

VOLUME I

ALASKA MIGRATORY BIRD CO-MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

FALL MEETING

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA
SEPTEMBER 21, 2017

Members Present:

Bruce Dale, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Eric Taylor, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Jack Fagerstrom, Kawerak
Cyrus Harris, Maniilaq Association, Kotzebue
Taqulik Hepa, North Slope Region, Barrow
Gloria Stickwan, Copper River Native Association
Coral Chernoff, Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak
Roland White, Association of Village Presidents
Gayla Hoseth, Bristol Bay Native Association
Chaiiy Albert, Tanana Chiefs representative, Interior
Peter Devine, Aleutian/Pribilofs

Executive Director, Patty Brown-Schwalenberg

Recorded and Transcribed by:
Computer Matrix Court Reporters, LLC
135 Christensen Drive, Suite 2
Anchorage, AK 99501
907-243-0668 - sahile@gci.net

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

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3 (Anchorage, Alaska - 9/21/2017)4
5 (On record)6
7 CHAIRMAN DALE: Welcome to the Alaska
8 Migratory Bird Co-Management Council. My name is Bruce
9 Dale. We're going to get started here this morning.
10 First, before our moment of silence I'd like to turn it
11 over to Cyrus Harris.12
13 MR. HARRIS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
14 I'd like to dedicate this moment of silence to a well-
15 respected elder from our community Raymond Stoney, who
16 just passed yesterday morning. He spent 30 years of
17 services with the agencies through commissions, co-
18 management councils, Western Arctic Caribou Working
19 Group meetings and I'm sure there are a fair amount of
20 agencies here that did recognize his name. I
21 practically got him out of retirement to be a part of
22 the elder rep for the Northwest Arctic region
23 representative for migratory bird meetings.24
25 I ask for a moment of silence for our
26 village representative. Thank you.27
28 (Moment of silence)29
30 CHAIRMAN DALE: Thank you, Cyrus. I
31 need to remind everyone this morning to use your
32 microphones. If you don't have one in front of you and
33 you wish to speak, try and get to one. The way the
34 room is laid out we don't have a speaker. We're not
35 going to be able to capture the record if we don't use
36 our microphone. So we'll all help each other
37 accomplish that because it's easy to forget.38
39 This is the first meeting of the AMBCC
40 that I've attended without Pete Probasco in attendance.
41 I think the smart money is that he's out hunting right
42 now and enjoying life. I haven't seen him lately, but
43 I heard he's playing a lot of hockey and he's doing a
44 lot of stuff outside and enjoying life. I mean he was
45 a great influence on this board, a pillar of strength
46 and calm and reason, I think, and really appreciate his
47 service on this council.48
49 The first thing we need to do this

50

1 morning is seating of alternates. So the alternates
2 would be Chaaiy Albert for Randy Mayo, Gloria Stickwan
3 for Roy Ewan and Coral Chernoff for Melissa Berns. I'd
4 entertain a motion to seat the alternates.
5
6 MR. DEVINE: So move. Aleutian
7 Pribilofs.
8
9 CHAIRMAN DALE: And a second.
10
11 MS. HOSETH: Second.
12
13 CHAIRMAN DALE: It's been moved and
14 seconded. Any objection to seating the alternates.
15
16 (No objecting votes)
17
18 CHAIRMAN DALE: We'll seat the
19 alternates then hearing no objection. Now we'll do the
20 roll call.
21
22 MS. SCHWALENBERG: Association of
23 Village Council Presidents.
24
25 MR. WHITE: Here. Present.
26
27 MS. SCHWALENBERG: Bristol Bay Native
28 Association.
29
30 MS. HOSETH: Here.
31
32 MS. SCHWALENBERG: Chugach Regional
33 Resources Commission is absent. Ahtna Intertribal
34 Resource Commission.
35
36 MS. STICKWAN: Here.
37
38 MS. SCHWALENBERG: Kawerak.
39
40 MR. FAGERSTROM: Here.
41
42 MS. SCHWALENBERG: Aleutian-Pribilof
43 Islands Association.
44
45 MR. DEVINE: Here.
46
47 MS. SCHWALENBERG: Sun'aq Tribe of
48 Kodiak.
49
50

1 (No response)
2
3 MS. SCHWALENBERG: She may be coming.
4 Maniilaq Association.
5
6 MR. HARRIS: Here.
7
8 MS. SCHWALENBERG: North Slope Borough.
9
10 MS. HEPA: Here.
11
12 MS. SCHWALENBERG: Tanana Chiefs
13 Conference.
14
15 (No response)
16
17 MS. SCHWALENBERG: Chaaiy is probably
18 on his way. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.
19
20 DR. TAYLOR: Present.
21
22 MS. SCHWALENBERG: Alaska Department of
23 Fish and Game.
24
25 CHAIRMAN DALE: Present.
26
27 MS. SCHWALENBERG: Mr. Chairman, we
28 have a quorum.
29
30 CHAIRMAN DALE: Thank you, Patty. I
31 will start off with introductions. Just so we're not
32 in a rut we'll go to my right first. I'm Bruce Dale.
33 I'm the Director for the Division of Wildlife
34 Conservation for the Alaska Department of Fish and Game
35 and I'm chairing this year.
36
37 DR. TAYLOR: Good morning. I'm Eric
38 Taylor. I'm with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
39 Migratory Bird Management Program.
40
41 MR. WHITE: Good morning. Roland
42 White, AVCP. A rep from that region.
43
44 MR. HARRIS: Good morning. Cyrus
45 Harris, Maniilaq Association, Kotzebue.
46
47 MR. PEDERSON: Good morning. Mike
48 Pederson, alternate and staff for North Slope Borough
49 to Taqulik from Utqiagvik.
50

1 MR. FAGERSTROM: Jack Fagerstrom
2 representing Kawerak.

3
4 MS. STICKWAN: Gloria Stickwan,
5 alternate for Roy Ewan, AIRTC.

6
7 MS. SMELCER: Shirley Smelcer. I'm
8 with Ahtna Intertribal Resource and I'm happy to be
9 here. Good morning.

10
11 MR. PETRUSHKA: Claude Petrushka with
12 Tanana Chiefs.

13
14 MS. HEPHA: Good morning. Taqulik Hepa,
15 North Slope Borough rep from Utqiagvik.

16
17 MR. DEVINE: I'm Peter Devine, Jr.
18 Aleutian/Pribilof rep.

19
20 MS. SCHWALENBERG: Patty Schwalenberg,
21 AMBCC.

22
23 MS. HOSETH: Gayla Hoseth, Bristol Bay
24 Native Association, Dillingham.

25
26 MS. PADULA: Veronica Padula, staff
27 member of St. Paul Island.

28
29 MR. DANIELS: Bryan Daniels, Yukon
30 Delta National Wildlife Refuge.

31
32 MR. SANDERS: Good morning. Todd
33 Sanders, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Pacific Flyway
34 representative.

35
36 MS. NU: Jennifer Nu, member of the
37 public and freelance writer.

38
39 DR. FALL: Jim Fall. Division of
40 Subsistence, Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

41
42 MS. KEATING: Jackie Keating, Division
43 of Subsistence. Thanks for having us.

44
45 MS. NAVES: I'm Lili Naves. I work for
46 Division of Subsistence and I coordinate the survey
47 program for the AMBCC. Jackie is the new subsistence
48 resources specialist for the division. She worked on
49 the diversity of projects. She also worked on bird-

50

1 related work.

2

3 MS. ZELLER: Tamara Zeller, U.S. Fish
4 and Wildlife Service, Migratory Bird Management Program
5 in Anchorage as well.

6

7 MR. SFORMO: Todd Sformo, North Slope
8 Borough.

9

10 MR. FISCHER: Good morning. Julian
11 Fischer of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service,
12 Migratory Bird Program.

13

14 MR. AHMASUK: Good morning, everybody.
15 Brandon Ahmasuk. I'm the subsistence director for
16 Kawerak and Nome.

17

18 MS. ZELLER: Hi. Tamara Zeller, U.S.
19 Fish and Wildlife Service, Migratory Birds.

20

21 DR. FROST: Chuck Frost, also U.S. Fish
22 and Wildlife Service, Migratory Birds.

23

24 MS. DIMARZIO: Tasha DiMarzio, Fish and
25 Game, Waterfowl Program.

26

27 MR. BUTLER: Lem Butler, assistant
28 director, Fish and Game.

29

30 MR. SCHAMBER: Jason Schamber. Alaska
31 Department of Fish and Game, Statewide Waterfowl
32 Program.

33

34 MR. ROTHE: Tom Rothe, humble duck
35 hunter and retired Fish and Game.

36

37 MS. HOOPER: Good morning. Jennifer
38 Hooper, AVCP, natural resources director.

39

40 CHAIRMAN DALE: All right. Thanks,
41 everyone. So we have the review and adoption of the
42 agenda. One item we brought forward from yesterday was
43 we were going to discuss swan bag limit. I'm not sure
44 where we should put that on the agenda. Probably under
45 new business.

46

47 MS. SCHWALENBERG: Can we put that
48 under future potential regulatory proposals under 12,
49 other business?

50

1 CHAIRMAN DALE: All right. So we're
2 going to put swans under 12(b), future regulatory
3 proposals. Patty.

4
5 MS. SCHWALENBERG: Can we also add
6 invitation to that same section. There's some issues
7 we wanted to add to that regulation or talk about.

8
9 CHAIRMAN DALE: Which?

10
11 MS. SCHWALENBERG: The future potential
12 regulatory proposals.

13
14 CHAIRMAN DALE: What else did you want
15 to add there?

16
17 MS. SCHWALENBERG: Invitation.

18
19 CHAIRMAN DALE: Invitation? Oh, okay.
20 All right.

21
22 MS. HOSETH: Mr. Chair. We want to
23 discuss an apology from U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
24 and maybe we can add that under other business.

25
26 CHAIRMAN DALE: Okay. We'll make that
27 12(c) apology. Any other changes to the agenda
28 proposed.

29
30 (No comments)

31
32 MS. HEPA: Mr. Chair. I move to
33 approve the agenda with the additions.

34
35 CHAIRMAN DALE: It's been moved.

36
37 MR. WHITE: Second.

38
39 CHAIRMAN DALE: Seconded. Any
40 objection to the amended agenda.

41
42 (No objections)

43
44 CHAIRMAN DALE: So moved. Okay. We're
45 going to take time for public comments now. Anybody
46 that would like to make comments sit down on the end
47 there next to Gloria, push the button and we'll hear
48 your comments. Please keep them to a reasonable
49 length.

50

1 (No comments)

2

3 CHAIRMAN DALE: Okay. If anybody
4 changes their mind, we'll get back to that. Then
5 adoption of Council action items from the April 2017
6 meeting. Patty.

7

8 MS. SCHWALENBERG: Mr. Chairman. The
9 action items are included under tab 1 and this is a
10 list of the motions that were made during the meeting
11 and after we accept these action items I'll give a
12 short report on what we've been doing since the spring
13 meeting.

14

15 MR. DEVINE: Mr. Chair. I move to
16 adopt the motion items.

17

18 CHAIRMAN DALE: We've got a motion. Do
19 we have a second.

20

21 MS. HOSETH: Second.

22

23 CHAIRMAN DALE: And a second. Is there
24 any objection to adopting the action items from the
25 April 2017 meeting.

26

27 (No objections)

28

29 CHAIRMAN DALE: Hearing no objections,
30 so moved.

31

32 MS. SCHWALENBERG: Thank you, Mr.
33 Chairman. In relation to the action items that you had
34 just adopted, the Kodiak Road Subcommittee has been
35 working on the three proposals. They're gathering
36 additional data to bring that back to the Council
37 hopefully next spring. We did write a letter in
38 opposition to the expansion of the shellfish farm in
39 Humboldt Bay, California.

40

41 And the Audubon Society has been
42 keeping in close contact with us on those developments
43 and they are still looking for a Federally recognized
44 tribe in Alaska who uses Brant to request tribal
45 consultation with the Corps of Engineers. So if any of
46 the Council members has a tribe that would be
47 interested in doing so, please contact me.

48

49 There was a motion to assign the

50

1 Outreach and Education Committee to review the public
2 regulations booklet and that is on our radar although
3 the work has not begun on that yet, so we're hoping to
4 have maybe a draft by the spring meeting for that.

5
6 So the next document under tab 1 is the
7 third quarterly narrative report of the Executive
8 Director, so people can read that at their leisure.
9 Just in short we conducted the spring meeting. We were
10 working with, as I said, the issue down in California
11 with Coast Seafoods and the shellfish farm.

12
13 We also worked with the Alaska
14 Department of Fish and Game, Jason Schamber, to submit
15 three proposals to the Alaska Board of Game and we'll
16 be talking about those later on in the agenda. The
17 first one is to seek an exemption from the State
18 Waterfowl Conservation tag. The second one is to
19 address the need for proxy hunting of Emperor Geese in
20 the fall/winter season. The third one is the
21 definition of edible meat. What we are trying to do is
22 allow the -- excuse me, have the Board of Game change
23 the regulations to mirror the spring/summer regulations
24 that were changed through the AMBCC a couple years ago.

25
26 Jason Schamber from Alaska Department
27 of Fish and Game and I attended the Alaska Waterfowl
28 Association meeting in Eagle River to share information
29 on the harvest regulations for Emperor Geese. That was
30 pretty well accepted.

31
32 I also traveled to Washington, D.C.
33 this quarter for meetings with Federal agency
34 representatives regarding our projects and projects of
35 the Chugach Regional Resources Commission and I did
36 include a separate document regarding that trip.
37 Basically we provided information to our congressional
38 delegation about the things that the AMBCC is doing and
39 we're also working on trying to find a stable source of
40 funding for the AMBCC and it would be really nice if we
41 could get a line item in the budget for the entire
42 program and hopefully that would help us to use that as
43 leverage to find additional funds so that we're not
44 always scrambling around for funding.

45
46 Like I said, we did meet with the
47 congressional delegation. We told them about the
48 handicraft regulation being passed. There still are a
49 few issues that Todd Sformo I believe, the chairman of
50

1 the Handicraft Committee, will be reporting on a little
2 later in the meeting that they're interested in
3 assisting us with, but again we would prefer to work
4 through the AMBCC regulatory process to resolve any
5 issues that weren't addressed in the first regulation.
6 So that's it for my report.

7

8 Thank you.

9

10 CHAIRMAN DALE: Thank you for that
11 report, Patty. So now we'll move to regional reports
12 and we'll start on my left with Gayla.

13

14 MS. HOSETH: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We
15 weren't able to have our fall meeting and we kind of
16 ran out of funding with our budget with what was
17 allowed for us with the high cost of travel within our
18 region and we're going to be talking at our spring
19 meeting about having one face-to-face meeting a year
20 and do a couple teleconferences throughout the year. I
21 know other regions are doing that. I did talk to my
22 chairman about that and then we'll probably have a
23 teleconference when it comes time for the call for
24 proposals in between November and December.

25

26 I did hear from a village elder out of
27 Togiak and he was so thankful to finally have an
28 opportunity to hunt Emperor Geese and he was very
29 thankful for the work that AMBCC has been working on to
30 allow that hunt. I think he said that he got five
31 Emperor Geese that he was able to share with his family
32 in the village of Togiak. So that was really nice to
33 hear the feedback of that for people not being able to
34 hunt for so many years.

35

36 What I'll do is the information that we
37 have here that we gathered here during this meeting
38 when we have our teleconference I'll share all the
39 updated information with our regional council. Thank
40 you.

41

42 CHAIRMAN DALE: Thank you, Gayla. Any
43 questions for Gayla.

44

45 (No comments)

46

47 CHAIRMAN DALE: Okay. Peter, are you
48 ready?

49

50

1 MR. DEVINE: I'm ready. Thank you, Mr.
2 Chair. Sorry to report, but we have not had a meeting
3 for our fall period either, but we have our village
4 seminar meetings coming up next month. I have a spot
5 reserved in there to try and get more RMB members, but
6 we're having trouble in our region because, you know,
7 once the school shuts down people move.

8
9 So in the last couple years we've had
10 three villages, you know, just pretty much fold up.
11 But I am seeking partners so we can get this winter
12 hunt schedule together. I know we've done this in the
13 past where we set up a schedule or a timeframe that we
14 wanted for the winter hunt. I mean it was -- I forget
15 how many years back. I'm probably going to have to dig
16 deep in the closet. In the past we've done that, but
17 I'm trying to get them all back on board, you know.
18 Let them know that we're still pursuing a winter hunt.

19
20
21 Even though they're not -- there was no
22 participation in the spring hunt for Emperor Geese
23 because they're not in our region, but I know a lot of
24 guys are real appreciative of being allowed this and I
25 mean they're gearing up for the sport hunt. An amazing
26 amount of money that they're putting in to just go get
27 one goose.

28
29 That's all I got.

30
31 CHAIRMAN DALE: Any questions for
32 Peter.

33
34 (No comments)

35
36 CHAIRMAN DALE: How did culture camp
37 go?

38
39 MR. DEVINE: Culture camp was pretty
40 good. We had a good time. Izembek sent some people
41 over for the first time, so we've been doing our camp
42 for 18 years. I think they were there for the first
43 couple and then kind of went away because -- they were
44 sending people from Homer, but Izembek actually came in
45 and -- I mean the guy that was there I mean he was
46 great. I mean the kids liked him. I mean he wasn't
47 Orville, but a good replacement.

48
49 CHAIRMAN DALE: All right. Thank you.

50

1 Taqulik.

2

3 MS. HEPA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So we
4 held our regional management body meeting in Point
5 Hope, Alaska September 12th and 13th. This is what I
6 heard from our advisors. This year -- and this is out
7 of the meeting. They're hunters from Barrow. But
8 people or hunters that hunted migratory birds noted
9 that geese and other birds were about a week and a half
10 earlier. Although we did have a cold spring and the
11 spring went a lot later than recent years, which was
12 good, so we had better access to them.

13

14 For the summer they're noticing that
15 the birds are staying later, in particular the geese.
16 It seems like they're staging near the communities and
17 taking off. Like there's some that are now staying
18 like in the community, like outside people's houses,
19 and that was pretty much unheard of until several years
20 ago.

21

22 I guess they just knew that if they
23 were going to come near the communities that they would
24 be harvested. I don't know if it's because of where
25 they're spending their winters and with more people
26 that they're becoming accustomed to our people because
27 growing up it was very rare to see geese within our
28 communities.

29

30 So that was noted and that they are
31 staying longer because it's been a very wet and warm
32 fall and summer. So the geese are still hanging around
33 and they should be gone. Even small birds are staying
34 around.

35

36 The other comment that we heard from, I
37 think it was one of the Barrow reps, he was talking
38 about red phalaropes in particular. Growing up and
39 being around the North Slope that we would see huge
40 flocks of them gathering, you know, flying or in the
41 water. Now we don't see -- they're not -- it was
42 notable that there aren't as many. That was another
43 concern that we did hear. These continue to be notably
44 larger. There seems to be a lot more, so spring
45 hunting was very good.

46

47 While we were in Point Hope there was
48 people traveling down the coast for their evening ride
49 and they did report that there was some dead birds that

50

1 they saw. We had our subsistence assistant from -- or
2 research assistant from Point Hope and our research
3 biologist/veterinarian go down and travel and they
4 collected some samples, but she saw about 100 dead
5 birds that were just randomly on the coastline. They
6 weren't clumped together or anything. It looked like
7 they were shearwaters and fulmars, I believe.

8
9 So the homework for our advisors this
10 winter is to re-look at the regs for the North Slope to
11 see if there are any changes. There's been some
12 interest in changing the boundaries because if you're a
13 hunter from Barrow and you harvest within the area that
14 we hunt that there's a possibility you could hunt with
15 two different regulations, so they want to make it more
16 consistent. So looking at the boundaries is something
17 that we'll talk about at our next meeting.

18
19 Thank you.

20
21 CHAIRMAN DALE: Thank you. Any
22 questions for Taqulik. Eric.

23
24 DR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Taqulik. You
25 mentioned that geese are more abundant during the
26 spring. Are those white-fronts primarily or did you
27 also see relative to Brant or Snow Geese? Can you
28 comment on that.

29
30 MS. HEPA: What I did hear from the
31 hunters and being out in the field myself it was mostly
32 White-Fronted Goose, but on their return were again the
33 beautiful flocks of fall Black Brant coming just south
34 of Barrow. The Black Brant aren't too much within the
35 community, but if you go down the coast you could see
36 them gathered and staged.

37
38 DR. TAYLOR: Thank you. I also just
39 wanted to add your comment about the red phalaropes
40 we're showing that up in our data as relative to
41 shorebird population trends. It is a species of
42 concern, so your observations are also mirrored in our
43 surveys as well.

44
45 MS. HEPA: The other comment that I
46 forgot to mention because it was a colder spring there
47 was some concerns about egg picking time because the
48 birds will egg or lay their eggs depending on the snow
49 conditions, so people were continuing to pick eggs

50

1 after the closure. I know that there is -- I believe
2 that there was a clause within the regulations where we
3 could call the Regional Director or someone to help
4 change the dates depending on the conditions. But that
5 was one thing that was brought up within the
6 communities.

7

8 CHAIRMAN DALE: Peter.

9

10 MR. DEVINE: Mr. Chair. Taquulik just
11 brought up something. On the bird die-off, the same as
12 last year. I mean it's not -- we're not seeing it on
13 the Pacific side. It's only on the Bering Sea side.
14 South villages aren't seeing any of that.

15

16 CHAIRMAN DALE: On the south are you
17 still getting debris washing up?

18

19 MR. DEVINE: I haven't seen any.

20

21 CHAIRMAN DALE: Thanks, Peter. Claude,
22 did you want to give an update from Tanana Chiefs?

23

24 MR. PETRUSHKA: I'm not prepared for
25 doing that.

26

27 CHAIRMAN DALE: All right. When Chaaiy
28 comes back we'll see if he wants to. So we'll jump
29 over to Gloria for TRC.

30

31 MS. STICKWAN: We didn't have our fall
32 meeting either and we plan to have a migratory birds
33 camp next spring. One of the concerns we have is the
34 budget being reduced down to 8.5 percent it's going to
35 reduce our budget. We would like to see our budget
36 increased to \$65,000 and I submitted a copy to Gayla
37 and Patty. Part of my position will be paid out of
38 this. I submitted this. Hopefully copies will be made,
39 but we wanted \$65,000 for our budget. That \$14,000
40 won't cut it for us because we'd have an increase.

