As always it would be  
5       better to be face to face but, you know, the situation,  
6       you know, can't get together right now but, yeah,  
7       hopefully this next storm is not anywhere near as the  
8       last one. As always what I tell people in our region,  
9       you know, for the other regions, anything out of the  
10      ordinary, report it, you know, as the best we can do.  
11      I did like what Julian said about, you know, we're all  
12      here, we all love the resource. You know this meeting,  
13      it is one of the meetings that I do enjoy coming to,  
14      the other one is the (Indiscernible) Committee. So  
15      anyway, thanks.

16

17                   MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Thank you.

18      Cyrus, are you still on, or did you -- I know that you  
19      had a meeting, I don't know if you're still here.

20

21                   MR. HARRIS: I am. My meeting starts  
22      at 3:00 so the timing is just right. But, thank you,  
23      Madame Chair. Just as well as everybody, I really  
24      enjoy these migratory bird meetings. I pretty much  
25      like to thank, you know, all the players within the  
26      AMBCC, the Fish and Wildlife Service, Alaska Department  
27      of Fish and Game and Native Caucus. Great information  
28      shared this past couple of days. Great information  
29      shared within the new business. Great topics to  
30      discuss, interesting topics, of course, the avian  
31      influenza and how it's handled, taken care of. Will  
32      Lacey with the budgets, kind of give us some  
33      clarification in some areas, not all the way fully,  
34      but, I guess, you know, he's -- it's always -- it's  
35      good to know that he's with us and he's willing to help  
36      our regions wherever questions may arise.

37

38                   But, yeah, will be looking forward for  
39      the spring meeting here and go from there and be  
40      interesting to get together again.

41

42                   All right, that's it. Thank you.

43

44                   MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Thank you, Cyrus.

45

46                   Taquulik.

47

48                   MS. HEPA: Hi. I just wanted to say,  
49      again, thank you. Lots of good information. As

50

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1 everyone else said, it's difficult sometimes to do Zoom  
2 meetings especially when you have people in our office  
3 or around us wanting our attention and we're trying to  
4 double-task. I do look forward to meeting everyone  
5 this spring and I wish you all a good winter.

6

7 Thank you.

8

9 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Thank you.

10

11 Coral.

12

13 MS. CHERNOFF: Yeah, I just want to say  
14 thank you to everyone who attended the meetings  
15 yesterday and today and came to share with us. Thank  
16 you for that. And I wish everyone a healthy fall. See  
17 you in the spring.

18

19 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Thank you, Coral.

20

21 Randy.

22

23 MR. MAYO: Thank you. Yeah, I'd just  
24 like to thank everybody all the way around that put all  
25 the hard work into this effort of migratory bird  
26 conservation that we all depend on and we want to see  
27 for the future generations. And it's good to hear  
28 information on what's going on outside of our region  
29 that can affect us with our fish and birds and what's  
30 going on out there in the sea there, you know, it has  
31 affects on us in the Interior. There was a lot of good  
32 discussion and a lot of good information that I'll be  
33 able to bring back to my management body and carry on  
34 the work.

35

36 So thank you everyone.

37

38 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Thank you. And  
39 my comments are, thank you to everybody with all the  
40 prep, gathering everybody together, really great  
41 presentations. We had great committee reports. I  
42 think it was helpful at our spring meeting when we went  
43 through our committees and actually set meetings and we  
44 had a lot of committee meetings. I know emperor goose  
45 committee takes up a lot of our -- a lot of our time  
46 and really important issues that we're working on  
47 within each committee. I do like Robb's comment that  
48 we all have hats and some of ours are in the closet and  
49 we forget sometimes the hats that we have, that was a  
50

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1 fun comment that he had to share.