41

42 CHAIRMAN DALE: Thank you. Any
43 questions for Gloria. Gayla.

44

45 MS. HOSETH: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
46 It's not a question for Gloria, it's just a comment
47 regarding our budget. As we do look at our budgets, I
48 think it was at our spring meeting that we were to come
49 up with our wish list budget of what we would like to

50

1 have in our region. As everybody does know the cost of
2 travel is very expensive in a lot of our areas to get
3 from the villages to the hub communities. So as we
4 work on our grant cycle you guys just keep that in
5 mind. Even if we have the wish list, we could have the
6 information of what it really would cost for us to have
7 a good successful migratory bird program in our
8 regions.

9
10 CHAIRMAN DALE: Thank you, Gayla.
11 Jack.

12
13 MR. FAGERSTROM: Good morning. Like
14 several of you we didn't have our fall meeting and that
15 kind of defeats the purpose I think. We're here to put
16 input from our people and it's kind of sad that it's
17 lack of funding.

18
19 Some observations from my village
20 personally. Blankety blank swans. I'm going to keep
21 bringing that up every year. Brant, seems to me
22 they're getting less and less. They're not the numbers
23 that we used to see growing up. Unusual bird sighting,
24 maybe just a shrike. A blood-thirsty little bird.
25 Kind of reminds me of a swan. Going back to it, Patty
26 said earlier about the community that utilizes Brants.
27 I think my community would like to have a consultation.

28
29 The bird die-off Brandon can fill in a
30 little more on that. There were like five birds people
31 encountered on the way to fish camp and on the way to
32 gather driftwood from the beach.

33
34 Our berries, you know birds eat a lot
35 of berries, and there was a marked lack of
36 blackberries. Everything else kind of was adequate,
37 but blackberries. Ducks and geese feed on them quite a
38 bit and are a source of food that they're not able to
39 access. The reasoning behind that is all the storm
40 surges we get. Every year we get a 10 to 12 foot storm
41 surge and blackberries grow right next to the beach, so
42 they get inundated every year and after a few years of
43 that you pretty much kill the plant.

44
45 That was about it on my side. If
46 Brandon can fill in on the bird die-off, I'd appreciate
47 it.

48
49 CHAIRMAN DALE: Brandon.

50

1 MR. AHMASUK: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
2 Like Jack was saying in our region we had a bird die-
3 off Shishmaref down to St. Michael, Stebbins. It was
4 happening pretty much from Spring until about two,
5 three weeks ago. I think one of the communities that
6 saw the most was Gambell. I think their count was 523
7 dead birds. All different species; fulmars, kittiwakes,
8 puffins, lots of birds. I don't know that I need to
9 get into too much more than that. There's going to be
10 a flyer in the binder that everybody is going to review
11 later. If you have any questions, I'll try to answer
12 them.

13
14 CHAIRMAN DALE: Questions for Brandon
15 or Jack. Eric.

16
17 DR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
18 Assuming the meeting is going to go on until Friday,
19 which I think it will, Robb Kaler from our seabird
20 section is going to come and address the group
21 relative to the die-off. I know Robb has worked
22 closely with Brandon and Gay Sheffield from Kawerak and
23 UAA. So Robb will provide the group additional
24 summaries of the numbers of birds that are estimated to
25 have died off, the species, and then findings of the
26 U.S. Geological Survey, National Wildlife Health
27 Center, in terms of what their findings were. So we'll
28 have that report tomorrow.

29
30 Thank you.

31
32 CHAIRMAN DALE: Thank you, Eric.

33
34 MR. ALBERT: Quyana, Mr. Chair. I have
35 a question for both or all three, Jack, Brandon and
36 Taqulik if they can answer the question. Regarding the
37 shipping lane, we know it was implemented within this
38 past year and with the amount of ships that have
39 started going up and down this lane have you guys seen
40 any effect to these seabirds on their behavior and/or
41 have you guys seen more birds being pushed out from the
42 shore away from these areas?

43
44 CHAIRMAN DALE: Brandon.

45
46 MR. AHMASUK: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
47 Just for Nome -- I mean, yes, we do get shipping
48 traffic. I say kind of centralized, you know, directly
49 in and out of Nome. Most of the traffic is far out to
50

1 sea. We never see it. I couldn't say whether or not
2 if it was actually affecting our birds or not.

3
4 MS. HEPA: Thank you for the question.
5 For the North Slope I haven't heard of any noticeable
6 changes from that. I know with the seabirds, like the
7 shearwaters and the fulmars, that they're more abundant
8 in the fall time during the fall storms. They like to
9 fish and some of the like gulls and stuff. But that's
10 the time of the year when we see them coming in. Some
11 years we don't see them, but it all depends on the
12 conditions.

13
14 CHAIRMAN DALE: Brandon.

15
16 MR. AHMASUK: Actually that does remind
17 me. So there's -- I'm trying to remember the name of
18 the cruise line. I think it's the Crystal Serenity
19 Cruise Line. Some of their passengers pay in the
20 hundreds of thousands to get on this ship. What
21 they're promised by this ship is that they'll see
22 wildlife. Some of the wildlife that they're promised
23 to see is walrus, birds, whatnot. The marine mammal --
24 that's a little different subject, but what the cruise
25 line is promising them, we'll get you as close as
26 possible to bird colonies.

27
28 But my question is, is there an actual
29 observer on there. How do they know they're not
30 getting too close? How do they know they're not
31 actually bothering these birds on the various islands.
32 I think it was reported that they were by St. Lawrence
33 Island, but I know St. Lawrence Island has some type of
34 agreement where pretty much no ships, unless they're
35 going directly to the island for supplies and whatnot,
36 they're not supposed to be anywhere near the island.
37 Anyway, that was a concern, the cruise ships getting
38 closer than they should.

39
40 CHAIRMAN DALE: Peter.

41
42 MR. DEVINE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
43 With this northern shipping route coming open, the
44 planning part of it I'm not involved with that, but if
45 you have a seat at that table you can change the route.
46 As far as your question on monitoring, they are
47 monitored. I mean it's pretty amazing with the vessel
48 monitoring system. You can get an online report.

49
50

1 I mean it's almost like -- okay, for
2 instance coastal navigation which operates freight line
3 between Seattle and Sand Point. I mean you can get on
4 your computer and know exactly where that boat is. The
5 same as they're tracking airplanes and stuff. But back
6 when the planning started, you know, in our region they
7 recognized that there were some sensitive places that
8 these ships were passing.

9
10 The first year when it opened I mean it
11 looked like spaghetti. I mean wires going all
12 different directions. But after raising issues of
13 concern and stuff like that I mean you could see this
14 from the spaghetti to the next year was right in line.
15 I mean they all came together. They are being real
16 good team players. I mean they're listening to what
17 our recommendations are and they're following them.

18
19 With the vessel monitoring system I
20 mean it's almost like you can know which vessel
21 violates the lane. I don't know if we could talk and
22 have Coast Guard impose fines if they violate it, you
23 know, if it's not -- if they go out of the shipping
24 lane deal, it has to be life in jeopardy or something,
25 you know, to seek shelter. But it's being monitored
26 really good.

27
28 That's all I have.

29
30 CHAIRMAN DALE: It sounds like that
31 might be a pretty good option. I would imagine that a
32 company like a cruise ship would want to be pretty
33 sensitive and wouldn't want a lot of controversy. So
34 if there was a dialogue with them, we could probably
35 make sure that they weren't disturbing things.

36
37 MR. AHMASUK: Mr. Chair. I'm going to
38 disagree a little bit. I brought up the walrus. The
39 same cruise ship the first year they were going up -- I
40 don't know if they did it this last year, but the first
41 year they were going up -- basically the response we
42 got back was we don't care. We're going to get as
43 close as we want to with the walrus because our
44 passengers paid good money to see walrus. I believe
45 one passenger even said I want to see a walrus before
46 they're all gone. So that was the mentality. So
47 anyway.

48
49 CHAIRMAN DALE: Thank you.

50

1 MR. PEDERSON: I just want to add to
2 Taqulik's report about our regional management body. A
3 lot of the issues that we discuss there are covered
4 under old and new business on our agenda for today and
5 tomorrow. So we did talk about our survey results and
6 stuff like that, the Board of Game proposals and other
7 issues relating to migratory birds that we're dealing
8 with along with AMBCC.

9
10 Thank you.

11
12 CHAIRMAN DALE: Thank you, Mike.
13 Taqulik.

14
15 MS. HEPA: And I did forget to mention
16 just following the comments around the room that we
17 hold one meeting a year and we try to get out to a
18 different village each year. I know that we're
19 supposed to hold two meetings, but because of the cost
20 of airfare and to get everyone to the outlying
21 communities. Because education and outreach on this
22 co-management council is very important to our hunters,
23 our people want to understand what it means, but you
24 need to be in the communities to do that.

25
26 Unfortunately, with the funding that is
27 made available we can only do one meeting. So we
28 choose to have our meeting in the fall time because
29 spring and summer is very active for our subsistence
30 hunting activities and I just wanted to put that on the
31 record.

32
33 CHAIRMAN DALE: Thank you. We'll move
34 on to Cyrus.

35
36 MR. HARRIS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
37 The Northwest Arctic Region Migratory Bird Advisory
38 Council met by teleconference on August 29, 2017 this
39 fall. All members of the council were in attendance in
40 addition to Patty and Brittany Anderson, Erin Nelson
41 from Maniilaq's environmental health program, Brittany
42 Sweeney from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Refuge.

43
44 Subsistence hunting seems to have gone
45 smoothly in the region this year. There were no
46 reports of problems, issues or unusual sightings from
47 council members. Bird die-off seen in the Bering
48 Straits were not seen in the Northern Seward Peninsula.
49 I just got word from Brandon that Deering had one
50

1 sighting after our meeting, but there were really no
2 sightings around our area or no sightings reported.

3
4 The council members were not aware of
5 any subsistence harvest of Emperor Geese in the region,
6 although there were a few sightings in coastal
7 locations. Both myself and Brittany from the U.S. Fish
8 and Wildlife Service worked on outreach this year to
9 get bird hunting information out to tribes and people
10 seemed happy with the information they have been
11 receiving.

12
13 Patty presented updates on AMBCC issues
14 or topics. The Council remained neutral on issues in
15 other areas, but there were comments in support of
16 Kodiak's tribal members being able to meet their needs
17 for birds.

18
19 Issues of interest in the Northwest
20 Arctic Council included funding and budget increases to
21 allow for two annual meetings here as well as Regional
22 Council members to participate perhaps on a rotating
23 basis and statewide AMBCC meetings. In other words,
24 you know, for the lack of funding and the amount of
25 work that it takes to keep these meetings going in our
26 regions that 14.8 for Maniilaq is just not quite
27 cutting it.

28
29 There was some interest from our
30 regional reps if they can participate to at least get a
31 birds-eye view of these fall and spring meetings that
32 take place here. If there were funding available for
33 that, that would -- you know, they show us high
34 interest into this AMBCC meeting and also our regional
35 meetings.

36
37 Current level of funding isn't adequate
38 for the high travel and lodging costs in our region.
39 In 2017, one in-person meeting used most of the funds
40 allowing for only a teleconference call in the fall.
41 In person meetings have a higher level of engagement.

42
43 There continues to be interest in
44 getting the avian first responders training for
45 individuals in the Northwest Arctic, so we shared that
46 information with the folks. There is interest for
47 folks be heading up that way, but where would that
48 funding come from. Perhaps you could -- Eric could tap
49 into that 4-point-odd millions of dollars you spoke of
50

1 yesterday.

2

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10 Council members enjoyed the Alaska
11 Migratory Bird calendar and support the continuation of
12 this program. The other notes are my meeting minutes
13 here.

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Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DALE: Thank you, Cyrus. Any
questions for Cyrus. Gayla.

MS. HOSETH: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I
guess it's just a comment again. It would be good if
we could get some of our regional representatives to
come to this meeting so that we do have public at our
meeting since this is a public meeting. I think we
only have two public members that stated were present
here and it's always agency around us.

MS. SCHWALENBERG: They sent two TCC
reps.

MS. HOSETH: Oh, okay. Nice. So I
mean we do have some, but I know that we were able to
bring our chairman I think two years ago when we did
have leftover funding available for travel. So if we
can -- I know that the budget is always a concern, but
finding out that we only get 6 percent for all of our
regions for the state of Alaska for what is coming
through to U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is a concern
and it would be good to have our regional reps. Not
all of them, but just if we could bring at least one of
them or two of them from our regions to attend this
public meeting.

CHAIRMAN DALE: Cyrus.

MR. HARRIS: Yeah, I'd like to add a
little bit onto that one. You know, after we had our
meetings there was another meeting that took place that
took funding away from the 14.8 from Maniilaq. Well,
actually it never took it away, but it went in the
useful manner of attending one of the meetings for
Emperor Goose discussions at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife
Service's offices.

So, with that said, I didn't have
enough funds to get the regional folks together and yet

1 alone I didn't have any more monies to attend this
2 meeting to where the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
3 refuge in Kotzebue did find some additional monies that
4 were not used to allow me to attend this meeting.

5

6 Thank you.

7

8 CHAIRMAN DALE: Thank you both. It
9 sounds like money is pretty tight. Roland.

10

11 MR. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We
12 had our meeting last Friday and it was a day meeting.
13 In the previous years before Jennifer and I got on
14 board we noticed that they used to have two-day
15 meetings, but like everyone our budget is tight so we
16 only have enough funding for a day meeting during
17 spring and fall.

18

19 We were lucky enough to have this
20 meeting inline with our executive board meeting with
21 AVCP. That's the main reason we had everybody present
22 during the meeting. But we didn't have much discussion
23 around topics, but here and there people would throw
24 little items such as the swan concern for the fall
25 hunting.

26

27 As noted yesterday, we only have three
28 allocated per permit in our region as well as the
29 Kawerak and people up there. We were wondering if by
30 any chance that could be lifted so the bag limit can
31 increase and/or no more bag limits for swans. The main
32 concern behind that is that these swans generally scare
33 of other smaller birds away from their natural habitat
34 and cause them to move to a different location.

35

36 The other thing we discussed and was a
37 big concern with the request of Fish and Wildlife
38 Service activities during roundup for tagging their
39 birds was the use of choppers to round birds up. We
40 were informed for the past 30 years they haven't been
41 using choppers due to the noise level and they were
42 hoping that we'd come to an agreement that they try
43 this coming year with a chopper or helicopter to round
44 up these flightless birds so that they can be tagged,
45 but with deliberation we ruled out that we're not going
46 to do that due to the loudness of the choppers scaring
47 the birds off and whatnot after seeing a photo of those
48 Snow Geese that were rounded up in Canada area.

49

50

1 We had a few questions about the die-
2 offs because we didn't see any die-offs in our region
3 and we gave recommendations on what to do or what Fish
4 and Wildlife and Fish and Game services should do in
5 our region education-wise. So if by any chance we come
6 across or one of our hunters come across a number of
7 dead birds, they would know not to touch them and to
8 contact the proper authority in regards to that.
9 Unfortunately, Patty, due to circumstances, wasn't able
10 to attend our meeting, but Jennifer did a pretty good
11 job covering for her.

12
13 The other item we discussed was the
14 Kodiak issue. Those three proposals that were brought
15 up during the spring meeting we were wondering what
16 they were doing in regards to that and how far along
17 they were in. The other item is the Emperor Goose
18 permit system. We didn't talk much about it, but we
19 spoke a little about it because nobody goes out hunting
20 during fall for these birds. Like noted the other day,
21 they're too skinny, stringy and whatnot.

22
23 The issue of the Duck Stamp came up
24 with the wording for those people 18 and under, the
25 proposal for them to be exempt. We were giving our
26 people the information that the proposal would state
27 not just 18 and under but everyone who goes out hunting
28 would be required to be exempt if passed.

29
30 So that was the meeting. Oh, one other
31 thing. A few of the members were concerned about the
32 data for the egg harvest because we saw a lot of zeroes
33 for practically every bird. We were wondering what
34 kind of methodology that Fish and Wildlife Service and
35 Fish and Game service were using to collect information
36 on egg harvest data.

37
38 With this the meeting was over, but
39 after the meeting was done I spoke with a couple fellow
40 bird hunters and I was asking questions to them. They
41 were saying that unusually all these birds that they
42 usually hunt are really skinny this fall. I was
43 wondering -- I was holding this question off. I was
44 wondering if the birds up north were skinny just as
45 they are skinny in our region. And I'm wondering, like
46 Jack mentioned earlier, birds usually eat blackberries
47 and there's no blackberries in our region. I was
48 wondering if that could be the cause for the birds not
49 to have their fat.

50

1 CHAIRMAN DALE: Thank you, Roland.
2 Anybody want to speak to that issue or a question or
3 comment for Roland. Eric.

4
5 DR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
6 Roland, I can't cite any specific data relative to this
7 year in terms of birds thinner, less fat when they were
8 migrating fall, but typically, you know, birds go
9 through a molt and a flightless period in late summer
10 and that's a very stressful time periods for birds.
11 They use much of their fat reserves. Some ways they
12 actually use some of their protein. Actually their
13 pectoral or breast muscles actually decrease during
14 that time period. Birds that are raising young with
15 broods also go with the flightless and same thing.
16 They use their fat and protein reserves.

17
18 So if I had to guess, birds that are
19 migrating right after that molt period are going to be
20 thinner than they might be during the springtime when
21 they arrive. But your point about the berries is a
22 good one in the sense that once they complete molt and
23 they start flying they often go to areas to stage to
24 replenish those fat reserves and if those berries
25 weren't available, I mean you're absolutely right,
26 those birds could come through thinner than what they
27 do normally.

28
29 That's just a comment.

30
31 MR. WHITE: Thank you. Over the years
32 before I got on board I would go out hunting during
33 fall for cacklers and just recently for white-fronts.
34 This is right after they're staging, like a few weeks
35 after or a couple weeks after they start staging.
36 Normally right before they leave they have thicker fat
37 than they arrived, right before they leave, and there
38 hasn't been or these hunters haven't seen any fat
39 whatsoever on these birds and that was my concern.

40
41 CHAIRMAN DALE: Cyrus.

42
43 MR. HARRIS: I've got a question for
44 Roland. How about Snow Geese population in your area?
45 I mean do you see a large amount there like we did?

46
47 MR. WHITE: In the past, before my
48 time, my late mother would tell stories of Snow Geese
49 being abundant in our area, but we hardly see Snow

50

1 Geese. Here and there we'll see a handful, but down in
2 Scammon Bay/Hooper Bay region they usually see a lot of
3 Snow Geese.

4
5 After speaking with one of my friends,
6 I don't know what's going on in their region, but he
7 told me that their staging area during fall has been
8 moved somehow by these birds and he was thinking
9 because a lot of people started going out hunting in
10 that area with the use of four-wheelers. And he
11 mentioned a few times he saw low-flying planes around
12 the staging area and he was wondering if those low-
13 flying planes and the four-wheelers are causing these
14 birds to move to a different location.

15
16 MR. HARRIS: Thank you, Roland. The
17 reason I ask I guess is the abundance of the Snow Geese
18 really take a lot of the habitat that we hear on some
19 of these other reports.

20
21 CHAIRMAN DALE: Are you seeing more up
22 in your area?

23
24 MR. HARRIS: Very much, yeah, during
25 spring migration and then we're seeing unusual fall
26 migration or staging stopping areas.

27
28 CHAIRMAN DALE: Eric, would those be
29 Wrangell Island birds?

30
31 DR. TAYLOR: They could be Wrangell
32 Island birds. They also could be birds from the North
33 Slope that are migrating south. I was going to ask
34 Taqulik in your observations. I know in fact we had a
35 specific meeting with the North Slope Borough, USGS,
36 Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Fish and Wildlife
37 Service relative to our concern, the agency's concern
38 as well as others about the increase of Snow Geese on
39 the Arctic Coastal Plain.

40
41 Cyrus mentioned that Greater Snow
42 Geese, for example, in Canada have increased to the
43 point where they're actually destroying habitat and
44 affecting other species, particularly shorebirds and
45 other species of waterfowl. Julian Fischer will give a
46 report here later today on Snow Geese and their
47 population increase on the Arctic Coastal Plain.

48
49 Taqulik, in terms of observations of
50

1 hunters on the North Slope, are folks seeing more Snow
2 Geese or no?

3
4 MS. HEPA: I didn't hear too much this
5 year, but throughout this last year we did do some
6 outreach through our newsletter and I think it was
7 talked about on the radio talk show encouraging people
8 to hunt more Snow Geese. But I think the biggest
9 challenge that we have -- and they want to help -- is
10 access because the Snow Geese come later and the travel
11 conditions aren't optimal for our hunters to get to
12 where the Snow Geese colonize. They wish they could
13 because they do taste good. It's just the timing
14 proposes a challenge.

15
16 So we will continue to communicate with
17 our hunters on how we could help with that situation
18 because they understand and we understand through the
19 reports that you and others have given that if they
20 grow too big there's a potential for them to loose, you
21 know, the grub or whatever you call the grass.

22
23 Thank you.

24
25 CHAIRMAN DALE: Jack.

26
27 MR. FAGERSTROM: Thanks. Going back to
28 our spring meeting, which we fortunately held, there
29 were some observations from Stebbins and St. Michael.
30 They said there were a lot of white geese this year to
31 the point where the kids were hunting them right at the
32 airport. I think those are Wrangell Island geese, I
33 believe.

34
35 Going back to the survey, Stebbins is
36 not going to get surveyed. In our region, they're
37 probably one of the only communities that very heavily
38 harvest Snow Geese.

39
40 CHAIRMAN DALE: That's a good segue,
41 Jack, because we're going to talk about harvest surveys
42 next. So if you're going to talk about harvest surveys
43 -- Peter, you've got something else. Please.

44
45 MR. DEVINE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. One
46 thing I failed to mention is we had an incident in Sand
47 Point where some individuals killed five bald eagles
48 and this happened in March. Well, the birds were sent
49 out. There was body parts missing, you know. Fish and
50

1 Game is conducting an investigation or the troopers are
2 conducting an investigation in our region. I never
3 even got word of it until like August 15th when a
4 public service announcement came across saying if you
5 have any information on who killed these birds or what
6 happened to these birds.

7
8 I was in town that day that happened
9 and I know exactly who all was along that dock that
10 day. All four boats. Nobody talked to anybody.
11 They're conducting an investigation. You know, it's
12 like why can't they contact the representatives for
13 that region and say we're conducting an investigation,
14 can you help. I mean I probably would have gave them
15 some information that would have had this thing wrapped
16 up by now. There was only like four boats there that
17 day.

18
19 The problem is these birds are so darn
20 aggressive. I mean they have a clock. They know when
21 pollock season happens and the pot season. What's
22 happening is the fishermen are putting tarps over these
23 birds -- or not over the birds, over their bait
24 thinking it's safe, you know. Then you come back the
25 next day and half your bait is gone. I mean it's not
26 right that they did that, but -- I mean it's like kind
27 of disturbing.

28
29 I mean this incident has gone on for
30 six months and nobody contacts anybody. We didn't even
31 get word of it through our tribes or anything. We've
32 got three tribes in town. Like I said, this thing
33 could have been wrapped up and those people would be
34 sitting in prison right now. Here's partners, you
35 know, just doing stuff without consulting the tribes
36 again.

37
38 CHAIRMAN DALE: Thanks, Peter.

39
40 MR. WHITE: One other thing that I
41 forgot to mention is the ptarmigans. Over the years we
42 see thousands and thousands of ptarmigan in our region,
43 but for the past year we haven't really been seeing
44 ptarmigans.

45
46 I'm glad Peter mentioned the nuisance
47 of the eagles. In our area we would never see any
48 eagles, but nowadays almost every day we'll see an
49 eagle while traveling. You know, eagles are predators

50

1 to these small birds. The loss of ptarmigans I don't
2 know where they went. I'm wondering if the eagles are,
3 in fact, killing them and eating them.

4
5 My question is is there any way to
6 allow certain areas -- not my area though because
7 they're not that abundant, for instance Peter's area to
8 limit the amount of eagles that they might be seeing?

9
10 The only reason I say that is when I
11 was going to school down in Kodiak several years back
12 right at the porch of our neighbor we'd see at least 10
13 eagles by this one five-gallon container and they were
14 just screeching away fighting over food. Me and my
15 wife we were thinking, boy, that's dangerous. What if
16 they attacked some little kid while playing outside. I
17 feel what Peter is going through.

18
19 CHAIRMAN DALE: Thank you. Okay. Are
20 there any more regional comments.

21
22 (No comments)

23
24 CHAIRMAN DALE: All right. We'll wrap
25 that up and we'll take a five-minute break and then
26 Lili can get set up and we'll come back and get into
27 harvest surveys.

28
29 (Off record)

30
31 (On record)

32
33 CHAIRMAN DALE: Before we start into
34 the harvest surveys I'd like to introduce Jennifer Nu.
35 Jennifer Nu is, among other things, a freelance writer.
36 Go ahead and have a seat at the thing there. Push the
37 button. Tell us who you are and where you're from and
38 what you're working on.

39
40 MS. NU: Hi. Thanks so much. My name
41 is Jennifer Nu. I didn't mention this earlier, but I
42 just wanted to introduce myself. I'm a freelance
43 writer and a lot of my story topics include food
44 traditions, including subsistence lifestyle, and
45 looking at different aspects of food because
46 traditional foods and subsistence foods are so
47 incredibly important for health and for culture in the
48 state.

49
50

1 So I came to this meeting because I'm
2 working on a piece about egg collecting, egg harvesting
3 and I'm just really curious about learning more about
4 egg collecting in the different parts of the state. So
5 I just wanted to introduce myself so if there's some
6 time after the meetings if you have any ideas, story
7 ideas or connections, it would be fantastic to chat
8 with you.

9
10 Thank you so much.

11
12 CHAIRMAN DALE: Great. Thank you.
13 Welcome, Jennifer. So, yeah, I'd encourage you to get
14 with her and tell your stories and traditions from egg
15 taking in your region. We're glad to have somebody
16 here that's taking an interest in our meeting.

17
18 Thank you, Jennifer. Is there any
19 questions for Jennifer. Peter.

20
21 MR. DEVINE: No questions, but just a
22 comment. We have a lady downstairs who did a
23 traditional foods cookbook for us a couple years ago.
24 I don't know if you've run into her yet, but Sue Unger.

25
26 MS. NU: Oh, okay.

27
28 MR. DEVINE: If not, I could take you
29 down and introduce you to her, but we have a cookbook
30 out on the traditional foods in our area and there's a
31 segment on eggs. We did a pretty good job on this
32 book, I think, because there's a lot of input from the
33 elders on traditional uses and methods and whatnot.

34
35 CHAIRMAN DALE: What's the title of
36 that book, Peter? Do you know offhand?

37
38 MR. DEVINE: I can't pronounce it. I
39 mean that foreign word I said this morning, aang, that
40 was hello. That's the only Aleut word I know of
41 besides a few cuss words.

42
43 (Laughter)

44
45 MR. DEVINE: But it's Quqamiigux or
46 whatever. It's down there in the display case by the
47 coffee -- by the reception desk down there in the
48 display case. It's that big, thick book that starts
49 with a Q, Quqamiigux or something like that. Those are

50

1 available here. I think last year they were like \$45
2 or \$50, but it's really put together quite well. Some
3 of the information we had to get I mean we couldn't
4 even get it in the state. We had to consult with other
5 countries. Of all places for marine mammals, Japan.
6 They had information, but I mean it's got nutritional
7 stuff in it. If you get a chance, check it out.

8
9 CHAIRMAN DALE: All right. Thanks.
10 Now we'll move on to Lili and the harvest surveys.

11
12 MS. NAVES: So all the materials about
13 the bird harvest survey is behind Tab 2. As usual I
14 will just go down the list there and there are updates
15 on what's going on in the program.

16
17 Starting with work recently completed
18 we have ready the draft report for adoption of the 2016
19 harvest survey and this is our action item that you
20 need to act on. Should we do the action item at this
21 time or later on?

22
23 CHAIRMAN DALE: Why don't we just get
24 that out of the way so we don't forget.

25
26 MS. NAVES: Okay. Are there questions
27 or comments about the 2016 estimates that we should
28 entertain now? So the draft tables were first made
29 available in the spring meeting and I have received
30 some input on the report. If there are any questions
31 yet at this time.

32
33 CHAIRMAN DALE: Peter.

34
35 MR. DEVINE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I
36 just noticed that there's no estimate for the
37 Aleutians. I was wondering.

38
39 MS. NAVES: So with the revised survey
40 we do five regions every year and this is YK Delta,
41 Bristol Bay, Interior Alaska, North Slope and the
42 Bering Strait. These regions were chosen as an
43 indicator of the total harvest in the state. They
44 together do about 90 percent of the total harvest. So
45 we don't have money to survey all the regions. The
46 intent of having something that you can do the same
47 every year and can compare across years closer to
48 Alaska-wide estimate. So that's why some regions were
49 left out.

50

1 But this doesn't mean that there is no
2 data at all for those regions. There are comprehensive
3 surveys that are looked at by other entities that
4 collect harvest on birds and also other resources that
5 keeps going on done by other entities. If there is
6 interest or any pressing management issue that needs to
7 be looked at more closely in any region the Harvest
8 Survey Program will be happy to provide assistance on
9 doing surveys there.

10

11 MR. DEVINE: Okay. Next question.
12 What is the cycle? If we can't do them so often, if we
13 have -- okay, here's the issue I got. I mean we
14 haven't had anything in our region since 2005. That's
15 12 years. We've got one of the smaller regions where a
16 more comprehensive study and survey can be done with
17 the few amount of dollars that we have. Is there any
18 idea on when we'll get surveyed again?

19

20 MS. NAVES: As far as I know, there are
21 no plans to conduct surveys in the other regions, so
22 that Kodiak, Aleutians and the Gulf of Alaska were set
23 aside until there was a pressing management issue that
24 may push the AMBCC to collect data there. There are
25 other harvest surveys that have been conducted more
26 recently in your area there, Peter, and they are the
27 surveys that was done by -- I'll ask Jim Fall to answer
28 that because he's better informed about that than me.

29

30 DR. FALL: Jim Fall from the Division
31 of Subsistence. In the last five or six years there
32 have been comprehensive harvest surveys done in I think
33 every community in the Aleutian/Pribilof Island area
34 except for St. Paul and St. George. So we do have
35 fairly recent harvest estimates for all migratory bird
36 species. In fact, as Peter knows because he helped us,
37 we did Sand Point this past year and King Cove, Cold
38 Bay.

39

40 An anthropologist named Katherine Reedy
41 has done just about every other place from Atka,
42 Akutan, Adak, Nikolski, False Pass, Nelson Lagoon. So
43 even though the AMBCC program, because of funding
44 constraints, has not done migratory birds, we have been
45 able to update harvest estimates in this region. It's
46 not a perfect situation, but it's not as if there's
47 nothing since the last AMBCC survey there.

48

49 Thank you.

50

1 CHAIRMAN DALE: Peter.

2

3 MR. DEVINE: Thank you, Jim, for
4 reminding me what I did this spring.

5

6 (Laughter)

7

8 DR. FALL: It was a good job, too.

9

10 MR. DEVINE: Just to mention that was a
11 good -- I mean they did come out and do a survey. I
12 mean like you said it was everything. I was surprised
13 how open people were. I mean they held nothing back.
14 So I think we're going to get a pretty good picture of
15 overall take. Thank you, Jim.

16

17 CHAIRMAN DALE: I have a question. I
18 wonder if it's appropriate or if there's a way to
19 incorporate those other surveys into this information
20 we have or at least have -- if they have reports, that
21 we could distribute them here so that everyone around
22 could see the other work that's being done and have
23 that as a reference.

24

25 MR. DEVINE: Just a comment. We will
26 get this information, but it won't be here. We'll get
27 it later on at the BIA Providers Conference, I believe,
28 is when we get that comprehensive information. I mean
29 we did a couple years ago, so I expect they'll do the
30 same.

31

32 MS. NAVES: The results of the surveys
33 on the Aleutians also will be available at the
34 Community Subsistence Information System. That is an
35 online database that's hosted by the Division of
36 Subsistence that has community-level estimates for all
37 surveys done by the Division since the early '80s.
38 This is available online and everyone can go there.
39 That's a great source of information.

40

41 When I do big compilations of harvest
42 data as I did for sea ducks with Tom Rothe, seabirds,
43 and I'm doing with shorebirds now, I pool a whole lot
44 of information available, so I combine all the AMBCC
45 data and all the data available at the Community
46 Subsistence Information System. So for those big
47 overview perspectives I work with about 500
48 communities, so this is number of communities and years
49 that are surveyed across the state. So there's a good

50

1 body of data out there and it's public available.

2

3 CHAIRMAN DALE: Okay. Thank you.

4 Jack.

5

6 MR. FAGERSTROM: Looking at the
7 estimated bird harvest, Bering Strait/Norton Sound
8 2016, you go to Page 8 on Tab 2, Table 7. It says Snow
9 Geese. Reported 43, estimated 1,366. I think those
10 Snow Geese numbers come from two of my communities,
11 Stebbins and St. Michael. Looking at the harvest
12 format, I don't think Stebbins is going to be counted.
13 How are the numbers going to reflect on that?

14

15 MS. NAVES: We cannot survey all
16 communities every year, so there is a system to
17 distribute the sampling effort across regions. We
18 defined a route numbering the communities. It usually
19 starts on the south side of the region and it goes all
20 the way through the islands and to the more interior
21 communities. So we selected the first community that
22 will be picked in this route and then let's say you
23 survey every other fourth community. So that the
24 sampling effort is spread all across the region so it
25 doesn't get concentrated only on the coast or only on
26 the island.

27

28 In one single year it's possible that
29 we miss local harvest patterns for different places,
30 but we have to think about the whole picture in a set
31 of years. So even if you miss a community in a year in
32 a set of years we'll get the regional pattern
33 represented across.

34

35 MR. FAGERSTROM: Well, that's well and
36 good, but if you do not do what you just said, if you
37 look at the scheduling, Stebbins I don't think is even
38 going to be surveyed. Like I pointed out, they're the
39 ones who harvest the white geese.

40

41 MS. NAVES: I hope that the managers
42 have enough information and they know how to look at
43 the data. People usually don't look at one single year
44 of harvest data. It's well understood that harvest
45 estimates vary a lot across years and this is due for
46 natural situations, for socioeconomic factors. For
47 instance even
48 in Stebbins if by chance there is construction of the
49 airport, people may be busy working on the airport and

50

1 then maybe harvest may go lower that year as compared
2 to other years.

3
4 So there's lots of causes, lots of
5 factors that my cause harvest to vary. So when looking
6 at the harvest data it's understood that you have to
7 look across a range of years because there is not lots
8 of natural variation and there are socioeconomic
9 factors that play a role too. I hope that more and
10 more of this message gets across and that we get more
11 informed on how to look at data. Not focusing on one
12 specific year, but looking at a set of years.

13
14 MS. HEPA: I'll wait until your
15 presentation is done.

16
17 CHAIRMAN DALE: Lili, is Stebbins in
18 the rotation where eventually they'll be counted?

19
20 MS. NAVES: They can come any year.
21 It's a random selection.

22
23 CHAIRMAN DALE: It's random.

24
25 MS. NAVES: Uh-huh (affirmative). It
26 was last year and I don't think it is this year, but it
27 may be next year again.

28
29 CHAIRMAN DALE: Okay. So the idea then
30 is when -- so you have an estimate that doesn't include
31 Stebbins where they shoot a lot of the white geese in
32 2016, so the estimate for the whole area is probably
33 low, but next year or the year after when they get an
34 estimate from Stebbins and they extrapolate that over
35 to the whole region, then that estimate will be high.
36 When you look at the five-year, six-year average, it
37 will be right and that's the long-term view that we
38 have to work with. It's an adequate timeframe. It's
39 not ideal, but that's the money situation.

40
41 Jack.

42
43 MR. FAGERSTROM: I'm sorry to continue
44 to harp on this, but looking at the format that our
45 village received and the scheduling that was on there,
46 I didn't see Stebbins on there at all. It was all
47 blank. It had all the communities there and you had a
48 little darker thing when you're going to survey.
49 There's no Stebbins there.

50

1 I also noticed that Savoonga and
2 Gambell I think they're going to get surveyed like once
3 out of four years according to the little roadmap you
4 had. Those people out there harvest a lot of eggs and
5 a lot of birds that the rest of our villages don't
6 harvest.

7
8 MS. NAVES: I think that how the
9 selections of communities is set it's very likely that
10 you're going to have at least one island community each
11 year. So last year just by random sampling Diomedes got
12 surveyed. So this year by random sampling I think
13 Savoonga is in the selection. It may be that a year
14 maybe we miss one, but it's well known that the
15 communities -- the seabirds are really important for
16 the island communities.

17
18 In fact, the island communities on St.
19 Lawrence in the Bering Strait area account for about 80
20 percent of the total harvest of sea birds in the state.
21 So it's not going to pass out for their screen. This
22 is well documented elsewhere. So if you have one year
23 that's missing on the survey, it's not that you're
24 missing the whole picture and that everything is lost.
25 There are other sources of information for that.

26
27 MR. FAGERSTROM: Thanks.

28
29 CHAIRMAN DALE: It seems like it would
30 be beneficial -- we need to preserve the statistical
31 integrity of the study design that's been implemented
32 and that requires a random sample, which does create
33 some of these anomalies.

34
35 It seems like it would be beneficial to
36 preserve some of that information. I wonder if it
37 would be possible during the review period after you
38 present the initial results in 2016 to capture some of
39 these brief but concise considerations in a footnote
40 that says -- you know, when you get to white geese it
41 says note that Stebbins was not included in this survey
42 and Stebbins is reported to be the area of high harvest
43 of white geese.

44
45 Then the managers would have that in a
46 written context so they could use that as well without
47 not knowing that these little anomalies are going to
48 occur. In the long run it will work out, but it seems
49 like that would be -- I don't know if that would be

50

1 overly burdensome or not. I don't know that there
2 would be a lot of them, but it would be worth
3 preserving them I think.

4
5 MS. NAVES: I think this is great. We
6 had tried to do that over the years and sometimes we
7 added things as footnotes to the table so when you get
8 comments from the regional bird councils we footnote on
9 the table, but I think that putting it in the
10 discussion section of the report it's maybe a more
11 appropriate way because in the footnote of the table
12 can get a little hidden.

13
14 So the discussion part of our reports
15 have been a little slim. I think that we can
16 collectively make an effort to boost that a little bit
17 by -- it may be just a bullet point to add at the
18 discussion section that include all these kinds of
19 comments rather than burying them as footnotes to the
20 tables. So great suggestion. Easy to implement.

21
22 CHAIRMAN DALE: Taquulik.

23
24 MS. HEPA: I think that that's really
25 important even before -- like for the 2017 results that
26 we have each of us that is going to present to our
27 regional management bodies a set of talking points that
28 we could highlight because just like Jack's region that
29 we had concerns about obviously the methodology in
30 comparing it to prior years of data that was collected.
31 Some of the questions were like are we comparing apples
32 to oranges because the methodology was so different.

33
34 The other thing that was pointed out
35 was why isn't there a note on this about what the
36 confidence interval is. You know, is this because that
37 76,000 birds in total that were harvested seems very
38 high. So they wanted to understand more about that. I
39 think that we did a really good -- a pretty good job of
40 explaining it, but having a consistent message to our
41 people about what these numbers mean and how do you put
42 that into perspective.

43
44 Like you're saying that I think we're
45 the managers that look at this, you know, and I know
46 that we need to understand that, you know, even though
47 this number looks high, over time when we've learned or
48 become accustomed to the new methodology that's going
49 to be implemented, you know, what are we trying to see

50

1 here.

2

3

Thank you.

4

5

6 MS. NAVES: I think there are other
7 comments that can be added there to the discussion
8 section of the report this year besides the Snow Geese.
9 Emperor Goose harvest was not detected
10 in the Bering Sea. I think this can be other item to
11 be included there too. The North Slope estimates were
12 a little on the high side and on the other hand the YK
13 Delta was a little on the low side. So I think a
14 little bit of perspective like that would be really
15 important. And I think that input from the regional
16 bird councils and from the representatives on this is
17 really important too because some things escape me or
18 escape other people seeing the report.

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The other thing that's nice to include there too are notes about for instance if in an area the harvest is on the low side, then you look at the breakdown by seasons; spring, summer and fall estimates. If you have an idea of what was low in spring, oh, it was an early breakup, a little context like that that can help understand why the estimate -- it's not that if it's high or low, but why they may be low or high, that's really helpful too.

Just putting the data together, I don't know what are the environmental and the socioeconomic conditions that are going on in each region and each year that have caused those variation.

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CHAIRMAN DALE: Mike.

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MR. PEDERSON: I just want to add on to Taqulik's comment that at our RMB meeting there was some concern about, you know, the confidence intervals and like Taqulik had mentioned I think some bullet points would be real helpful because even we were a little confused when we were looking at it. We had to remind each other that this was a trial year and that this was the first survey results under the new system that was being released as data.

45

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So I agree with Taqulik and just hearing from our regional management body that they voiced several concerns, but in the end I think me and Taqulik were able to let them know that again this was

1 a trial period, a new survey. We took a break for how
2 many years on this, so bullet points would be really
3 helpful.

4
5 I also agree with Jack's comments and
6 your explanation of the confidence intervals and how
7 they play a role in reviewing these. Again, like
8 Tagulik had mentioned, our RMB had concerns about the
9 high number of birds harvested in that one season.

10
11 CHAIRMAN DALE: Okay. Anything more on
12 the 2016 harvest estimates.

13
14 (No comments)

15
16 CHAIRMAN DALE: I guess it's time for a
17 motion to approve these so we can have it published.

18
19 MR. DEVINE: So move.

20
21 CHAIRMAN DALE: Can I get a second.

22
23 MR. WHITE: Second.

24
25 CHAIRMAN DALE: It's been moved and
26 seconded to adopt the 2016 harvest estimates. Is there
27 any objection.

28
29 (No objections)

30
31 CHAIRMAN DALE: Hearing none that will
32 be the action of this council. Okay. Lili.

33
34 MS. NAVES: So between now and having
35 the final version of the report I'll be in touch with
36 the regional representatives to get the bullet list
37 reviewed and included in the final report.

38
39 So going to item (b) under work
40 recently completed, based on results of the 2016
41 survey, the Colorado State University folks, the
42 statisticians that have helped us along this process,
43 they did an evaluation of how the survey went and they
44 suggested little tweaks on how to distribute the
45 sampling effort among the regions.

46
47 There is a report that includes those
48 recommendations and the Harvest Survey Committee met in
49 late June to review those recommendations. The

50

1 committee was in agreement in moving forward with those
2 recommendations. It's very minor details compared to
3 the other parts of the review. So I think at this time
4 we're in the fine tuning part of it. So we're moving
5 forward with the preparations for the 2017 data
6 collection including these adjustments to the sampling
7 design.

8
9 We hope to have the cost estimates for
10 each region for the 2017 survey completed by end of
11 September even if it's preliminary numbers only. So
12 it's real important that the partners provide that
13 information so we can consolidate our plan and then
14 start to working on the more fine level of preparations
15 for the survey this year.

16
17 Questions or comments about that.

18
19 CHAIRMAN DALE: Taqulik.

20
21 MS. HEPA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Again
22 I just want to say that based on the communities that
23 are selected for the 2017 for the North Slope hopefully
24 the data results will show that the communities that
25 were selected aren't coastal communities. There's two.
26 Of course Barrow and then Point Lay is one of our
27 smaller villages and then the other two are our inland
28 communities. One of them is kind of the outer range of
29 most migratory birds, so they don't harvest as many
30 birds.

31
32 I'm hoping that in the 2017 results
33 that that is reflected, that it's going to be a low
34 harvest especially compared to like the egg picking
35 because a few communities are heavy egg pickers and
36 that's not one of the communities. So I look forward
37 to seeing how that comes out.

38
39 Then the other point too I suggest to
40 our harvest coordinator is that understanding the
41 methodology and the training is very important because
42 if you sway from what the methodology is and picked
43 your own households that might be easier or you're not
44 following -- if you're not able to collect information
45 from this certain household there's a method to picking
46 the new household. If you sway, then it becomes biased
47 and it has the potential to change the numbers and I
48 really want all of us and all our surveyors from all
49 the different regions to understand that because I want

50

1 to see good reliable numbers.

2

3

Thank you.

4

5

6 CHAIRMAN DALE: So when those numbers
7 come in, that's when to take a look at them in your
8 region, see what anomalies there might be, help Lili
9 with the wording of understanding what -- you know, the
10 sampling scheme might have affected the particular
11 years' numbers so we can capture that and preserve that
12 information.

12

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14

MS. NAVES: Can you move to the next
slide.

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CHAIRMAN DALE: Roland.

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Then starting at Tuntutuliak let's say
that in the YK Delta we survey every fifth community,
so we start Tuntutuliak is selected and then you go the
next fifth community and then the next fifth community
and then the next one. Like that we spread all the
communities that will be surveyed across the region.

That was done so not by chance. All
the selected communities are on the coastal area or are
in the interior part. Lime Village and the Red Devil

1 that are in the selection for 2017 are in fact a little
2 bit of a problematic place to survey because not only
3 they are small communities but it's really difficult to
4 access there. So those are inherent parts of the
5 system that we end with small communities that are
6 super expensive to survey. For instance only airfare
7 to train a surveyor in Lime Village is \$3,000 to go
8 there for a small survey a little community like that
9 to survey the households there.