2

3

4 I do want to say that I think one of  
5 the highlights of AMBCC that we did have this year was  
6 attending the Pacific Flyway Council meeting in Juneau  
7 and giving that overview and being able to let the  
8 Pacific Flyway Council know how important AMBCC is and  
9 how important us, as stewards of our lands, keeper of  
10 the birds, as our (Indiscernible) Council here in  
11 Dillingham is what our Council name is. And as we sit  
12 at this meeting as a co-management Council to bring our  
13 added information of what we have, from our elders and  
14 from our Council meetings and from the people who live  
15 in each individual region, the concerns, the comments,  
16 the issues, the good and the bad of -- as we are all in  
17 these regulatory cycles, this is just one of many that  
18 we work with, I think this is one of the -- this is one  
19 of my favorite Councils as well to be on, just with the  
20 history that we have with everybody and the  
21 relationships that we are building are really, really  
22 important. And AMBCC is looked at, throughout the  
23 state of Alaska, as a model for co-management, and we  
24 need to have more co-management on different resources  
25 within the state of Alaska. So I think that that is  
26 also really important.

26

27

I just wanted to thank everybody.

28

29

30 Thank you, Patty, for all your hard  
31 work that you've done to hold us together, you know,  
32 during these times, especially with everything -- what  
33 everybody's going through, so I just wanted to extend  
34 my gratitude and thank you, to you, especially.

34

35

36 With that, thank you guys, and I'll  
37 call on you, Patty, if you had any Staff comments.

37

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MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Thank you. And I

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1 think that we'll have a celebration potluck, hopefully,  
2 when we're all together in the spring, I think that  
3 that potluck that we had the last time was really good  
4 so we could plan something with that.

5

6 Do we have any more Staff comments, if  
7 anybody wanted to say anything. I know Michael is a  
8 part of our team now.

9

10 MR. OPHEIM: Which Michael?

11

12 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: You.

13

14 MR. OPHEIM: I saw a couple and I was  
15 -- no, it's been great. I love the education, hearing  
16 everybody talk, especially from the communities that  
17 are seeing all these things first hand so this is  
18 great. I've really appreciated the time.

19

20 MADAME CHAIR HOSETH: Thank you. Well,  
21 now is the time, Ryan, if you want to put out your  
22 right hand -- there you go, I'm transferring the gavel  
23 to you.

24

25 CHAIRMAN SCOTT: All right, perfect.  
26 Thank you, Gayla. Thank you. I thank you for your  
27 leadership over the last year and we do miss Eric as  
28 well. But let's talk about what we're doing next.

29

30 So I think the only thing we have to  
31 left to do is to start talking about when we want to  
32 get together in the spring. And I'm just going to go  
33 out on a limb but it sure sounds like we should plan  
34 for an in-person meeting, I think I heard that  
35 overwhelmingly and I would concur with that. And,  
36 Patty, you can correct me if I'm wrong, but don't  
37 generally we get together in April?

38

39 MS. SCHWALENBERG: Yep, it's usually  
40 the first week in April, on this calendar, for 2023 it  
41 looks like the week of the 3rd through the 7th.

42

43 CHAIRMAN SCOTT: Do people want to take  
44 a gander at their calendars real quick and see. Does  
45 anybody know if the Federal Subsistence Board has set  
46 their spring meeting date yet -- it's usually later in  
47 April so.

48

49 MR. FISCHER: From the perspective of

50

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1 Fish and Wildlife Service, I checked with Wendy before  
2 the break and her schedule's currently open. The  
3 participation of Migratory Bird Program, in general, is  
4 better in the early part of April if possible as things  
5 really start to ramp up with field work and planning  
6 for other activities. So I'll just put that in there.  
7 But maybe we could meet later if need be but early  
8 April has worked well in the past. It's usually right  
9 around the time we're celebrating the opening of the  
10 current year's hunt too.

11

12 CHAIRMAN SCOTT: That's great, thank  
13 you, Julian. Well, how about April -- I assume we want  
14 to plan for a two day meeting so April 4th and 5th or  
15 5th and 6th. Anybody have any preference.