10

11 But it's really difficult to have a
12 system where all those little things are accounted for.
13 So you see how it comes that's really expensive to
14 survey, that's difficult to access. If there is any
15 major logistic constraint or something else -- this is
16 also pending village consent, so we select alternate
17 communities to replace if need be. The need may be a
18 major logistical constraint or it may be lack of
19 village consent or something like that.

20

21 And then there's a rule. If you need
22 to select alternate communities, the rule is that the
23 first alternate community is the number immediately
24 below that community. So let's say Lime Village is
25 number 28. If you were to select an alternate
26 community for that, we would pick community 27, which
27 ends up being Russian Mission. That's really far from
28 there, but at a certain point the string ends. So the
29 first alternate community for Lime Village is Russian
30 Mission.

31

32 And then if by chance there is for
33 whatever stronger reason Russian Mission cannot be
34 surveyed, the rule for selecting the second alternate
35 community is that will be the number immediately above
36 that first community selected. So we started at Lime
37 Village. If you cannot survey Russian Mission -- Lime
38 Village is 28. If you cannot survey Russian Mission,
39 which is 27, we'd go to 29 and that is Stony River.

40

41 So there are rules on how to select
42 this thing so we don't get out of the random selection.
43 It's still random. The problem is that there's all
44 this indirect process that we can get out of random, so
45 there's rules to prevent those.

46

47 DR. FALL: One other point is that
48 there are some very small communities in some of the
49 regions that we have not included in the list for the

50

1 very reason, Roland, that you're pointing out. They're
2 very, very small, the expense is just too high to get
3 there. They might not even have an active village
4 council anymore. There's a very small number of those
5 in several regions. But as communities change, schools
6 close and populations drop, we can modify that list and
7 that's why we need advice from all of you about that.

8
9 MR. WHITE: Thank you. Since our
10 region is the biggest region here in Alaska and it's
11 the most vast, one of the recommendations that I would
12 have for selecting random villages for survey is doing
13 parcels for each subregion. Create parcels under
14 subregions. Like for instance when I saw the list to
15 be surveyed they're primarily coastal villages and I
16 hardly saw villages that were a little further in, so
17 it says Red Devil and Lime Village.

18
19 So for instance if you guys are
20 creating parcels for bigger villages such as Bethel, I
21 don't know how many parcels you created for that one,
22 why not make parcels for bigger regions so you could
23 actually have a good representation of the harvest
24 estimates that you guys are collecting? Like for Upper
25 Yukon region I didn't see any villages from there, like
26 you mentioned Russian Mission and whatnot.

27
28 So if you guys pick a couple villages
29 from that area and try and pick a couple villages from
30 the middle area and then a couple villages from the
31 coastal area then you guys would have more accurate
32 estimate counts.

33
34 MS. NAVES: This is a system that makes
35 sense and the survey used subregions until recently,
36 but then in the second survey revision as we upped the
37 geographic scale for the survey, we let go of the
38 subregion level. So it makes sense, but it was -- with
39 the goal of having Alaska-wide estimates you had to go
40 a notch up on the geographic scale. It's important to
41 keep in mind that the survey score is grained and that
42 we cannot capture small geographic patterns on the
43 survey.

44
45 So when coming with the revision of
46 survey, it's really difficult to have a plan that cover
47 all the details and we have been trying to do the best
48 to cover as much as possible of the tables, but there
49 are gives and takes and lots of negotiations and the

50

1 discussion during the survey review we'd say what are
2 the priorities and what we need to let go to move
3 forward with the priorities. So we understand that
4 it's not a super tight perfect system that pleases 100
5 percent of the partners, but it's a middle ground
6 approach that most people can live with.

7

8 CHAIRMAN DALE: Mike.

9

10 MR. PEDERSON: One other consideration
11 that we need to consider around this table is the
12 amount of funding that the survey program receives from
13 the service. It has limitations and that kind of
14 defines some of how we're doing the harvest survey
15 work, the budget.

16

17 CHAIRMAN DALE: Yeah, without question,
18 Mike. This is a compromise based on available funds.
19 If we had the money, we'd survey -- and the manpower,
20 we could survey every village every year. But you have
21 to come up with a scheme and we spent several years
22 with Colorado State coming up with some scheme that
23 would be statistically viable. When we have these
24 anomalies, these problems because of the random sample,
25 we just needed to make it statistically robust numbers-
26 wise. We need to capture that information in the
27 bullet points and preserve them that way until we can
28 find funding to solve those problems.

29

30 Taqulik.

31

32 MS. HEPA: Again I think if whether
33 it's an individual from a different agency or a
34 different community and they look at these numbers,
35 unless they read the fine print they're not going to
36 have a good idea of what all those numbers mean. Like
37 you said, if you're a good manager, you need to
38 understand that you can't focus in on one year. But I
39 think the majority of the people that are going to look
40 at this information are going to get the wrong
41 perception, so we need to really think about that.

42

43 You know, is it worth the investment to
44 put -- what did we provide for the annual funding,
45 300,000, 100,000, I forget what the number was, but are
46 we really capturing what we set out to collect and
47 report on or should we do something -- I know that we
48 invested and I want to give due diligence to this new
49 process. But, like I said, if an individual picks it

50

1 up that isn't around the table, the perception is going
2 to be wrong on what the data is or potentially be
3 wrong.

4
5 CHAIRMAN DALE: That's a good point and
6 maybe we need some better outreach that explains the
7 limitations of the data. Of course everyone around
8 here obviously understands it very well and points it
9 out. I think if you look up the decision-making ladder
10 that we can -- we understand the data when we take it
11 to the flyway council and the flyway council
12 understands it when they take it to the Service
13 Regulations Committee.

14
15 So in terms of the decision-making
16 process I'm not sure there's a problem, but certainly
17 the perception and how people view this both within the
18 program and outside is important that they understand
19 these data when they become public. So maybe I'm
20 wrong, but it seems to me that if we continue with this
21 sampling strategy and harvest monitoring strategy that
22 we have sort of two places that we have to be
23 concerned. In the decision-making process I think
24 we're okay, but in terms of having people, the general
25 public, both users and people outside the system,
26 understanding it we could do better for outreach.

27
28 That's why hopefully the bullet points
29 will be not fine print somewhere, they'll be the things
30 people read because you go through and most people look
31 and they scan a few of these and go, huh, that's a big
32 number or that's a zero, right, and that's about it and
33 then you start wondering. Then if that leads you to
34 the other little discussion points, that's I think our
35 vehicle for doing that right now. And that puts it
36 back on us, right, to make sure that information gets
37 in there.

38
39 Anything else. I always love the
40 harvest survey discussions. It's not an easy problem.
41 You got something, Roland?

42
43 MR. WHITE: I don't know if this is
44 appropriate to bring up, but with my comment there was
45 an answer that funding is always the downfall for not
46 having certain villages being surveyed. I don't think
47 that should be a concern. I know it's a concern, but I
48 don't think it should be a concern due to the fact what
49 Taqulik just mentioned. There's individuals out there

50

1 that can look at this survey information and perceive
2 it a different way because a picture has 1,000 meanings
3 and this actually is a picture and it's got 1,000
4 different meanings.

5
6 Then on top of that the other thing --
7 the reason why I said I hope this is not inappropriate
8 to bring up. For instance, on the YK Delta during the
9 salmon runs, primarily with chinook when they come in,
10 the Fish and Wildlife Service brings in hundreds of
11 employees not from our region but from different
12 regions outside of Alaska as well as inside Alaska to
13 enforce the law that is mandated for our region not to
14 go out fishing for chinook. These individuals have so
15 many different camps up and down the Kuskokwim with at
16 least three employees per camp, at the most five. If
17 that is the case, why is more money allocated to the
18 fishing portion of the Fish and Wildlife Service
19 instead of the Migratory Bird segment?

20
21 CHAIRMAN DALE: Eric.

22
23 DR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
24 Roland, I can't comment on the funding level that law
25 enforcement uses to monitor salmon take on the Yukon-
26 Kuskokwim Delta. In terms of our funding for the
27 migratory bird survey, every year it's around 150,000
28 plus an additional 100,000 that we give to the
29 Department of Fish and Game to help offset Liliana's
30 study. So each year it's about \$250,000 to implement
31 this survey.

32
33 As Lili mentioned, we contracted with
34 Colorado State University with three individuals there
35 and I think -- Lili, correct me if I'm wrong, but it
36 was like a two to three-year process, is that right?

37
38 MS. NAVES: Uh-huh (affirmative).

39
40 DR. TAYLOR: So we had a Harvest Survey
41 Committee that was comprised of representatives from
42 the Department of Fish and Game, Fish and Wildlife
43 Service and the Native Caucus. As Lili correctly
44 described, no survey can meet everyone's expectations.
45 There was a long discussion and probably one of the
46 most tough discussions are what are the objectives of
47 this survey.

48
49 Some folks wanted regional reports.

50

1 For example, you might say, gosh, I want a really good
2 estimate for the YK Delta. I don't really care about
3 Cyrus, but by gosh I want mine. Then others might say,
4 no, you know, a total state estimate. We want everyone
5 to know overall that migratory birds are important to
6 all residents of the state of Alaska and that's
7 ultimately where we fell.

8
9 We ultimately fell -- like Lili said,
10 we picked five regions and those five regions represent
11 about 90 percent of the harvest of migratory birds
12 during spring and summer for the state of Alaska.
13 Unfortunately, folks like Cyrus and Peter, you know,
14 those regions are not surveyed, but as Lili and Jim
15 mentioned we do have substantive amount of data that
16 show migratory birds are important to those residents.

17
18 So ultimately I can't answer your
19 question how much funding the law enforcement puts into
20 salmon monitoring. We felt like this was the amount of
21 funds that we could provide toward a survey relative to
22 its objectives. Ideally, like Lili said, hopefully it
23 meets most people's objectives.

24
25 Thank you.

26
27 CHAIRMAN DALE: I guess I would add
28 that you know how the Service or how the Department of
29 Fish and Game, State of Alaska, distributes its money
30 relative to AMBCC and other competing programs that is
31 something that this body can influence. As you note
32 under Tab 1 there, the trip report of the Executive
33 Director to the Alaska Migratory Bird Co-Management
34 Council visited with the Congressional Delegation,
35 asked for support for this program. The entities in
36 this room, you know, if they care and believe that to
37 be true should do that as well.

38
39 The State of Alaska, first off, with
40 the new administration, one of our priorities and
41 through every communication with the Interior and the
42 new administration has prioritized AMBCC funding as
43 being important. We think this is a place that Alaska
44 Natives, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the
45 State of Alaska work actually very well together. It's
46 not broken. It needs more money if anything, but
47 that's how those priorities change.

48
49 There's other groups that think

50

1 enforcement may be the most important conservation
2 tool, but it is an important conservation tool and
3 there will be people arguing for those efforts to
4 continue or increase people more interested in fish
5 than waterfowl, migratory birds. There's a lot of
6 competing interests out there. Climate change, you
7 name it. So the way that that is influenced is by
8 communicating to the decision-makers who have control
9 over the bigger budgets.

10

11 So, Lili.

12

13 MS. NAVES: Moving down the list on
14 item (c) that's just an update that the household
15 registration and mail-out survey were completed for the
16 Cordova 2017 harvest. One novelty there on 2017 is
17 that two communities were added to the process. Now
18 Tatitlek and Chenega were added to Cordova.
19 Participation on that survey was good. This year I
20 think 28 households registered and 21 returned their
21 mail-out survey, so we're around 80 percent
22 participation. That's super good.

23

24 The results of this survey are reported
25 in the regular annual AMBCC survey. So besides the
26 five regions that are surveyed with the in-person
27 survey, there are also tables for the Cordova and now
28 Tatitlek and Chenega that are surveyed for their spring
29 hunt through the mail-out survey.

30

31 Item number (d). I was invited to
32 attend the Yakutat Tern Festival this year and make a
33 presentation about the harvest of birds and eggs, the
34 subsistence harvest. I did this presentation there.
35 That was in early June and it was very interesting
36 because it was a very new audience. It's not people
37 that usually I go to talk with. Southwest Alaska has
38 not participated much in the AMBCC, so it was a great
39 opportunity to talk about the bird and egg harvest and
40 emphasize harvest of seabirds because that was the Tern
41 Festival.

42

43 I think that was moving in the right
44 direction in terms of outreach and communication and
45 establishing relationships with partners in other
46 regions of the state.

47

48 Down to item (e). This is the heads up
49 data paper was released in midyear this year about what
50

1 you learned from our experience with the Yellow-billed
2 Loon. This is an article that I co-authored with
3 Tamara that we worked together with the harvest surveys
4 and the bird counts in St. Lawrence Island in 2011 and
5 2012.

6
7 There are three reports that came out
8 of those harvest surveys and bird counts, but I felt
9 that was important to summarize all this in a shorter
10 document that is easily accessible and also that could
11 reach other public including managers and people in
12 universities. So that was published as a peer review
13 paper.

14
15 The main objective was to highlight
16 what you learned through this process. We'd go out and
17 do some unusual data and then how you handle it and
18 what you learned for this process. For instance this
19 whole process really increased lots of awareness about
20 the species identification in harvest surveys. As we
21 were talking at the work session, the sport hunt
22 survey, the HIP survey has a parts survey that collect
23 tails and wings to define their species composition.
24 We don't have that component in our survey, so what are
25 the consequences of that.

26
27 So I think that putting those things
28 together it's time consuming and take a while because
29 we did those studies in 2011 and only now the article
30 is out. The reports were out much before, but putting
31 the article together there's a much longer process of
32 review that goes together.

33
34 But I think that is the direction that
35 is important for our harvest survey to invest in in
36 terms of increasing awareness about the AMBCC, about
37 the survey program and building credibility on our work
38 because this peer review research they have a bunch of
39 other professionals that look at that.

40
41 So the standard in scientific research
42 is that when you produce a peer review of the research
43 this means that there are other professionals in the
44 area that are in agreement with what you are doing and
45 they don't see major flaws in that. So this is
46 something that I think we need to keep doing.

47
48 CHAIRMAN DALE: Eric.
49
50

1 DR. TAYLOR: I just want to take this
2 opportunity to really commend Lili and Tamara. Lili
3 glossed over it pretty quickly, but the peer review
4 process to publish a paper in a scientific journal is
5 probably one of the most rigorous processes that a
6 scientist or a biologist can go through. Indeed, as
7 Lili mentioned, the paper that's in your binder went
8 through a pretty rigorous review by all sorts of other
9 individuals in terms of survey, scientist, biologist,
10 from social scientist and others that looked at this
11 very closely.

12
13 As Lili mentioned, the real advantage
14 of publishing a paper like this is it gets out to an
15 audience not only in Alaska but throughout the entire
16 world because this publication is assessable via the
17 internet and that's really important in terms of
18 demonstrating the importance of subsistence and
19 cultural and traditional uses of migratory birds to
20 others.

21
22 Again, as Lili mentioned, it's not an
23 easy process to go through. It's very time consuming,
24 but it's also very rewarding. It speaks very highly to
25 Lili's credibility as a scientist.

26
27 MS. HEPA: Congratulations.

28
29 MS. NAVES: I'll correct Eric that it
30 speaks really highly to the Harvest Assessment Program
31 of the Alaska Migratory Bird Co-Management Council.

32
33 This year we released another peer
34 reviewed article on the conversion factors for the
35 birds and eggs. This is a really good work conducted
36 by the program too and we are en route to have a third
37 one released this year on a summary for the harvest of
38 seabirds. There is work ongoing now to have such a
39 product for harvest of shorebirds. So it's time
40 demanding and this happens in the background of our
41 meetings here, but it's worth time invested I think.

42
43 CHAIRMAN DALE: Lili, I'd like to
44 interrupt just to say that I certainly echo Eric's
45 expression of appreciation. I think the other thing
46 that got glossed over a little bit in this presentation
47 is the importance of this work on Yellow-billed Loons.
48 This not long ago was a species that could have easily
49 ended up on the endangered species list. One of the

50

1 threats to it was take by humans.

2

3 It was very important to the population
4 the work that was done, the demographics assessing just
5 what was out there for Yellow-billed Loons as well as
6 evaluating take in this innovative paper. It put it
7 into a perspective where your ability to take loons and
8 look-alike species and hunt in areas where these
9 species exist has been now protected and that is a very
10 important
11 component of this work.

12

13 In other places there's habitats that
14 people used to hunt and gather and this is the Lower
15 48, but they can no longer go because they might
16 disturb an endangered species. So getting ahead and
17 keeping these species common, identifying that they're
18 not in jeopardy is very important and then putting good
19 realistic assessment of the harvest and the lack of
20 impact of that harvest has basically ensured our
21 ability to continue this customary and traditional
22 activity.

23

24 So thanks for that.

25

26 MS. NAVES: So moving to item (f). Jim
27 Fall and I, we assessed the Sun'aq Tribe designing
28 their survey for public input on the road closure. If
29 you ask technical assistance on this kind of thing, we
30 are happy to provide.

31

32 Moving to ongoing and upcoming work.
33 Item number (a), I already talked a little bit about
34 this. This is the seabird harvest estimates. I
35 completed the review again and submitted the paper
36 again for publication. I already did a couple of
37 presentations at the AMBCC about this data, so it's not
38 a new business. As I said, the publication process is
39 a little usually behind just because of the review
40 process takes a long time.

41

42 Item number (b) there. It's a brief
43 update on the project about harvest and local
44 traditional knowledge about the shorebirds in Alaska.
45 So this project is funded by NFWF. It's a grant from
46 NFWF and we use State matching funds for that, so it's
47 really great to be able to leverage other fundings to
48 the project.

49

50

1 We completed interviews in Quinhagak,
2 Toksook Bay and Platinum last spring and this winter we
3 already have village consent to do interviews in Hooper
4 Bay and Bethel and we are hoping to add two more
5 communities to the set of communities included for the
6 interviews pending village consent.

7
8 So this project has three components.
9 One is a big overview of the harvest data for Alaska
10 and this involves data already available in the AMBCC
11 database and data from the Community Subsistence
12 Information System similar to what I did to the
13 seabirds. I put all this data together and you have
14 about 500 communities. This is harvest data that's
15 difficult to deal with because those are species that
16 are taken in small numbers and there's lots of species
17 identification issues. So for the harvest assessment
18 part it's all previously collected data.

19
20 The other component of this project is
21 local traditional knowledge about interviews and those
22 are the interview -- the new data collection part. In
23 the interviews I'm focusing on ethnotaxonomy. This
24 means how local people lump shorebirds, how the local
25 names use it and also how those birds are important to
26 people, how they're used in the past, how they're used
27 nowadays.

28
29 The third part of the project is
30 outreach and communication. When everything is said and
31 done and I have a better understanding of how these
32 birds are important for people, how the Native names
33 work, to summarize all this and put in a short kind of
34 format, one-page format, that can be brought back to
35 the communities.

36
37 So the interviews are -- oh, the
38 harvest data analysis for the whole state, for the
39 interview parts, we're focusing on the YK Delta because
40 there's lots of shorebirds there. So this is how we
41 were on this project. For our partners in the YK Delta
42 if you think that there is any way that you can help us
43 with communication with the communities, I would really
44 appreciate that because this is a project that's a
45 little bit more difficult to present for the
46 communities because the shorebirds are not the main
47 subsistence resource.

48
49 So when coming to a community you have
50

1 really to craft the language and making the
2 relationships to explain why you're interested in doing
3 this study there if it's not the main subsistence
4 resource. So when going for this project we knew it
5 was going to be a little bit more difficult than doing
6 a salmon project for instance, but we're doing the best
7 we can.

8
9 MS. HEPA: I'm just curious, Mr. Chair.
10 This is separate from the harvest survey and where does
11 the funding come from this?

12
13 MS. NAVES: So the Harvest Assessment
14 Program has two components. One component it's the
15 regular annual surveys and that is the regular funds
16 that you have from the Fish and Wildlife Service and
17 ADF&G. This goes every year. Besides the annual
18 survey we also do special topic projects that are
19 projects that address pressing management issues. So,
20 for instance, the Yellow-billed Loon was a special
21 project. The seabirds was a special project. For the
22 shorebirds I got a grant from NFWF.

23
24 MS. HEPA: Oh, you mentioned that.

25
26 MS. NAVES: Yeah. I can see there is
27 another special project that I have been working on
28 with the Division of Wildlife Conservation on Fish and
29 Game. There is lots of interest in terns nowadays.
30 There are some indication that tern numbers are going
31 down and the original representatives have also
32 reported that at the AMBCC in recent years on their
33 regional reports. So there's lots of interest now on
34 what's going on with terns.

35
36 The Division of Wildlife Conservation
37 is working on that tagging program. Now there is new
38 satellite tag that's 2 grams. It's in test phase yet,
39 but they're using those little tiny tags on terns and
40 they're getting for the first time data on where
41 Aleutian Terns are going.

42
43 Also it's important to collect data
44 during the breeding season because the terns are very
45 finicky. They move a lot from a place to another and
46 that interferes with the ability of counting terns
47 because a colony exists here today and next week maybe
48 they move to another place.

49
50

1 So with the tagging data they're trying
2 to understand movements during the breeding season, but
3 also to come with a better way of counting terns, but
4 also the tags live long enough that is providing that
5 about the migration and the wintering grounds. Those
6 terns winter in the Indonesian area there.

7
8 So this is all new information and it's
9 a very interesting thing to know that maybe can help
10 explain what's going on with the terns. So together
11 with this satellite tagging component there was
12 interest in developing local traditional knowledge
13 about this project to know what local people know about
14 these birds.

15
16 So we started doing interviews in
17 Platinum and I did interview there this spring at the
18 same time that the biologists who were doing the
19 tagging study. So we are working on transcribing and
20 summarizing those interviews now. There is interest in
21 expanding this project to other parts of Alaska, so
22 let's see how that goes. Funding for that project is
23 coming from the Division of Wildlife Conservation.

24
25 CHAIRMAN DALE: I see them chomping at
26 the bit there. Peter probably wants to be involved in
27 that and volunteer for that study because he knows the
28 friendly terns. He's very fond of them.

29
30 MR. DEVINE: Well, why the terns? I
31 mean it's like -- you know, it's not something we
32 consume in our area. I don't know if you guys consume
33 in your areas, but we don't consume the terns, Arctic
34 or the other ones. We do eat herring gull eggs. But I
35 mean terns and them other ones are vicious birds. We
36 don't like to play with them. We may have
37 inadvertently eaten one, you know, thinking we were
38 getting a -- but, no, we haven't because the herring
39 gulls lay in bluffs, so it's not like going to a nest.

40
41
42 I mean with the lack of dollars
43 wouldn't it have been better to put the tag in a goose
44 and see where they're going?

45
46 CHAIRMAN DALE: This goes back to what
47 I was talking about before with the loons. These
48 populations there's concern, but we don't know how much
49 concern there should be. For example, we don't know if

50

1 they're just moving around or if there really are fewer
2 numbers. If there's concerns that we can deal with, we
3 would deal with them to keep the species common because
4 if it becomes on the Endangered Species List, then
5 there will be prohibitions on take in areas where terns
6 are.

7
8 So even if you're not targeting terns,
9 there could be prohibitions on take, there could be
10 prohibitions on disturbance. There might be
11 prohibitions on industry, the nearshore fisheries. You
12 never know once they start getting on a list and
13 demarking critical habitat where there would be
14 prohibitions on taking and disturbing. So it's
15 important on these species to make sure that they stay
16 common.

17
18 You know, as friendly as they are, they
19 do have an important function in the ecosystem and
20 besides that, you know, we do have the Endangered
21 Species Act, which is a good act. So that's why terns.
22 I don't know if it's a satisfactory answer or not, but
23 that is why terns.

24
25 MS. NAVES: With this LTK we're really
26 not looking at the harvest of terns. There's already
27 data available for that. So the statewide harvest of
28 terns, the birds themselves, is about between 60 and 70
29 birds a year. It's nothing. But the harvest of tern
30 eggs is widespread. It's reported by all coastal
31 regions and the estimate is between four and five
32 thousand eggs a year.

33
34 Considering the numbers that are
35 available for the terns in coastal areas, this may be
36 substantial, but with all the questions about the
37 numbers of how many terns are indeed out there, so it's
38 really difficult to say anything at this time.

39
40 But the intent of including a local
41 traditional knowledge component there together with the
42 biological data is because terns are really difficult
43 to study. There's lots of data gaps. Aleutian Terns
44 are more in the coastal areas, but Arctic Terns also
45 breed in Interior areas and there's no information at
46 all about the colonies in Interior, where they are, how
47 many they are, how big they are.

48
49 The one idea as this project expands to
50

1 include the more and more local traditional knowledge
2 and have people that have been living in these areas
3 sharing this environment with terns since a long time
4 they probably know things about terns and just to unite
5 efforts and see what biological research and indigenous
6 knowledge can come together and help in the long-term
7 sustainability of this resource that we know is dear to
8 subsistence users. Not for the bird harvest, but for
9 the egg harvest. So this is why I have been involved
10 with this project.

11

12 Questions before moving to the next
13 one.

14

15 (No comments)

16

17 MS. NAVES: So item (d) there under
18 ongoing and upcoming work is that we're trying to get
19 into the phase II of the online access to the harvest
20 estimates. It's currently down. There is a problem
21 with the website. We are taking this as an advantage
22 to move into phase II. That will be to expand the time
23 window that's available there.

24

25 Currently you have only the AMBCC data
26 there, but the idea is to expand it to also include
27 harvest from the goose management surveys going back to
28 the '80s in the YK Delta and back to the '90s into
29 Bristol Bay. So have the whole full window of time
30 there, the time span that's covered by this data.
31 That's all part of making data more available, more
32 accessible and hopefully more usable too.

33

34 I think that was it.

35

36 CHAIRMAN DALE: All right. Any
37 questions for Lili. It's pretty good timing.

38

39 (No comments)

40

41 CHAIRMAN DALE: Okay. Any other sort
42 of miscellaneous messages or anything. Thanks for the
43 good discussion today so far. Let's take a break for
44 lunch and come back at 1:30 and get started right back
45 after it.

46

47 (Off record)

48

49 (On record)

50

1 CHAIRMAN DALE: Okay, everybody, let's
2 get started here. Next up we continue on with old
3 business. Council committees. Todd, are you ready for
4 handicrafts?

5
6 MR. SFORMO: Sure.

7
8 CHAIRMAN DALE: Just let the record
9 show that Coral is here. Coral, would you introduce
10 yourself, please.

11
12 MS. CHERNOFF: I'm Coral Chernoff from
13 Kodiak. I'm the alternate rep for Kodiak AMBCC.

14
15 CHAIRMAN DALE: All right. Welcome,
16 Coral.

17
18 (Connecting teleconference)

19
20 CHAIRMAN DALE: Okay, Todd, it's all
21 yours.

22
23 MR. SFORMO: Thanks. Todd Sformo,
24 North Slope Borough. On Tuesday we had a Handicraft
25 Committee meeting. There we, of course, kind of
26 congratulated ourselves in helping to amend the
27 permanent migratory bird subsistence harvest
28 regulations in Alaska and help in getting the published
29 ruling in the Federal record on the 24th of July and
30 it's now enacted beginning on the 23rd of August, 2017.
31 So about one month or so.

32
33 The ruling, as most people know, of
34 course, allows for the sale of handicraft with
35 nonedible migratory bird parts taken for nutritional
36 purposes during the spring/summer hunt. It has
37 currently 27 species. Those can be found at the end of
38 the Federal Register article at the back of Tab 3 if
39 you'd like to see those.

40
41 Since that's kind of a milestone I just
42 thought I'd make just a few observations on the
43 committee. I think one of the reasons for the success
44 of this committee was that we had a lot of active
45 participation by many of the members. One reason for
46 that is that we had frequent teleconferences,
47 especially right after this AMBCC meeting.

48
49 So that kind of allowed us to kind of

50

1 carry over the momentum and have a certain amount of
2 continuity. We had lots of those meetings, so people
3 were really willing to discuss kind of over and over
4 again until the point where we were able to make a lot
5 of frank and direct comments. Down to things like I
6 can't live with this or I can live with this.

7
8 One example I think of that is I think
9 a number of people felt there was an insistence on
10 using the Silver Hand Program as the way of making a --
11 kind of a certifying of Native artists. We didn't
12 really know how many Native artists felt that that was
13 important or not. So we had Brandon do kind of an
14 informal poll at times just to see. The answers
15 varied, so some Native artists were already in it.
16 Others thought maybe and others were just dead set
17 against it as another hurdle that they had to get
18 through.

19
20 When we presented that kind of
21 information, even though it was just qualitative to
22 other members of the Handicraft Committee, like Law
23 Enforcement, they were willing also to look at what
24 they could live with or not. Up to that point I think
25 the whole group felt like we needed to come up with one
26 single certifying way of doing things.

27
28 What we found was that we were willing
29 to have maybe a little bit more cumbersome
30 certification by having two or three different forms of
31 certifying the work of art. That it was an authentic
32 work of art by a Native artist. That was a big hurdle.
33 It may not seem like that, but the idea that we needed
34 one single way of doing it kind of was a breakthrough
35 that we didn't need to do it one single way.

36
37 So those were just the observations.
38 On Tuesday we asked whether the committee needed to
39 continue and they would like it to continue for a
40 number of issues that we willingly put aside or new
41 issues that are coming up. One is the number of
42 species. We'd like to obviously increase the number of
43 species for nonedible parts for works of art.

44
45 Currently the Fish and Wildlife Service
46 is pursuing that through negotiations with the
47 Japanese. So a number of very specific questions came
48 up regarding those negotiations. One is what's the
49 status of those negotiations. When do they take place.

50

1 Do those kind of changes -- are those kinds of changes
2 if more species can be added to this list of 27, does
3 that constitute a treaty change or, if not, how is that
4 defined, what are the specific terms for that because
5 maybe there's other ways of -- I shouldn't say amending
6 treaties, but -- I don't even know how to describe it.
7 So that came up as a detail we'd like to know more
8 about.

9
10 The bigger thing was though that we had
11 to ask those questions anyway. That was because we
12 feel that there's really a lack of participation by
13 either committee members or the Native Caucus in these
14 further negotiations. It wasn't just for this
15 committee but for other committees around the AMBCC.
16 So our committee though would like to have more active
17 participation in these negotiations, access to
18 individuals or groups that are doing these negotiations
19 and access to the situations in which they're taking
20 place.

21
22 I think this follows at a pretty good
23 time because of Eric's talking about the reevaluation
24 of the Fish and Wildlife Service. One of the key things
25 he mentioned was that they were trying to do a better
26 job at addressing partners' concerns by increasing
27 transparency, defensible actions and helping partners
28 staying engaged. So I think with those -- you could
29 fulfill a number of those kind of goals for the Fish
30 and Wildlife by having more active participation in
31 dealings outside of the AMBCC.

32
33 It was also brought up that if that
34 can't be done, that there would be maybe possible
35 things that the committee could help do and that would
36 be to maybe enlist other tribal or government-to-
37 government consultations and actually have maybe tribes
38 try to consult with the State Department itself. Not
39 exactly bypassing AMBCC, but to a certain extent,
40 enlisting the help of the Inuit Circumpolar Council in
41 helping the committee participate more. Then also
42 maybe pursuing Senator Sullivan's proposals for further
43 addition of birds.

44
45 Let's see. I think there were just two
46 more things. During the entire Handicraft Committee
47 meetings we realized that dealing at an international
48 level was going to be just too difficult at this point,
49 so we put that aside. Some members would like to look
50

1 at that again. Not necessarily with the idea that we
2 could actually pursue that, but we'd like to just
3 revisit, see what the problems are and see if there's a
4 different take or a different angle we could look at.

5
6 In the Federal Register there was also
7 mention of a letter of concurrence on the 29th of
8 December 2015 and that was related to like a Section 7
9 consultation, but it was a letter. So I don't think
10 anybody in the committee knows about that, so it would
11 be nice just to get a copy just so we understand what
12 else had to be done, so we could see it and read it.

13
14 Then finally Coral had a number of real
15 specific questions and I'll try to summarize them, but
16 she's here so she can also correct me. One was that if
17 a teacher is now engaged -- being paid by let's say a
18 college, teaching a class with the use of traditional
19 handicrafts or traditional materials, does that person
20 being paid to do that constitute sale of handicraft.
21 We just weren't sure if that was a gray area or not.
22 Also if you have non-Natives in that class, they're
23 paying for the class, probably paying for materials, is
24 that a sale and if it is who signs the form.

25
26 So those were just very specific
27 questions, but you may have more or can summarize them
28 better. And anybody else in the committee if you have
29 additions or comments. Otherwise that's the report.

30
31 CHAIRMAN DALE: Thank you, Todd.
32 Taqulik.

33
34 MS. HEPA: Yeah, just on his last point
35 I think that's a really good point and I'm glad that
36 she did bring it up because at our local tribal college
37 that they do offer handicrafts class. Questions posed
38 to us whether it's marine mammals or migratory birds
39 are non-Alaska Natives able to participate in this
40 class because of the various different laws. I think
41 that's a gray area that needs to be clarified around
42 the state.

43
44 CHAIRMAN DALE: Thank you. Patty.

45
46 MS. SCHWALENBERG: I just wanted to
47 mention that I contacted the Office of Law Enforcement
48 and I believe Ryan Noel will be here tomorrow so he can
49 address any questions regarding the handicrafts at that

50

1 time.

2

3

Thank you.

4

5

CHAIRMAN DALE: Peter.

6

7

MR. DEVINE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I would like to see us pursue getting this list expanded because myself personally I make the Aleut Bentwood hats and I teach in the culture camp. Some of the species that I used, which is not on our list of 27, I utilize goose feathers, ptarmigan feathers, mallard feathers, Northern Pintail, butterball, so there's a whole -- I mean if we could get this to include the whole list of migratory birds instead of just the 27, that would be awesome.

17

18

Thank you.

19

20

21

CHAIRMAN DALE: It sure sounds like we need to keep that committee together and working. Roland.

22

23

24

25

26

27

MR. WHITE: Thank you. One other thing that was mentioned yesterday or a couple days ago was feathers that aren't really on the migratory list from -- what are they called, crows and eagles.....

28

29

CHAIRMAN DALE: Ravens.

30

31

32

33

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35

MR. WHITE: Ravens and eagles that these artists find on the ground. They pick them up and use them on their crafts and they were wondering if there's a possibility to incorporate those fallen feathers into their artifacts.

36

37

CHAIRMAN DALE: Todd.

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MR. SFORMO: You know, looking over the Federal Register article it does say that found parts or found objects cannot be used that way. So that is on Page 34266 on the third row of paragraphs there and it's the first full paragraph. So I forgot about that during the Tuesday meeting and just saw it now.

45

46

47

48

49

MS. HOSETH: Thank you and thank you for that report, Todd. Just for any treaty changes Natives definitely need to be involved with that. One thing is that when U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

50

1 travels across seas if our Executive Director can
2 accompany for any changes to do with any treaties or
3 any negotiations that are happening.

4
5 Also when solicitors ask questions,
6 they should be asking the questions to the Native
7 people to answer the questions if they do have any
8 questions. We don't need to have an interpreter or have
9 somebody speak for us. We can speak for ourselves if
10 they have any questions because they're not familiar
11 with our lifestyle.

12
13 CHAIRMAN DALE: Gloria.

14
15 MS. STICKWAN: On page -- was it that
16 form sale certificate, we can download that from the
17 U.S. Fish and Wildlife website. Is that possible?

18
19 CHAIRMAN DALE: Did you hear the
20 question, Eric or Todd? Do you know where we can get
21 the form?

22
23 MR. SFORMO: No, I don't know. It is
24 right there, that's true.

25
26 CHAIRMAN DALE: You probably can take
27 that one and Xerox it, I'm sure.

28
29 DR. TAYLOR: Excuse me. Eric Taylor.
30 Gloria, I don't, but we can ask Ryan Noel and get an
31 answer for you here by tomorrow.

32
33 CHAIRMAN DALE: Peter.

34
35 MR. DEVINE: Yeah, I see it says a form
36 number, but on the form that we have here there is no
37 numbers. No, I found it. It's at the bottom. Never
38 mind. But I guess my question would be, I mean when we
39 utilize this, can we photocopy it or just copy it off,
40 Xerox it and go from there?

41
42 CHAIRMAN DALE: Probably. Tamara.

43
44 MS. ZELLER: It's on page 2. It's on
45 the AMBCC website. You go to the bottom of page 2 and
46 you're next to the document. It tells you right there
47 where you can find it.

48
49 CHAIRMAN DALE: Thank you very much.

50

1 So it's on the AMBCC website you can find the form.
2 You'd think one of us would have known that.
3 Fortunately one did.

4
5 Okay. More questions for Todd.

6
7 (No comments)

8
9 CHAIRMAN DALE: You know, we all
10 congratulate you guys on a job well done.

11
12 MR. SFORMO: Well, it was a very good
13 committee, so that did it.

14
15 CHAIRMAN DALE: All right. Thanks.
16 Next up is Jason Schamber, Emperor Goose management
17 update. Tell us what you're going to tell us.

18
19 MR. SCHAMBER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
20 Jason Schamber, Alaska Department of Fish and Game. On
21 Tuesday the Emperor Goose Subcommittee met with the
22 intent of reviewing and getting updates on activities
23 that occurred since the last time the group met, which
24 was at the spring AMBCC meeting. There are no action
25 items for the Council to consider that came out of the
26 subcommittee at this time.

27
28 The primary focus of the review and
29 updates was the population status of Emperor Geese
30 based on the YK Delta coastal survey that was conducted
31 this last June and updates to the fall/winter hunt.
32 I'll be covering those materials in a forthcoming
33 PowerPoint presentation, which I believe is scheduled
34 for immediately after the committee reports. So I'd
35 like to defer discussion of those topics to that
36 PowerPoint presentation if I could.

37
38 So, for now that will conclude the
39 Emperor Goose Subcommittee report.

40
41 CHAIRMAN DALE: Okay. Questions on the
42 subcommittee's activities.

43
44 (No comments)

45
46 CHAIRMAN DALE: If not, we'll hear from
47 you in a minute then. Next we have up Mike with
48 harvest survey update on the Harvest Assessment
49 Program. Maybe we'll just go ahead and T up -- go

50

1 ahead, Taqulik.

2

3 MS. HEPA: No, I'm good.

4

5 CHAIRMAN DALE: Okay. I don't think
6 he's in that chair, is he?

7

8 MS. HEPA: There he is.

9

10 CHAIRMAN DALE: Mike always favors the
11 dramatic entrance.

12

13 (Laughter)

14

15 CHAIRMAN DALE: As do I. He's just
16 better at it.

17

18 MR. PEDERSON: Good afternoon. The
19 Harvest Survey Committee met on Tuesday afternoon. I
20 won't go into the details of the June 2017
21 teleconference we had. Liliana discussed some of that
22 today, so I'll just focus on our Tuesday meeting. We
23 did end up having a quorum.

24

25 We went through some of the things we
26 discussed in June such as the single we call household
27 visit. We adopted that as a standard. Strategies to
28 improve efficiency. Liliana went over that this
29 morning. Then we made a recommendation and a motion
30 for Colorado State University to review optimal
31 allocation of the sampling effort based on the 2017
32 survey results for summer 2018. This was because we
33 adjusted the 2017 survey based on the 2016 results. So
34 next summer's survey will be the new adjusted stuff as
35 identified and reported on by CSU in our June meeting.

36

37 We also talked about rarely harvested
38 species mostly relating to seabirds and shorebirds for
39 the survey. Some of the concerns that were raised was
40 whether that was in the budget to deal with, but it was
41 just going to be added information that will be on the
42 survey.

43

44 We formed a subcommittee to look at the
45 criteria to deal with that, so the subcommittee of the
46 Harvest Survey Committee will be meeting to deal with
47 that issue. There appears to be no management concerns
48 with seabirds or shorebirds at this time, so that is
49 the criteria that we will work out and bring back to

50

1 the full Harvest Survey Committee when that's done.

2

3 We also discussed the problems of doing
4 surveys in the larger communities such as with
5 commercial buildings, unoccupied buildings, abandoned
6 buildings, stuff like that, multiple apartment units
7 and how to deal with that issue. So Liliana will be
8 putting thoughts down on that and we'll discuss that
9 further down the road. As the 2017 survey progresses,
10 we'll probably identify some of those types of issues
11 more better I guess is the word.

12

13 And then we talked about outreach and
14 communication and how to understand harvest surveys,
15 getting back to what Taqulik had mentioned in her
16 regional report about bullet points on exactly what the
17 survey will be doing. So Liliana had started putting
18 some stuff down on how we can better inform the public
19 about the harvest survey that we're doing.

20

21 We also discussed a workshop that may
22 be upcoming to discuss harvest surveys. I believe
23 Jason or maybe Chuck from the Service had more
24 information on doing something like that maybe during
25 AFN. Just on ways of how to inform the public much
26 more better of what the harvest survey is all about. I
27 don't know if Liliana or Jim would want to add
28 anything, Chuck.

29

30 (No comments)

31

32 So that's my report.

33

34 CHAIRMAN DALE: Thanks for that report,
35 Mike. Any questions for Mike. Eric.

36

37 DR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
38 Mike, could you clarify -- you mentioned that the
39 committee is looking at -- and I apologize for not
40 making the meeting. I did make sure Chuck Frost was
41 there. Can you clarify that the committee is
42 considering using the present survey to estimate rarely
43 harvested species.

44

45 MR. PEDERSON: We're going to look at
46 the criteria for the use of rarely harvested species on
47 the survey and the subcommittee will come up with some
48 action items regarding that.

49

50

1 DR. TAYLOR: Okay. My concern is that
2 the survey really wasn't designed to do that. The
3 survey was designed to estimate the total harvest for
4 the state. We discussed this earlier when we had the
5 deliberations with Colorado State. So my concern is,
6 you know, the problem with looking at rarely harvested
7 species is that the estimates can be way off. Just
8 like Bruce said about Yellow-billed Loons. So my
9 concern is we should give that some really serious
10 thought before going down that road to make sure that
11 the criteria that you talked about we think about that.

12
13 MR. PEDERSON: Yeah, that's why we
14 formed a subcommittee to look at exactly what you just
15 said. We argued these aspects on Tuesday as well.

16
17 CHAIRMAN DALE: I share Eric's concern.
18 You know, the numbers could be bad and used in a poor
19 way, but I think it is important to document the
20 continued use. So maybe that should be more of an
21 objective rather than to estimate actual take rather
22 just to document that there is continued use of these
23 rarely taken species. As you go forward see if that
24 satisfies most of the need for looking at that. That
25 would be my suggestion for your subcommittee.

26
27 MR. PEDERSON: Well, if either one of
28 you were there, we would have saved a lot of time.

29
30 (Laughter)

31
32 MR. PEDERSON: But thank you for your
33 comments.

34
35 CHAIRMAN DALE: Touche.

36
37 (Laughter)

38
39 CHAIRMAN DALE: Brandon.

40
41 MR. AHMASUK: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
42 Brandon Ahmasuk. As you mentioned, it potentially
43 could be used against us, but that was one of the
44 concerns as you brought up like with the Yellow-billed
45 Loon. Back when that first came about there was a
46 known harvest of Yellow-billed Loons and when that came
47 about the finger pointing started. Because we know
48 there's a harvest, but the species is on the ESA list
49 as threatened, that's who we're going to target because
50

1 that's the known harvest. So law enforcement showed up
2 at St. Lawrence Island. We know there's a known
3 harvest out here so we're out here to give citations.
4 True, no citations were given, but that was the
5 mentality at the time.

6
7 Like Mike said, that's why a
8 subcommittee was suggested to root through all this and
9 try to come up with the best way forward.

10
11 CHAIRMAN DALE: Okay. That sounds like
12 a good approach. What resolved the Yellow-billed Loon
13 issue was the study that Lilian and Tamara did so you
14 can focus it on the species where we do have this
15 intersection between use and take by Alaska Natives and
16 other folks in the included areas and some evidence of
17 population decline or alleged population decline or
18 some other concern. So then we can focus on that
19 species, but to try and estimate for all the rarely
20 taken species, good luck with that. We don't even do a
21 very good job on the ones that we shoot thousands of.

22
23 Okay. Anything else. That was a good
24 report.

25
26 (No comments)

27
28 CHAIRMAN DALE: Next we go to Jason and
29 update on the Emperor Goose fall hunt.

30
31 MR. SCHAMBER: Jason Schamber, Alaska
32 Department of Fish and Game. I'll be providing an
33 update to the fall/winter hunt. As I mentioned before
34 in the subcommittee report, this is material that was
35 covered during that meeting.

36
37 I'll just provide a brief background on
38 the fall/winter hunt itself to orient the group and
39 provide a frame of reference for the update itself. So
40 there's 1,000 birds available to harvest statewide for
41 the fall/winter hunt and this hunt is administered as a
42 registration permit hunt. Each permit allows a hunter
43 one Emperor Goose per season. This is open this year
44 for Alaska residents only. The registration permits
45 are available either online at the website you see here
46 at Department of Fish and Game
47 offices around the state or in many coastal villages
48 where Emperor Geese are hunted.

49
50

1 There are seven hunt areas that have
2 been defined throughout the range of Emperor Geese and
3 these are defined by Alaska Fish and Game Game
4 Management Units as well as the Izembek State Game
5 Refuge and that's that black box in the Alaska
6 Peninsula that you see there with the exploded view of
7 the defined boundary for the State Game Refuge there in
8 the lower right corner.