16

17 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: 4th and 5th will  
18 work for me.

19

20 CHAIRMAN SCOTT: Great.

21

22 MS. SCHWALENBERG: Me, too.

23

24 CHAIRMAN SCOTT: Gayla, go ahead.

25

26 MS. HOSETH: Yeah, Mr. Chair, that  
27 would be good, on the 4th and 5th. I don't know if we  
28 wanted to have in-person committee meetings like we  
29 have in the past if we wanted to have committee  
30 meetings maybe on the 4th and then the meeting on the  
31 5th and the 6th.

32

33 CHAIRMAN SCOTT: What's 'the will of  
34 the Council, that seems pretty reasonable to me. You  
35 got everybody in one spot.

36

37 MR. FISCHER: Good.

38

39 MS. EVANS: That'll work for me.

40

41 MR. DEVINE: That works for me.

42

43 CHAIRMAN SCOTT: Great, thank you,  
44 Peter. Thank you, Priscilla. Okay, well, let's plan  
45 for that, committee meetings on the 4th AMBCC Council  
46 on the 5th and 6th, and Committee chairs that gives  
47 you, you know, gives you a little time to get things  
48 ready to go and start putting that all together and we  
49 can check in as we get a little bit closer and see how  
50

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1 that's coming together as well.

2

3 Okay, I better make a note of that  
4 though.

5

6 Okay, great, well, does anybody have  
7 any other comments or anything for the good of the  
8 whole.

9

10 (No comments)

11

12 CHAIRMAN SCOTT: Not hearing any.....

13

14 MR. DEVINE: Yea, Mr. Chair.

15

16 CHAIRMAN SCOTT: Go ahead, Peter.

17

18 MR. DEVINE: I think I come up with a  
19 name for our new committee, AMBCC Environmental Impact  
20 Committee.

21

22 CHAIRMAN SCOTT: There you go. So  
23 ordered.

24

25 All right, well, thank you again  
26 everybody for being here for the last couple of days  
27 and to all the folks that did join us, guests, and for  
28 the information provided, Patty and Michael and Gayla  
29 for getting things organized and having it up and  
30 running for us. I wish you the best fall. I know the  
31 West Coast and Northwest Coast is looking at another  
32 one, another storm coming, and thinking about you all.  
33 I hope things go well and that you're able to get out  
34 and enjoy the land that we're all so privileged to live  
35 on.

36

37 Thank you, again, for your time, be  
38 safe and good luck out there this fall.

39

40 I will take a motion to adjourn.

41

42 MR. HARRIS: So moved.

43

44 CHAIRMAN SCOTT: Cyrus.....

45

46 MS. HEPA: Second.

47

48 MR. AHMASUK: Second.

49

50



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1 CHAIRMAN SCOTT: All right, it's been  
2 moved and seconded. All in favor.....

3  
4 MS. SCHWALENBERG: Who made a motion,  
5 sorry I couldn't -- it got garbled.

6  
7 CHAIRMAN SCOTT: Cyrus made the motion,  
8 and I don't know who -- I can't remember who seconded.

9  
10 MS. SCHWALENBERG: Who seconded?

11  
12 MS. HEPA: Taqulik.

13  
14 MS. SCHWALENBERG: Okay, thanks.

15  
16 CHAIRMAN SCOTT: All those in favor say  
17 aye.

18  
19 IN UNISON: Aye.

20  
21 CHAIRMAN SCOTT: Any opposed, anybody  
22 else want to hang out on Zoom, I could be here for a  
23 bit.

24  
25 (No opposing votes)

26  
27 (Laughter)

28  
29 CHAIRMAN SCOTT: All right, no opposed,  
30 so we're adjourned. Thank you again everybody, have a  
31 great afternoon and enjoy your fall.

32  
33 (Off record)

34  
35 (END OF PROCEEDINGS)

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