9
10 The season dates are variable across
11 these seven hunt areas. Four of the seven are already
12 currently open, so they opened on September 1st. The
13 remaining three will open in October. Each hunt area
14 has an individual harvest quota and all of these sum up
15 to the 1,000 bird statewide quota.

16
17 So the northern regions each have 125
18 birds allowable as well as the Izembek State Game
19 Refuge. Bristol Bay area has 150 and then the
20 Aleutians and Kodiak each have 175 birds allowable.
21 Once these quotas are met the hunt areas will be closed
22 by emergency order.

23
24 We can track the harvest to close the
25 hunts because there's a mandatory reporting requirement
26 associated with these registration permits. For most
27 areas it's a three-day reporting requirement from the
28 date of kill, but in Izembek State Game Refuge in
29 Kodiak it's a 24-hour reporting period.

30
31 Hunters can report either through a 1-
32 800 number that comes to our office and there's a
33 message set up that hunters can leave their specific
34 information or hunters can go online to hunt.alaska.gov
35 and also report.

36
37 This is the update portion of the
38 fall/winter hunt. The hunt itself was prefaced by a
39 fairly considerable outreach effort to get the word out
40 and the details of the fall/winter hunt. That was
41 orchestrated largely by Tamara Zeller of Fish and
42 Wildlife Service, Migratory Bird Management.

43
44 A couple products that came out of that
45 outreach effort was a one-page flyer that was sent to a
46 number of box holders in coastal villages in each of
47 the hunt areas as well as a two-page flyer that was
48 sent around to the tribes, tribal councils and various
49 parts of the Fish and Wildlife Service Emperor Goose

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1 outreach team.

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There are copies of those one and two-page flyers on the back table. So I would encourage folks to grab one of those and we would welcome any input that anybody has, any improvements that we can make for next season to help get the word out about this hunt.

We also put out radio PSAs. Tyler Lewis, who is in our shop, helped with that considerably in six of the hub villages. Those included Kotzebue, Nome, Bethel, Dillingham. Those played about a week to 10 days prior to the hunt opening in those areas. They were a 45-second spot that crammed as many details about the fall hunt as possible into that short PSA. Then Kodiak City and Unalaska will also be airing the PSA for about a week prior to their hunt opening next month.

In addition, we sent the one-page flyer that went to the box holders to post offices as well in 70 rural villages to advertise outside of the post office itself on bulletin boards to help get the word out as well. The post office is a fairly frequented area in the villages. And then ADF&G released a press release, so this went out to various newspapers and radio stations that have done various articles on the fall hunt itself.

With regard to the actual permits themselves, they went online in July. July 5th I believe they were available online. We also distributed a number of paper copy permits to 47 coastal villages in the hunt areas and those also were available in July. They will be available both in the villages and online until the hunt areas are either closed or the season dates end.

So to date we've had 193 online permits obtained. The paper copy permits we're not clear on how many have been distributed thus far. We plan to make a call to the vendors in November and get a tally from them of how many have been distributed to date. We'll have a final tally at the end of the season when they return that information to our office.

Thus far as of this morning we've received 15 harvest reports of Emperor Geese being

1 harvested and all of those have come from Unit 9.

2

3 So this is a graph of the population
4 status of Emperor Geese and the trend over the last 30-
5 some years. This is based on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta
6 Coastal Zone Survey that the Fish and Wildlife Service,
7 Migratory Bird Management Region 7 shop is conducting
8 annually. The last survey was conducted in early June
9 of this year. The estimate was 30,000 geese, which is
10 a bit lower than last year's estimate of 34,000, which
11 was set as the population objective.

12

13 We're still above any of the population
14 harvest thresholds that were set in place, the 28,000
15 and 23,000. As I mentioned yesterday actually during
16 the work meeting the regulations will be unchanged for
17 the spring/summer and fall/winter harvest in 2018. So
18 the regulations will be the same as they were this
19 year.

20

21 As many of you know there was a non-
22 resident hunt that was approved by the Board of Game
23 earlier this year in January. That hunt will take
24 place next year, so it's allowable in fall of 2018. It
25 is a draw permit hunt. Non-resident hunters can apply
26 for a draw permit starting November 1st of this year.
27 That open period extends to December 15th.

28

29 The draw permits will be awarded next
30 February for non-resident hunters to participate in the
31 fall harvest of 2018. There will be 25 draw permits
32 awarded and those are allowable for hunting in Units 8,
33 9, which includes the Izembek State Game Refuge, and
34 Unit 10.

35

36 This hunt will be administered as a
37 single hunt area, which is a bit different than the
38 resident hunt. The single hunt area will include these
39 four resident hunt areas, but they will be considered
40 zones within that single hunt area. This allows us to
41 administer a single permit for the hunt area, but the
42 non-resident hunters have the flexibility of hunting in
43 each of the four zones provided they are still open and
44 haven't been closed by emergency order.

45

46 By having four zones within a single
47 hunt area it also allows those zones to have different
48 hunt conditions. Those hunt conditions will be the
49 same as the resident hunt areas. So, for example,

50

1 Kodiak will have the same season dates in the
2 non-resident zones as the resident hunt area of Kodiak.
3 The same harvest quota as well. So once that quota is
4 met we can close the hunt area, the resident hunt area
5 and the non-resident zone by emergency order whether
6 non-resident/resident reporting occurs or just from
7 resident reporting.

8
9 I think that's all I had. You can
10 advance it one more, the slide. That's just my
11 information. If anybody has any questions or concerns
12 to follow up after the meeting, they're more than
13 welcome to give me a call at the office or email me and
14 we can discuss it.

15
16 Thank you.

17
18 CHAIRMAN DALE: Okay. Good report.
19 Thanks, Jason. Questions for Jason. Brandon.

20
21 MR. AHMASUK: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
22 Brandon Ahmasuk. I don't think it's any secret that
23 the regions did not want the non-resident hunt. When
24 this all came about, it was to open the subsistence
25 harvest for Emperor Geese. My understanding when the
26 Service was first considering this it was for basically
27 Alaska residents only. Correct me if I'm wrong, but
28 that was my understanding.

29
30 It's also my understanding that the
31 State does have management authority but they have not
32 been given the authority to make it more liberal. They
33 can only make it more restrictive. So the point I'm
34 trying to make is you're giving out these -- yeah, it's
35 only 25, but in a perfect storm if all 25 went to just
36 say Kodiak, that takes away from their quota. So in my
37 mind you've essentially -- the State of Alaska has
38 liberalized it, but it's my understanding that the
39 State has the authority to only make it more
40 restrictive.

41
42 The point I'm trying to argue is the
43 State has liberalized it when it's my understanding
44 they only have the authority to make it more
45 restrictive.

46
47 MR. SCHAMBER: This is Jason Chamber.
48 The decision to add in the 25 non-resident permits was
49 made by the Board of Game at their meeting in January.

50

1 It is contained within the 1,000 bird allotment that's
2 in the Federal framework. So it's neither more liberal
3 or restrictive, I guess. It's just part of the 1,000
4 bird quota that the State has allotted.

5
6 MR. AHMASUK: Again the part that
7 you're giving away birds to non-residents when this is
8 already a species of concern. That's kind of where I'm
9 coming from. So, in essence, you are -- in my mind, my
10 opinion, the State is making it more liberal when I
11 guess they only have the authority in my mind to make
12 it more restrictive.

13
14 Anyway, thank you.

15
16 CHAIRMAN DALE: Gayla.

17
18 MS. HOSETH: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We
19 talked about this yesterday in our work session. The
20 Native Caucus feels -- you know, we waited 30-plus
21 years to harvest Emperor Geese and since we're in a
22 three-year trial period and we have basically -- you
23 know, this is our first year, so we have two more
24 years.

25
26 We didn't feel that it was good for
27 non-residents to come up and harvest the first year
28 that -- or the second year that it would be open. In
29 our discussions yesterday, it was talked that we could
30 do a resolution to not give any permits to any
31 non-resident hunters or that we cannot give permits or
32 reduce the number.

33
34 How would we go about doing that, Mr.
35 Chair, because it's a really big concern that we have?
36 We don't want to open it up to non-residents yet and
37 see how that population does during the first three
38 years. You know, it's an Alaskan bird and also
39 migrates to Russia, but tell all non-residents and it's
40 -- we weren't very happy with that and we know that it
41 was a Board of Game decision. And if you could explain
42 the resolution portion to us and what we could do about
43 that.

44
45 CHAIRMAN DALE: Sure, I'll give it a
46 try. First I'll speak to Brandon's issue about them
47 being more restrictive or less restrictive. It's true
48 they can't be any more liberal than the Federal
49 framework which allowed 1,000 birds, but under the
50

1 authority of the Board of Game they do have the
2 authority to allocate amongst residents and non-
3 residents. So they allocated those 25 within that
4 framework to non-residents and that's sort of the way
5 it was done.

6
7 The rationale for it was that -- well,
8 there was many points given, but one is that the non-
9 residents pay for the lion's share of migratory bird
10 management and game management in Alaska through
11 license and tag fees. So that was one consideration.
12 The other was that there would be stronger support for
13 the conservation of the species if you had the
14 nationwide hunters behind it and things like that.

15
16 It was the Board decision that of
17 course the Department was neutral on, but they did make
18 that decision and there's some other things that I
19 alluded to yesterday that possibly you might consider
20 them possible benefits. That's not for me to judge how
21 you feel.

22
23 And then in terms of how you could get
24 the Board to give us guidance under our discretionary
25 authority to not issue any permits for a year or two or
26 whatever, the route is a little bit unclear. I did a
27 little bit of homework last night. What is clear is
28 that probably the Native Caucus, but the recommendation
29 to the Board should be done by September 29th. That is
30 the deadline for comments on the ACR meeting that's
31 coming up on October 4th. I'll double check that date,
32 but I think that's when they look at the single agenda
33 change request they have.

34
35 As we said yesterday, this would have
36 been done by agenda change request except the deadline
37 was September 11th. That was when you would have had
38 to submit the agenda change request. But we do have
39 the ability to issue less permits or no permits under
40 discretionary authority. Because it's allocation the
41 Department won't do that on our own. If the Board
42 directs us to do it, we will do it because we don't
43 make allocation decisions.

44
45 So if the Board reaches a letter by
46 September 29th, it's not clear, they won't have to take
47 it up, but they will have the ability, I think, I
48 haven't checked with the Department of Law, to take
49 this issue up and discuss it at the work session or the
50

1 ACR Board of Game meeting, it's just a teleconference,
2 on October 4th.

3
4 The reason it's important to get it at
5 that timeframe is because it's a drawing hunt and
6 people will be able to start applying for the drawing
7 hunt on November 1st and the actual drawing hunt
8 supplement that goes out that says there will be a hunt
9 or there will be 25 permits issued or whatever it says
10 has to go to the printer in the first week of October.

11
12 It's kind of tight to do it that way,
13 but that would be the recommendation to have it in by
14 September 29th. Then the Board may not take it up
15 until the work session before the statewide meeting,
16 which is November 10th. That work session will be on
17 the 9th or the 10th and they could take it up there.
18 At that point they would have to go back and stop the
19 application period and refund the money for the people
20 that already put in for it.

21
22 Taqulik.

23
24 MS. HEPA: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank
25 you, Gayla and Brandon for your comments. With that
26 being said and the short timeframe, would there be
27 consensus or a consideration from the AMBCC because we
28 have a strong voice, a co-management of migratory
29 birds, would there be consensus to write a letter on
30 behalf of the AMBCC requesting that zero permits be
31 given out until the three-year trial period has
32 concluded to see how the population reacts to an
33 opportunity for a 1,000 bird hunt?

34 CHAIRMAN DALE: Thank you. That's a
35 good question. It is an allocation issue, so I'm kind
36 of conflicted and I don't know exactly -- I imagine
37 Eric is in sort of the same boat where we wouldn't
38 weigh in. It would be much quicker and probably carry
39 more force or just as much if the Native Caucus so
40 chooses to make that petition to the Board of Game.
41 Otherwise we'd have to go do a lot of -- well, we'd be
42 talking to solicitors and nothing happens by September
43 29th when you get them involved.

44
45 MS. HEPA: Thank you.

46
47 CHAIRMAN DALE: Did you have something,
48 Gayla, next.

49
50

1 MS. HOSETH: Taqulik asked the same
2 question that I was going to ask. Thank you.

3
4 CHAIRMAN DALE: Okay. Peter.

5
6 MR. DEVINE: I have a concern. There's
7 public service announcements gone out to Kodiak and
8 then the place up north. Why not one to Izembek, which
9 is the trophy bird hunting capital of America? I think
10 we could get a public service announcement out for this
11 area.

12
13 We have a radio station in Sand Point
14 and it covers the whole Aleutians East Borough, so
15 everybody in the Izembek area would get the
16 announcement. The phone number over there is (907)383-
17 5737 and the radio station is KSDP in Sand Point. You
18 could also reach them on www.apradio.org and the
19 manager is Austin Roof. Just shoot them a copy of the
20 message and he'd be happy to put it on.

21
22 MR. SCHAMBER: That's a great
23 suggestion, Peter. Thank you. We'll definitely do
24 that.

25
26 CHAIRMAN DALE: And in terms of
27 outreach we've all got to do what Peter just did. If
28 you have an outlet you think it should be at, make sure
29 you get it to Jason and we'll get it on the air. I was
30 pretty impressed by the amount of outreach that has
31 occurred and was planned, but we'll always do better
32 and just let us know.

33
34 Go ahead, Peter.

35
36 MR. DEVINE: It's just we got the
37 message, but the hunters that are going to be coming
38 in, you know, if they could hear it on the radio. I'm
39 sure they're going to see the flyers when they fly in
40 there too. Thank you.

41
42 CHAIRMAN DALE: Taqulik.

43
44 MS. HEPA: Just to follow up on the
45 comment we made earlier about sending a letter
46 requesting for zero permits and I just want to ask
47 Patty real quick are we going to have a chance for
48 another Native Caucus or can we do a consensus to give
49 you direction to help write a letter before the

50

1 September 29th deadline?

2

3 MS. SCHWALENBERG: Yeah, I think that
4 we could probably have -- if we break a little early
5 today, the Native Caucus can meet if the Council agrees
6 to that and I'd be certainly willing to discuss that
7 with you about writing a letter, yeah.

8

9 CHAIRMAN DALE: Okay. That was my
10 concern. I didn't want to leave that open-ended there.
11 You're going to do it in Caucus?

12

13 MS. SCHWALENBERG: Yes.

14

15 CHAIRMAN DALE: Okay. That's fine. We
16 could do it here too if you needed to. Taqulik.

17

18 MS. HEPA: So if I may, Mr. Chair, and
19 Executive Director Schwalenberg, I'd like to just make
20 a recommendation on behalf of the Native Caucus to ask
21 our Executive Director to write a letter to the Alaska
22 Board of Game to request that no permits for that
23 particular hunt we were referring to until the three-
24 year trial period has been complete and we could
25 provide our details to fill in the letter. Is there
26 any objection to that, Native Caucus members?

27

28 (No comments)

29

30 MS. HEPA: Are you good, Patty? Was
31 that good enough?

32

33 MS. SCHWALENBERG: Yeah.

34

35 MS. HEPA: Thank you.

36

37 CHAIRMAN DALE: Just to be clear, what
38 she'll be asking for is that the Board direct the
39 Department to use their discretionary authority to
40 issue zero permits. I can work with you on it later.

41

42 MS. HEPA: Yeah, thank you. You learn
43 something new every day.

44

45 CHAIRMAN DALE: And I forget something
46 old every day too.

47

48 (Laughter)

49

50

1 CHAIRMAN DALE: Peter.

2

3 MR. DEVINE: I forgot to mention thank
4 you, Jason, for taking the ball and fricken slam-
5 dunking it. I mean this is -- you've just come on
6 board and I mean you took it and went running, so thank
7 you.

8

9 CHAIRMAN DALE: All right. Any more
10 for Jason. Any more Emperor Geese.

11

12 MR. WHITE: I have a question. With
13 this permit system for each region they're allocated a
14 certain amount and with the permits anyone with a
15 permit is allowed to catch one bird. Thinking back
16 several years there was an incident with a protected
17 bird up north where a hunter mistakenly shot this bird
18 and it was protected. Once he found out that was a
19 protected bird he reported it to Board of Game and he
20 ended up going to court and paying for the fine.

21

22 My question is if by any chance, let's
23 say me and my son go out hunting, he's 12 years old and
24 I tell him, okay, you can't shoot birds that are packed
25 together. Just shoot one bird that is passing by, but
26 then out of excitement he shoots a flock and two, three
27 birds fall and the enforcement officer comes by and
28 sees that we have three birds with only two permits,
29 what's going to happen there?

30

31 CHAIRMAN DALE: Well, the regulation
32 says the bag limit is one bird and so there's a
33 violation there. From that you have to go to law
34 enforcement and ask how they're going to treat it.
35 That would be the Alaska State Troopers and Ryan will
36 be here tomorrow, so that would be a good question for
37 Ryan. It's no different than anything else with a bag
38 limit and it does happen. It doesn't really answer
39 your question, I know, Roland, but that's all I can do.

40

41 MS. HEPA: I just want to make a point.
42 I think that's a really good point and thanks, Roland,
43 for asking that question. Because when people call and
44 ask should we report it, I just say, well, it's up to
45 you. But, you know, when we do harvest surveys and
46 reporting and trying to understand what is actually
47 happening out there, we know that it's good for them to
48 report it, but at the end of the day that there's a
49 potential.

50

1 And good examples of people receiving
2 citations because they reported taking a threatened or
3 endangered bird, even picking it up off the -- when
4 they find them, they could get -- I mean they could get
5 into trouble. So there's that gray line, but I don't
6 think people should be punished for reporting something
7 that was incidently taken or picked up when they find
8 them.

9
10 CHAIRMAN DALE: Brandon.

11
12 MR. AHMASUK: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
13 The more and more the Emperor Goose stuff goes on,
14 sometimes more and more confused I get. So my
15 understanding with this sport hunt because this is
16 basically the first year that topic did get brought up,
17 you know, what if I accidentally shoot an extra bird.
18 My understanding at the time was no citations will be
19 given. Again, correct me if I'm wrong, but when we
20 discussed this prior no citations were going to be
21 given. It was to encourage people to report. But now
22 if I go back home and tell people this, they're not
23 going to want to report anything.

24
25 So anyway again that was my
26 understanding that if an additional bird was
27 accidentally shot that no citations were going to be
28 given. Thank you.

29
30 CHAIRMAN DALE: Well, all I know,
31 Brandon, is that probably wasn't something that was
32 said by any of the biologists such as myself because we
33 can't speak for what law enforcement will do. I've been
34 involved in many of these discussions before the Board
35 of Game and usually the Department of Public Safety
36 says things like they take in the totality of
37 circumstances. So if there's other violations going on
38 or something like that, they may charge in a situation
39 like that.

40
41 If it's a self turn in and obviously
42 somebody just made a mistake, they have the
43 discretionary authority -- that's not the term they
44 use, but they do have the ability to write a warning
45 instead or give a verbal warning and they do that all
46 the time.
47 But we can't -- law enforcement will rarely say -- I
48 don't think I've ever heard them say, no, we will not
49 enforce something.

50

1 MS. HEPA: Their phrase is it's at the
2 discretion of the officer at the time and it really is
3 at the individual officer.

4

5 CHAIRMAN DALE: That's very true.

6

7 MR. SCHAMBER: Somebody correct me if
8 I'm wrong, but I think it was said earlier that there
9 will likely not be a penalty for not reporting in the
10 first couple years. Maybe that's where some of the
11 confusion lies.

12

13 CHAIRMAN DALE: That was discussed and
14 that frequently is the case when there's new reporting
15 requirements such as with caribou in Unit 23 and 26A,
16 that there's obviously -- when a new traffic pattern,
17 you know, suddenly erupts and we have difficulty with
18 outreach, there's consideration given for that
19 certainly.

20

21 Brandon.

22

23 MR. AHMASUK: Yeah, Mr. Chair. I do
24 recall that, but also remembering past meetings that it
25 was stated, again in my memory, that no citations will
26 be given for an incidental bird that was taken.

27

28 CHAIRMAN DALE: If you could search
29 your memory and find out who said that, that would
30 probably help and it would be a good question for law
31 enforcement tomorrow.

32

33 Okay. Anything else on Emperor Geese.

34

35 (No comments)

36

37 CHAIRMAN DALE: All right. Thank you
38 very much, Jason. So we're going to delay the Humboldt
39 Bay Aquaculture update until tomorrow. Which brings us
40 to new business.

41

42 MS. HEPA: Can we take a five-minute
43 restroom break? That's going to be a long one.

44

45 CHAIRMAN DALE: Absolutely. Great
46 idea. Thanks.

47

48 (Off record)

49

50

1 (On record)

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CHAIRMAN DALE: Next up is Julian to give the status and trends of migratory birds and we're going to challenge him to see if he can keep them as short as Eric always did.

(Laughter)

MR. FISCHER: Is this the hot seat right here? Good afternoon. My name is Julian Fischer. I work for Fish and Wildlife Service, the Migratory Bird Program. Today I'm going to talk about the abundance of migratory birds that are commonly harvested by subsistence hunters in Alaska.

Thanks for the opportunity. Jason is going to help me out by being my slide advancer. Tab 6 in your book has three items. It has the note pages for this presentation, but it's also got a one-page overview of the status of Emperor Geese. There's also some text in there. It's a memorandum to the Pacific Flyway that provides some very basic and kind of stark details about each species with regards to their growth rate and their currently population size. So you'll find some details in there, but the presentation is also found under Tab 6.

So what I'm going to talk about today is just a very brief overview of what we do in the Waterfowl Survey Program. I'll follow up with actual abundance estimates and trends for some of the most commonly harvested species here. At the end I'm going to talk about an idea that has been brought up several times, but most recently at the spring meeting Gayla and Patty approached Dave Safine and I about putting together a workshop to provide information about how these surveys are done, what the statistics mean, some of the basic definitions that will help communicate better the information we're providing in these presentations.

So I'll talk about that real briefly and then, of course, open it up to discussion and questions. I'd invite all of you to stop me at any point if something is unclear. I'd be happy to try to explain what we're looking at on each of these slides.

This is the crowd that I have the

1 pleasure to work with in Migratory Bird Management.
2 It's comprised of a number of individuals with
3 different expertise. There's two wildlife
4 biologist/pilots that fly aircraft for the purpose of
5 aerial surveys of migratory birds. There's two
6 quantitative ecologists, Erik Osnas and Chuck Frost,
7 who participated in the meetings this week. They have
8 advanced skills in statistics, modeling and decision-
9 making.

10

11 There's also a number of trained aerial
12 observers. They're waterfowl biologists that have been
13 trained in estimating flock sizes, species
14 identification and lots of training in safety,
15 particularly in airplanes. We also work closely with a
16 GIS specialist, a geographic information specialist,
17 who can put the data that we collect in the form of
18 maps for various uses.

19

20 So together this team of biologists
21 works on wildlife surveys for lots of purposes, but one
22 of the main reasons we do what we do is to provide
23 information to managers like yourselves to make
24 decisions about what should happen with regards to
25 harvest. Whether it should be increased or pulled back
26 or kept at the status quo.

27

28 So much of the work that we do is from
29 aircraft. The airplanes that you're looking at here
30 are all Cessna 206 planes on amphibious floats. There's
31 three aircraft. The two on the left and the upper one
32 that we've been using for the last few years, the upper
33 right aircraft is going to get phased out and replaced
34 with November 721, November Romeo in the bottom right
35 there.

36

37 These aircraft are all from the 1980s.
38 We've chose this aerial platform because they are
39 lighter than the new planes, they're less expensive to
40 operate and they allow us to put a fair amount of fuel
41 onboard so we can have long transits between different
42 places that we survey.

43

44 So just a brief background around the
45 general approach that we use for aerial surveys.
46 There's lots of different types of aerial surveys, but
47 most of what I'm going to be talking about today are
48 called transect surveys conducted during the breeding
49 period.

50

1 So, in essence, the aircraft flies
2 along a straight line. Lines that have been mapped out
3 in the office prior to going out into the field. An
4 observer on either side of the aircraft looks out to
5 200 meters on either side of the plane and records all
6 the birds that they see. When they see a bird, they
7 have a laptop computer or a pad that's connected to a
8 GPS and a microphone.

9
10 So when they click their microphone,
11 they say what they're seeing and it grabs the physical
12 location on the computer and it maps it out. So they
13 record all their observations through time and space.
14 At the end of that we're able to come up with a data
15 form that shows all the birds and the precise locations
16 where they were observed and the flock sizes and the
17 species.

18
19 Next slide, please. So afterwards we
20 spend quite a bit of time on the ground going over all
21 the data that's collected checking it for errors,
22 making sure that we covered all the transects that we
23 were slated to do. After that we run the data through
24 various computers to check for further errors and then
25 through analysis programs that produce population
26 estimates for each species in each location.

27
28 On the North Slope breeding pair survey
29 we station out of Prudhoe Bay and Atqasuk and sometimes
30 Barrow. Each day after each flight we sit down and we
31 go through each of those recordings and make sure that
32 it's transcribed correctly and get ready for the next
33 day. So there's an initial data checking period
34 immediately after the data is collected and then when
35 we get back to Anchorage or wherever we get further
36 into it.

37
38 Next slide. Okay, so I'm going to get
39 into some results here. I'm going to start off with
40 three of the geese that occur on the Yukon-Kuskokwim
41 Delta. The YK Delta is home to huge numbers of
42 migratory birds and of course many subsistence hunters
43 that rely on these birds. For these three particular
44 species the vast majority of those birds occur there on
45 the coastal zone of the YK Delta.

46
47 In the mid 1980s an aerial survey was
48 designed specifically to monitor first Cackling and
49 Pacific Greater White-fronted Geese, but also Emperor
50

1 Geese were recorded during the survey at that time.
2 Within the last couple years we've transitioned to
3 using this particular survey to be the primary
4 monitoring tool for Emperor Geese as well.

5
6 So on the left you see a map that shows
7 the transect lines. It extends from the Yukon River to
8 the north down to the Kuskokwim in the south and the
9 aircraft goes approximately 40 kilometers inland from
10 the coast. There's a higher intensity of flights over
11 the areas with the highest densities of birds.

12
13 This design was made specifically to
14 try to reduce the amount of uncertainty that we get
15 from our aerial surveys for geese. There's always a
16 trade off when you're trying to monitor the size of a
17 population. If you focus on an individual species
18 only, you can come up with a very excellent design
19 based on where those birds occur in space. But if
20 you're trying to collect information about multiple
21 species, you may sacrifice some of the precision for
22 one species for another.

23
24 Let's move on. This survey takes about
25 seven days to complete. It's done in late May to early
26 June during the breeding period when all the birds are
27 at their nest sites and they have just initiated nests.
28 The aircraft is flown at about 150 feet above the
29 surface and passes over each transect one time.

30
31 Peter.

32
33 MR. DEVINE: You said your surveys when
34 you're flying it's 150 feet. I've raised the question
35 before on how high you guys are flying and I believe
36 you guys said you were at 300 feet and I asked if you
37 could go up higher to get a bigger picture. Because
38 when we do marine mammal surveys they've got us at 600
39 feet. The thing I pointed out was it's almost like no
40 difference between a car and a truck. I mean you could
41 drive down the same highway, but if you're down lower
42 it seems like you're gone faster and you see less.

43
44 Then as far as the methodology you said
45 you guys look out 200 meters on each side. Do you
46 utilize the whole window in the aircraft? Because with
47 the marine mammal surveys you have a window like that,
48 but you could only count what's in this part.

49
50

1 MR. FISCHER: I'll try to address
2 those. For this type of survey, a breeding pair
3 survey, the altitude that we fly out is at 150 feet and
4 that's maintained by the pilot focusing on a radar
5 altimeter that shows precisely how far off the ground
6 they are. There are other surveys where we fly higher.
7 We have a photographic survey of Brant colonies which
8 I'll mention briefly further in the presentation where
9 we do fly higher and we're photographing birds. It's
10 at 400 feet.

11
12 With regards to the windows, the
13 observers are placed forward in the aircraft and they
14 are looking out the front window and they have a full
15 view and they will be constantly looking back and
16 forth, in front of them and to the side. They cannot
17 see directly below themselves, but they have markers on
18 the wing struts which shows them how far out to look on
19 the ground. We take care of that type of potential
20 bias by having those standard operating procedures for
21 this type of survey.

22
23 Next. Okay, I'm going to get into some
24 results here. I'm going to start off with Cackling
25 Canada Geese. Cacklers, pretty much all of them, are
26 nesting there on the coastal zone of the Yukon-
27 Kuskokwim Delta. Up here is the Yukon Delta, this is
28 the breeding area. After they breed the birds head
29 down to the Alaska Peninsula and head down to the coast
30 ultimately to get down to -- most of them winter in
31 Northwest Oregon and Southwestern Washington. Upon
32 return they head back. Basically reverse their flight,
33 but take a little bit longer following the coastline
34 back. We monitor this population on the breeding
35 grounds in late May to early June each year.

36
37 Next slide. Okay, here's some results
38 for Cackling Geese. Many of you have seen a similar
39 figure like this in years past. This is with one extra
40 data point with a 2017 numbers. Along here is the
41 population size. Along the X-axis is the year. For
42 example in 1985 we estimated about 50,000 Cackling
43 Canada Geese. This was at an all-time low. This is when
44 there was basically a goose catastrophe going on.

45
46 Working with the states and the Native
47 community particularly on the Yukon Delta, a Goose
48 Management Plan was developed and adopted by the
49 Pacific Flyway and hunting was closed for several years

50

1 in the wintering grounds and on the breeding grounds as
2 well. It was reinstated. Just a few years later
3 through the conservation efforts there was almost an
4 immediate recovery of the population. You can see over
5 the subsequent 10 or 15 years there was a huge response
6 in the goose population.

7
8 An objective was set in the Yukon Delta
9 Goose Management Plan of 250,000 and that objective
10 remains today. There have been efforts to lower that
11 population objective, but it has been maintained at
12 that level. Since the growth of that population it
13 been maintained generally around this population
14 objective. As Jason described yesterday, the new
15 management plan calls for action to be taken when the
16 number of Cacklers is more than 10 percent above the
17 objective or more than 10 percent below the objective.

18
19 There some other cut points that were
20 determined here on the Goose Management Plan. When you
21 can open harvest after it's been closed and that's at
22 110,000 and when it should be closed if it were to drop
23 down to this level then hunting would close again.
24 So Cacklers are healthy, above objective, and this is a
25 good thing for hunters.

26
27 MS. HEPA: I have a question.

28
29 MR. FISCHER: Yes.

30
31 MS. HEPA: On your open harvest and
32 closed harvest and population objective, has that been
33 modified over the years or was that set in 1985 or '84?

34
35 MR. FISCHER: I believe those numbers
36 have been consistent since the first iteration of the
37 Goose Management Plan, so those are in place.

38
39 Next slide, please. Okay, next species
40 also occurring on the YK Delta in great numbers are the
41 Pacific Greater White-fronted Geese. White-fronted
42 Geese as a species occur throughout Alaska and across
43 most of Canada, but the population I'm going to
44 describe now are the Pacific population that occur
45 primarily on the Yukon Delta. There's some that breed
46 down in Bristol Bay, but primarily they're occurring on
47 the Yukon Delta during breeding. They winter in
48 central California. The birds in Canada end up in
49 Mexico. Primarily, most of the birds that we see on

50

1 the YK Delta overwinter in California.

2

3 Similar to Cacklers, in the mid '80s
4 there was very low numbers, but after conservation
5 efforts in the Pacific Flyway numbers grew, surpassing
6 the population objective, and currently we're up to
7 approximately 630,000 birds, more than twice the
8 population objective of 300,000. White-fronts are
9 healthy and they're widespread and they're doing well.
10 This is not only because of the conservation efforts
11 that happened in the '80s but also because the farming
12 practices in California allow for a lot of overwinter
13 survival of this species.

14

15 Yeah.

16

17 MS. HEPA: I know there was some pretty
18 huge fires in that part of America. Do you ever look
19 at like what the fires would do on their winter
20 habitat? Just curious.

21

22 MR. FISCHER: I can't say that we have,
23 but these birds are relying on farm fields mostly
24 during winter, areas that would probably be less
25 affected by fires than birds that would be
26 overwintering in forested habitats.

27

28 Next slide, please. Okay, the ever-
29 popular Emperor Goose. As you all know, Emperor Geese
30 breed mainly on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. Their
31 wintering range is from Kodiak in the east out through
32 the Aleutian Islands and all the way out to the
33 Commander Islands in Russia. In springtime, these
34 birds start concentrating back on the Alaska Peninsula
35 and by the end of April start making their move north
36 back to the breeding grounds in the Yukon Delta.

37

38 Now some of the birds that are too
39 young to breed or those birds that are just not in good
40 condition to breed each year will depart the breeding
41 grounds in June and they'll pass up past St. Lawrence
42 Island, some will remain there, but many of them go
43 over into Russia and there they molt their feathers and
44 they spend much of the summer there only to return
45 again back south and start staging for the winter down
46 in the Alaska Peninsula at the end of the summer.
47 They're a highly migratory species, but they all remain
48 in Alaska or further north.

49

50

1 Next slide. So the management plans
2 for Emperor Geese were revised just last year. Two
3 plans were developed and many folks in this room were
4 involved in these processes. One for the Pacific
5 Flyway that covers the fall/winter harvest, which Jason
6 just described, and then the AMBCC plan for Emperor
7 Geese that deals with the subsistence harvest in
8 spring/summer.

9
10 In both of these they follow very
11 similar patterns in that there's population thresholds
12 that govern when the population can withstand a
13 traditional harvest and when we need to be more
14 cautious and start thinking about curtailing the
15 harvest and when it should be closed. So they're very
16 specific to that.

17
18 Next slide. So this is what that plan
19 looks like and it's based originally on an idea that
20 Cyrus brought that's based on the caribou model where
21 we have a red, yellow and green kind of signal here.
22 When the population is below 23,000 birds as measured
23 by the breeding ground survey on the Yukon Delta, then
24 harvest will be closed.

25
26 When it's in that yellow zone between
27 23,000 and 28,000, then that's an area where there can
28 be hunting, but there might need to be restrictions.
29 The restrictions are to be developed by the AMBCC.
30 There's all sorts of things that can be done and they
31 would be developed at a time when we're in that yellow
32 zone and those people who are on the Emperor Goose
33 Committee can develop those ideas together. We would
34 be looking to the subsistence hunters to advise how a
35 reduced harvest could occur in a traditional and
36 sensitive way.

37
38 Where we are right now is in the green
39 zone. The population has been growing since the '80s
40 and we hope it continues to, but the population is
41 above 28,000 so for spring and summer a traditional
42 hunt is in effect.

43
44 MS. HEPA: Are you going to talk about
45 the other plan and what their thresholds are? Are they
46 the same thresholds?

47
48 MR. FISCHER: Yeah.

49
50

1 MS. HEPA: Okay, good. Thanks.

2

3 MR. FISCHER: I wasn't going to talk
4 about that because I think Jason covered it, but I'll
5 just go over it again quickly.

6

7 CHAIRMAN DALE: Can you repeat the
8 question.

9

10 MR. FISCHER: The question was does the
11 other plan, the Pacific Flyway Management Plan that
12 covers the fall and winter hunt, does it have the same
13 thresholds. The answer is yes. If the population is
14 above 28,000, then there is a 1,000 bird quota. If it's
15 in the yellow zone -- Jason.

16

17 MR. SCHAMBER: There's just
18 restrictions. There's nothing specified.

19

20 MR. FISCHER: There will be
21 restrictions, but they're unspecified at this point.
22 And then if it's below 23,000, then the fall/winter
23 hunt would be closed. So the same population
24 thresholds for all periods of year.

25

26 Let's move on. Just to summarize here,
27 the current spring/summer subsistence hunt is from the
28 2nd of April through August. There is a 30-day closure
29 as with all migratory birds harvested in the
30 spring/summer. Currently it's open to customary and
31 traditional hunting practices.

32

33 As emphasized in all the outreach
34 materials, Emperor Geese are just above that threshold
35 now. So there is a possibility that overharvest could
36 occur and the population would go down below that
37 threshold. By having those plans developed there are
38 protections in place that everyone would expect to
39 happen if the population drops, so harvest restrictions
40 could be implemented.

41

42 Just the general message that all of
43 you know that encouraging hunters to hunt
44 conservatively now will hopefully allow that population
45 to continue to grow and allow this hunt to continue in
46 the future.

47

48 MS. HEPA: Just one follow-up question
49 before you move on this. Did we have a historical like

50

1 normal population before the rapid decline? Like what
2 was the healthy population prior to when it became a
3 conservation concern?

4
5 MR. FISCHER: Sure. So the survey on
6 the Yukon Delta started in 1985 at a time when the
7 population was really low. So the numbers we have
8 prior to 1985 are from an entirely different survey
9 that was conducted during spring on the Alaska
10 Peninsula where the birds stage prior to going to the
11 breeding grounds. For many years, up until 2015, we
12 used that survey to track the population.

13
14 What that showed us was that in the
15 late '60s, I believe, there was a high number counted
16 that year and then the survey wasn't repeated until
17 1981, at which time it was similar to where it is now
18 and then it went down and it dropped until about 1985
19 and then it started going back up again.

20
21 We discontinued that spring survey for
22 a number of reasons, many of which were concerns raised
23 by this management body about that survey. So we
24 switched to a survey that we believe is more precise
25 and reliable and repeatable. The consequence of that
26 is we can't directly compare what we see on the Yukon
27 Delta now with a time period prior to 1985.

28
29 MS. HEPA: It's like apples to oranges,
30 right?

31
32 MR. FISCHER: It's like crabapples to
33 McIntosh apples. There's similarities. They were two
34 surveys that were tracking the population. They were
35 done at different times and interestingly they showed
36 the same pattern through time. So from 1985 to 2015
37 both surveys showed the population increasing and about
38 the same rate, so that lends support to the idea that
39 they were both tracking the population adequately. One
40 we believe is superior and that's the one that we're
41 using now.

42
43 MS. HEPA: You reminded me. Thank you.

44
45 MR. FISCHER: Okay. Next slide,
46 please. I'm going to move on to Pacific Brant. Very
47 important on the Yukon Delta for subsistence hunters,
48 but also through the Alaska Peninsula out on the
49 Aleutians and on the North Slope and the Northwest

50

1 Arctic area.
2
3 Pacific Brant breed in many locations.
4 Traditionally we believe that most of them nest on the
5 Yukon Delta. We used to think that there was about 80
6 or 90 percent of them breeding just on the Yukon Delta
7 and the scattered colonies on the North Slope and in
8 Canada and some in Russia. There is evidence to
9 suggest the proportion of birds on the Yukon Delta is
10 declining relative to the North Slope and I'll get to
11 that in a few minutes.

12
13 In general, this group of birds, the
14 Pacific Brant population breeds on the North Slope and
15 the Yukon Delta and in some other locations in western
16 Alaska. In fall goes down to the Alaska Peninsula.
17 They stage in Izembek Lagoon where they are
18 concentrated into one mass of birds for approximately a
19 month before proceeding further south down to Baja
20 Mexico and various locations along the West Coast. In
21 some years, up to 30 percent of them however remain in
22 Alaska at the Izembek Lagoon area.

23
24 Next slide. So this population is not
25 tracked using the Yukon Delta breeding pair survey.
26 Instead a winter survey has been completed every year
27 since the '60s throughout its winter range. So from
28 Mexico to Alaska in certain areas crews from various
29 different states go out and they monitor the population
30 size sometime between January and February.

31
32 The Goose Management Plan in the '80s
33 used that survey as well and defined a closure
34 threshold and different levels of restriction and also
35 identified a population objective. So through time
36 Brant have bumped around a fair bit, but in general
37 they're been relatively flat if you look over the long
38 term. Currently they're doing well. Our count this
39 year was -- over the last three years was about 144,000
40 Brant, just below the population objective, but Brant
41 are doing well population wide.

42
43 Next slide. Now I mentioned that that
44 is based on a winter survey. The winter survey
45 monitors all Brant from all locations in the Pacific
46 population. But what about what's going on in the
47 Yukon Delta specifically. I mentioned before that we
48 used to believe that most of the birds in the Pacific
49 population bred on the Yukon Delta. Specifically we
50

1 thought they were all these five colonies on the coast
2 depicted here in these black blobs on this map.

3
4 So these colonies are very important
5 still and we've tracked them through time and we do not
6 use a transected aerial survey. We use a photographic
7 survey conducted by an airplane. The airplane has a
8 belly port which we mount a high-definition camera on
9 and take photographs of the Brant at their colonies.
10 The quality of the photos is kind of outstanding.

11
12 From 400 feet you can see nests clearly
13 with the numbers of eggs in them. You can see the
14 birds standing next to the nest or in some cases
15 incubating the nest. You can distinguish these birds
16 clearly from other geese. It's a little hard to tell
17 with this particular photograph because we're not
18 looking at a high-definition screen, but you can go
19 through all these photos and actually come up with an
20 estimate of numbers of Brant nests.

21
22 So what we have found with this
23 particular survey is that on the Yukon Delta the
24 numbers of Brant nests have been declining at these
25 colonies through time. That's the figure you see in
26 the lower right. In 2016 we had about 11,500 nests
27 within these colonies. The 2017 numbers are still
28 being tallied. It takes quite a bit of time to go
29 through all these photographs. There's many, many
30 hundreds of these photographs. I would expect it's
31 going to be similar to the 2016 number.

32
33 So where are all these birds going. We
34 saw that on the whole the Pacific population of Brant
35 seems to be relatively stable, but these ones are going
36 down. So what's happening. Why are the birds
37 disappearing on the Yukon Delta. We don't know and we
38 don't know if they're redistributing to other places on
39 the Yukon Delta or if they're just declining overall.

40
41 One hypothesis, one idea why they might
42 be going down is because of continued harvest. One
43 thing you can see from the photographs is the presence
44 of individuals walking to nests and collecting eggs.
45 This is not the purpose of the survey by any means, but
46 we know that there is still eggging occurring. There is
47 a closure on eggging of Brant on the Yukon Delta or
48 statewide actually, but it occurs and we're aware of
49 that and that shows up in the harvest survey reports.

50

1 What we do know though is despite
2 egging that occurs there are some nests that are
3 visited based on footprints leading to them that are
4 still active. This may reflect the traditional
5 practice of not taking all eggs from nests. We also
6 know that many nests, if they're visited by people,
7 they do not necessarily fail. If all eggs are removed
8 from a nest, obviously that nesting effort is going to
9 be over for the year.

10

11 Anyway, the number of colonies that are
12 visited by individuals is relatively low. It jumps
13 around from year to year. That's one possibility for
14 why the colonies are declining, is the presence of
15 people. There's many other possibilities that could be
16 going on out there including fox predation on nests or
17 other predators. It also could be that the birds are
18 simply not as successful on the Yukon Delta as they
19 used to be and they're being attracted to different
20 breeding grounds.

21

22 Go to the next slide, please.

23

24 MR. FAGERSTROM: Is that normal, the
25 tide level, the water level in those pictures?

26

27 MR. FISCHER: Great question. So these
28 colonies nest right on the coast. So on the Yukon
29 Delta the tide comes and goes and the Brant are
30 actually nesting on islands surrounded by mud at all
31 times. So when the tide comes up, this would look very
32 different. When the tide goes out, it looks like this.
33 So this is a low tide photograph.

34

35 I'll just point out that in some years
36 these birds experience tidal extremes with storms that
37 are occurring and they get entirely flooded out. It's
38 a big concern. Any bird that's nesting in one very
39 specific habitat, especially right on the coast, is
40 threatened by sea level rise obviously and by -- if
41 there's an increase in storms, they could experience a
42 lot of loss of habitat or just failed nesting attempts.

43

44 MR. FAGERSTROM: We noticed blackberry
45 patches getting inundated over the years and gradually
46 disappearing.

47

48 MR. FISCHER: Yeah, change is upon us
49 on the coast, that's for sure.

50

1 CHAIRMAN DALE: Roland.

2
3 MR. WHITE: Thank you. You mentioned
4 that based on the picture up there and based on the
5 footprints going back and forth to the nest you
6 mentioned that the possibility for the decline is
7 presence of people, is that correct?

8
9 MR. FISCHER: I said one possibility
10 for the numbers of Brant declining in colonies is
11 people. That is one possibility.

12
13 MR. WHITE: Okay. Does that reflect
14 any other birds besides the Brants?

15
16 MR. FISCHER: So Brant are unique from
17 other geese in that they nest in colonies. They're
18 closely clustered together. Other geese are more
19 spread out across the landscape. So there's
20 possibilities if a few people enter a colony, they can
21 be very effective at removing a lot of eggs in a fast,
22 efficient manner. So there might be a higher
23 probability that nesting could be affected by people
24 for Brant than for say White-fronted Geese that are
25 more spread out over the landscape.

26
27 MR. WHITE: The point that I'm trying
28 to get into is if these birds -- thinking of the
29 possibility, if these birds are affected in general by
30 the presence of people, is it possible that all the
31 other birds can be affected with the presence of people
32 and equipment to move somewhere else? That's my
33 question.

34
35 MR. FISCHER: Sure. The numbers of
36 birds at all of the five colonies on the Yukon Delta
37 have been going down. There's one research camp at one
38 of the colonies, it's a Tutakoke camp and there's been
39 a number of researchers there for many years. The
40 numbers of nests there are going down and the numbers
41 of nests at Kokechik Bay are going down and the numbers
42 of nests at Baird Inlet are going down and at Baird
43 Island.

44
45 So some of those colonies -- this one
46 here is from Baird Island or Baird Inlet Island. Some
47 have no presence of footprints. Some have some
48 presence of footprints. But the fact that the numbers
49 are declining in all colonies tells me that the

50

1 presence of people may be one factor, but maybe not
2 controlling the change. I think habitat change is
3 probably a much bigger impact.

4
5 The next slide might explain a little
6 bit why the population might actually be transitioning
7 to a more northerly nesting distribution. Does that
8 answer your question, Roland?

9
10 MR. WHITE: Yes. Thank you.

11
12 MR. FISCHER: Okay. This figure shows
13 the numbers of Brant on the North Slope. In the past,
14 starting in the mid '80s very few Brant were recorded
15 from our aerial surveys. Starting in the 2000's
16 numbers of Brant started increasing and did so at a
17 fairly rapid clip. I overheard Mr. Rothe talking at a
18 break about being up on the North Slope again this year
19 after not having been there since the '80s and being
20 surprised at the number of Brant that he saw up there.
21 I'm sure, Taqulik, those folks in your region are
22 having similar observations with Brant.

23
24 So the amount of habitat on the North
25 Slope that attracts Brant has really increased. I
26 believe the number of Brant are responding to that
27 change in habitat. It could be that there's just a
28 general shift in birds moving and breeding further
29 north. We know that Brant are wintering further north
30 now than they used to and the breeding grounds may be
31 shifting north as well.

32
33 Next slide. I'm going to talk again
34 about White-fronted Geese, but not the Pacific
35 population. This is a figure.....

36
37 CHAIRMAN DALE: Did you have a question
38 on Brant, Taqulik?

39
40 MS. HEPA: Yeah. Can you just go back.
41 I just want to make sure I understood the black line
42 versus the shaded one.

43
44 MR. FISCHER: Yes. Okay. Thank you.

45
46 MS. HEPA: I just want to make sure.

47
48 MR. FISCHER: I should have described
49 that earlier. The black line is the estimate we have
50

1 for a particular year. The shaded area around it is
2 the confidence interval. So that's a 95 percent
3 confidence interval. You notice that it's quite wide
4 for Brant. The reason for that is Brant are a colonial
5 nesting bird, which means they're very clustered in
6 close areas.

7
8 So if you imagine we were all Brant and
9 we were spread out across this room, which is like we
10 are, so we're more like White-fronted Geese in here,
11 and we were to fly transects across this room, on each
12 transect we'd see a similar number of us, okay. If we
13 all gather down at this end of the room and an airplane
14 came through and counted five transects through, most
15 of those transects would have zero birds on them and
16 one of them would have a whole bunch on it.

17
18 What that leads to is a highly variable
19 number out there with a low level of confidence around
20 what that population really is at. That's why you have
21 a wide confidence interval there. To answer your
22 question, the cloud around it is the range of numbers
23 that the population could be at.

24
25 MS. HEPA: That answers my question. I
26 just wanted to make sure I understood that. Thank you.

27
28 MR. FISCHER: I'm going to talk briefly
29 about the Mid-Continent population of White-fronted
30 Geese. We talked about the Pacific population that
31 migrates down the Pacific Flyway. There's many White-
32 fronted Geese that breed in Canada and the North Slope
33 of Alaska and in the Interior. These birds migrate
34 down through what's called the Mid-Continent Flyway.
35 The Mississippi and the Central Flyways. Many of them
36 winter in Texas, Arkansas and parts of Mexico.

37
38 Next slide, please. So there's two
39 ways that we've monitored this population. What you
40 see here is a highly variable number of White-fronts.
41 These counts are made from a survey that is not
42 designed for this species, but it provides an estimate
43 of how many birds there might be out there.

44
45 In the upper left here you see a figure
46 of the State of Alaska and in it there's these red
47 marks. These are primary breeding areas of waterfowl.
48 In the center, in the circle, are the areas that this
49 population breeds south of the North Slope. These areas

50

1 are all sampled by an aircraft throughout the summer
2 and they have -- they count the number of Mid-Continent
3 Greater White-fronted Geese along with all the other
4 ducks and geese that they encounter.

5
6 So we know that there's birds breeding
7 there. The numbers are highly variable and I believe
8 this is because many of the birds that are counted are
9 actually still migrating north. So if the survey is
10 conducted on one day, there might have been a huge
11 flock that was moving through the Interior on the way
12 to the North Slope. I am just showing this figure
13 because we are not using this to track the population
14 but it is an indication that there are Mid-Continent
15 White-fronted Geese that are present in the Interior
16 and are harvested there each year.

17
18 The next slide shows what we found on
19 the North Slope. So this is a survey that's similar to
20 the Yukon Delta where we have a high-intensity number
21 of transects. Mid-Continent White-fronted Geese have
22 been increasing on the North Slope. They were pretty
23 stable for quite a while and then kind of took off in
24 the 2000's.

25
26 I've heard from Taqulik and others that
27 the number of white-fronts observed and harvested on
28 the North Slope have increased over time as well and
29 that the data from our survey shows that. So there's a
30 lot of white-fronts both in the Mid-Continent
31 population and on the Yukon Delta.

32
33 Next slide. So this population of
34 white-fronts has a population objective of 650,000.
35 That number is determined based on not just what's in
36 Alaska, but what's in Canada as well. So there is a
37 survey that is done by the Canadian Wildlife Service
38 and the Fish and Wildlife Service in September. It's
39 probably occurring right around now in Saskatchewan
40 when the North Slope breeders, those that bred in the
41 Interior of Alaska and those that bred in Canada all
42 converge in this one area of Saskatchewan and there
43 they're counted. There's almost a million birds there,
44 so we're well over the population objective for that
45 species as well.

46
47 CHAIRMAN DALE: Taqulik.

48
49 MS. HEPA: You said it's happening now,

50

1 but yet there's still quite a few white-fronts that are
2 still in Barrow.

3

4 MR. FISCHER: Yeah.

5

6 MS. HEPA: Like I said, they're staying
7 later and arriving earlier.

8

9 MR. FISCHER: Yes.

10

11 MS. HEPA: That's like the timeframe.
12 So how does that -- will that affect what you guys are
13 doing here?

14

15 MR. FISCHER: Yeah. So there's a close
16 analogy between that fall survey in Saskatchewan and
17 the spring survey of Emperor Geese. It's a survey
18 that's done during a certain time when most birds are
19 congregating in an area, but not all of them are there.
20 There's some late arrivers and there's some that have
21 probably already passed through that area. But it's a
22 period of time in a certain place where there's a large
23 congregation of birds.

24

25 There's a lot of concern about this
26 approach. So right now the Mid-Continent Plan is
27 looking at two different ways to monitor this
28 population. One is this historical fall survey, but
29 it's also using a different method to monitor the size
30 of the population that involves banding birds every
31 year and calculating harvest rate. It's something I
32 can talk about at a different time because it's kind of
33 a long conversation, but it's a way of measuring
34 whether the number of birds that are harvested out of
35 the overall population is at a level that the
36 population can sustain.

37

38 So we're trying to shift away from
39 these surveys that are really difficult to understand
40 what portion of the birds are actually there. Like you
41 mentioned before, if birds are changing their timing of
42 migration, it can really throw something like this off.
43 If they're getting close to a million birds now, but
44 you actually have a bunch of birds that are still on
45 the breeding ground, then it might be far higher than a
46 million birds out there.

47

48 Okay. Another North Slope goose that
49 we've talked about a little bit this week, the Snow

50

1 Geese. Snow Geese breed in Alaska. Most of the Lesser
2 Snow Geese are breeding in Canada and in Russia. We've
3 talked a little bit about Wrangell Island Snow Geese.
4 Those birds pass through the Yukon Delta and Northwest
5 Alaska and then breed in Russia. There are Snow Geese
6 that are breeding on the North Slope of Alaska.

7
8 This map shows some stars here. These
9 are certain colonies where they're known to occur. The
10 North Slope Borough does surveys of these particular
11 colonies, but our survey covers these colonies plus
12 other areas as well. If you show the next figure, I'll
13 show you what we're seeing.

14
15 Snow Geese, like Brant, are also a
16 colonial nester, so you'll see these really wide
17 confidence intervals around our estimate. Nonetheless,
18 we believe that the numbers are increasing over time
19 and really have taken off. Prior to 2000 there were
20 very few that were seen and they've really taken hold.
21 This year we had about 60,000 that we estimated on the
22 North Slope.

23
24 Compared to what's in Canada, 15
25 million or half a million almost in Russia on Wrangell
26 Island, this is still a really small population, but
27 it's something that we have a high degree of interest
28 in because Snow Geese can get out of hand pretty fast.
29 In parts of Arctic Canada the numbers of Snow Geese
30 have gotten so dense that they've really destroyed a
31 lot of the tundra habitat up there. So it's something
32 we're watching closely.

33
34 MS. STICKWAN: Do you know why it
35 started in 2000, all these increases?

36
37 MR. FISCHER: That's a great question.
38 I don't know. I don't know if there was any one
39 particular trigger that happened right around 2000, but
40 we did see -- you're right, that's a great observation
41 -- numbers of Brant started increasing on the North
42 Slope, numbers of white-fronts really started
43 increasing and Snow Geese as well. And this wasn't
44 just in our aerial surveys, but reports from the ground
45 from subsistence hunters have all indicated this is
46 happening.

47
48 The habitat is a bit different on the
49 North Slope now. The temperatures have been

50

1 increasing. Snow Geese are quick to adapt. They
2 migrate early, produce many young, they nest early.
3 Once they take hold they can succeed very well. I
4 don't know what the trigger was right around 2000, but
5 it might have just been kind of a slow progression of
6 factors that led to a rapid increase where they kind of
7 took hold and then they're just succeeding there.

8
9 MR. ROTHE: Hey, Julian, once they
10 reach a threshold too they can overcome the ability of
11 predators to knock out the little ones.

12
13 MR. FISCHER: Mr. Rothe just pointed
14 out many birds -- the predators can keep them in check,
15 but once there's too many of them out there the
16 predators really can't keep them in check, so then they
17 can take off.

18
19 Next slide, please. Just a little bit
20 of information. Our colleagues at USGS have been
21 studying Snow Goose population on the North Slope and
22 they've been looking at their breeding success and
23 found that Snow Geese are kind of out-competing other
24 geese up there. They have not found that they are --
25 that that's leading to pushing other goose populations
26 downward. But compared to Brant and white-fronts and
27 Canada Geese they produce more young, they breed at an
28 earlier age and earlier in the year and they bring back
29 more young.

30
31 Despite that success we're seeing such
32 an increase that we believe that there must be some
33 Snow Geese that are actually immigrating into the North
34 Slope from Canada and possibly from Wrangell Island as
35 well. So those habitats might be becoming
36 overpopulated and the North Slope is kind of situated
37 right in the middle. So we might see more immigrants
38 from other countries showing up on the North Slope in
39 the form of Snow Geese. So we're watching that.

40
41 Next slide, please. Okay. The last
42 large bird I'm going to talk about is a favorite of
43 Jack's, the Tundra Swan. This is a figure that shows
44 the North American distribution. There's two main
45 populations of Tundra Swans on the North Slope. These
46 birds migrate down to the East Coast of the U.S. in
47 winter as do those that are breeding in Canada.

48
49 The western population that breeds
50

1 basically from Point Hope south either overwinters in
2 Alaska, in the case of the Alaska Peninsula, but most
3 of them really are wintering down along the Pacific
4 Coast and in the Rocky Mountains. So two separate
5 populations that migrate to two different places. We
6 track those separately using two different surveys.

7
8 Next slide. So the western population.
9 What you see in this figure is an index to the
10 population size of Tundra Swans in the western
11 population. They've grown slowly, but they've grown
12 since the 1980s. What we have here is a combination of
13 counts from several different areas including the
14 Coastal Zone of the Yukon Delta, Inland Yukon Delta,
15 Bristol Bay, the Selawik area and the Seward Peninsula.

16
17
18 This combined group is what you see in
19 this figure here. The numbers have jumped around from
20 our surveys a fair bit and you can see it's not a
21 precise estimate, but the numbers are high. There's a
22 new management plan in the Pacific Flyway that
23 identifies like a population objective of I believe
24 60,000 and we're about twice that number right now.

25
26 For the eastern population, this is
27 monitored with the Arctic Coastal Plain survey. So
28 this is just the Alaska portion of the eastern
29 population. Numbers have been increasing through time
30 almost kind of on a steady basis. Currently we're at
31 about 16-17,000 Tundra Swans up there as estimated from
32 that survey.

33
34 Lastly I just want to finish off with --
35 I don't want to leave the ducks out of this. Ducks
36 are monitored through aerial surveys across North
37 America. In this upper left figure here you can see
38 this huge area where these are principal duck
39 production areas. We're responsible for monitoring the
40 Alaska component, but there's other agencies and other
41 parts of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and
42 Canadian Wildlife Service that collectively monitor
43 birds throughout this whole area.

44
45 For these four common species the
46 numbers are strong. Northern Pintails are in
47 thousands, so 757,000 is the estimate for North
48 America. It says NS over here. There's no significant
49 change. That's what that's talking about over the
50

1 long-term average. Mallards are about 40 percent above
2 the long-term average. Wigeon, 15 percent above and
3 Green-winged Teal about 50 percent above the long-term
4 average.

5
6 We don't have precise estimates for
7 these species in small locations around the state, but
8 I just wanted to show this that gives a kind of a
9 general picture of what's going on continent-wide for
10 these common duck species.

11
12 Are there any questions about any of
13 the data I talked about just now or we can talk about
14 that afterwards because I just have one other thing
15 that I'd like to discuss in this presentation before we
16 go on?

17
18 Brandon.

19
20 MR. AHMASUK: Yeah, you mentioned for
21 Tundra Swans, let me back up just briefly, you had a
22 breakdown -- do you have breakdowns for population
23 numbers per region? Like in the past we've asked for
24 the number specifically for the Seward Peninsula.

25
26 MR. FISCHER: I do.

27
28 MR. AHMASUK: Could we get that?

29
30 MR. FISCHER: Yes. I can show that
31 right now. I'm going to pull up a different
32 presentation if you want to hold on for one sec. I'm
33 going to answer Brandon's question, but I want to
34 finish this up because I'm afraid that I'll crash the
35 computer in switching over presentations midway. I
36 have one more slide here and I'll jump right to that.
37 The short answer is yes and I'll show you the numbers
38 shortly.

39
40 So I presented a lot of numbers here.
41 There's lots of numbers that were collected in
42 different ways by different individuals. There were
43 indices, there were estimates, there were confidence
44 intervals, there was mention of significant change, no
45 significant change. What does all that mean. There's
46 a huge discipline of statistics that people go through
47 rigorous training in, but if you don't know any of it,
48 then it makes no sense at all.

49
50

1 To communicate better between the
2 survey group and this management body and the
3 subsistence hunters that rely on these resources, we
4 would like to develop a workshop to present at this
5 AMBCC meeting and also at regional meetings where we
6 can explain more clearly and with more time the meaning
7 of some of these numbers and where they come from. It
8 would also be an opportunity to learn more about the
9 traditional ecological knowledge and perhaps
10 incorporate those methodologies into the way we survey
11 birds.

12
13 So at the last AMBCC meeting there was
14 a request to develop a workshop of this type. So there
15 was a small amount of money that David Safine, who
16 works in our office, heard about to get some seed money
17 to start developing a workshop of this type. So he's
18 working with Erik Osnas and Liliana and Jason and
19 together they're going to put together a workshop to
20 try to explain better where these survey estimates come
21 from, how they're derived and what they mean.

22
23 To make that successful we want to know
24 what you want to know. I'm not going to ask you to say
25 what does this mean right now, but I want you to think
26 about what would be most helpful to you in terms of
27 understanding better why we survey the way we do and
28 what do these results mean. So I encourage you to come
29 to me with those requests or to Patty. Maybe perhaps --
30 you have monthly Native Caucus meetings. That might
31 be an agenda item you want to discuss is coming up with
32 ideas.

33
34 As that group develops a workshop,
35 before we go out and try to present it to anyone, we'd
36 love input from the Native Caucus about whether it
37 makes any sense or if there's other things they could
38 do to communicate some of these ideas better. So I
39 invite that input.

40
41 Next slide.

42
43 MS. HOSETH: I have one question.

44
45 MR. FISCHER: Yeah.

46
47 MS. HOSETH: Thank you. Just where it
48 says the grant is strengthening partnerships with
49 Alaska Natives and the State of Alaska, would that be

50

1 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service? Because you guys are
2 the ones that do the population trends.

3
4 MR. FISCHER: Okay. So that title,
5 that may have been the title of the proposal that was
6 submitted. It's Fish and Wildlife Service money and it
7 was literally a couple thousand dollars for some
8 travel, but it's a seed that we want to use to expand
9 this over time. The partnership would be between Fish
10 and Wildlife Service, Alaska Natives and the State of
11 Alaska. Together come up with ways to communicate
12 better. In this case it's simply for the focus on
13 statistics and the methods of wildlife surveys.

14
15 Did I answer your question?

16
17 MS. HOSETH: Kinda. I mean it was just
18 -- if this is overall with both U.S. Fish and Wildlife
19 Service and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game,
20 State of Alaska, I mean we need to strengthen our
21 partnership with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as
22 well.

23
24 MR. FISCHER: Yes. That's what it's
25 about.

26
27 MS. HOSETH: Okay. Well, that's what I
28 figured, but it says strengthening partnerships with
29 Alaska Natives and the State of Alaska.

30
31 MR. FISCHER: And the Fish and Wildlife
32 Service collectively. Okay. What do I have on the
33 next slide, Jason, before I go to Tundra Swans again.
34 Okay. Just a little bit more details on that. For
35 certain we're going to have this together for the
36 spring AMBCC meeting. We just have a few placeholders.
37 We put Bethel and Kotzebue down there as placeholders.

38
39
40 We don't want to go anywhere unless
41 we're invited and if there's interest for this to
42 happen there. We hope to visit regional meetings in
43 two places. It could be Bethel, Kotzebue, it could be
44 Dillingham. It could be whoever is interested in
45 having us. After the spring meeting we will learn
46 about how well this is working and go out to other
47 sites.

48
49 A few topics were listed here.

50

1 Interpretation of aerial surveys, harvest surveys,
2 waterfowl banding, but really we want to address the
3 questions that you have. So that's all I've got on
4 that. Are there any questions on that before I jump
5 back to Tundra Swans.

6

7 Peter.

8

9 MR. DEVINE: Not on that specifically.
10 Taqulik has been over there reading my thoughts and
11 asking my questions.

12

13 (Laughter)

14

15 MR. DEVINE: Okay. With how much
16 habitat, okay, Patty, you get on the computer and just
17 in Oregon alone and Washington there was 940,000 acres
18 lost. Just in Idaho there was 400,000 acres lost. I
19 think it's going to be pretty interesting to see where
20 these birds go. But back to your Mid-Continent Geese,
21 I mean all of them are headed to Hurricane Alley. I
22 mean it's going to be pretty interesting. I think
23 there's going to be some major die-offs with no food,
24 nowhere to go. Surveys are going to look pretty bad
25 next year.

26

27 MR. FISCHER: Yeah, it's a good
28 comment. We will see what happens when we do the
29 surveys next year. It might really pan out that way.
30 We're keeping our fingers crossed that those birds are
31 able to tolerate those major storms that they deal
32 with.

33

34 Let's see here. Okay. Brandon, I have
35 the information. I have one of the figures, but I just
36 noticed that I have two figures and they have the same
37 data on them. Just before this meeting I thought, you
38 know, I bet someone is going to say can you have that
39 breakdown by region, so I rapidly put it together,
40 which is something that is really dangerous to do with
41 data.

42

43 So I have it on my computer there and I
44 will share that with you immediately after. I can
45 describe -- I don't even want to tell you what that
46 figure is that I have up there, which is the next one
47 because I want to make sure that it's accurate. But I
48 can tell you that I did look at it this morning and
49 both for the Kotzebue Sound region, which is there in

50

1 purple, the numbers of Tundra Swans have been
2 relatively flat from our breeding pair surveys since
3 the '80s and in the Seward Peninsula it's a pretty
4 similar picture.

5
6 Our breeding surveys are not picking up
7 a major increase in swans. The main increase that
8 we've seen during breeding has been on the Yukon Delta.
9 Now that is not to say that there's not more numbers or
10 higher numbers of swans during fall, which I believe is
11 what you guys are seeing, is that correct?

12
13 MR. FAGERSTROM: Fall and spring.

14
15 MR. FISCHER: Fall and spring. So
16 migrating through. So we don't do swan surveys in
17 spring before they breed and we don't do surveys in
18 fall in those regions. I don't doubt at all that
19 there's more swans. Where they're coming from, it
20 could be that some of them are breeding in Siberia and
21 crossing over and then heading down the Western Coast
22 to the Pacific Flyway. It could be that they're
23 breeding in areas outside of our survey corridor. But
24 all reports are from you over the years has been clear
25 and consistent message that there's more swans there
26 than you've seen before and I don't doubt that.

27
28 CHAIRMAN DALE: Brandon.

29
30 MR. AHMASUK: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So
31 just for our area it's kind of showing the northern
32 portion of the Seward Peninsula and then inside the
33 Imuruk Basin area. I've been fortunate to go on
34 flights around the Seward Peninsula, low flying. We've
35 got lots of lakes. I could tell you right now even
36 just right outside the Nome area, even outside Jack's
37 area, lots of lakes and when you're flying over them
38 there's just swans. I guess just a heads up, I guess,
39 that there's a lot of swans that are being missed, I
40 guess.

41
42 MR. FAGERSTROM: Right there is Golovin
43 and we represent an area from here to approximately
44 there with the items included. Right now in the spring
45 this is a staging area for Brant that are on their way
46 to wherever, North Slope, somewhere. Over the years
47 we've noticed a lot more swans. Growing up it was a
48 \$1,000 fine if you shot one. It used to be cheaper to
49 shoot a swan than buy a turkey, so everybody was

50

1 breaking the law, but that was before Food Stamps.

2

3 Anyway, we get a lot of swans there and
4 they come from this area. We could see them flying in.
5 They come from down here. We're worried about our
6 eelgrass beds. This area here they get a lot of Snow
7 Geese and I believe they're going to Wrangell Island.
8 These geese go from here pretty much to there in a
9 straight shot.

10

11 But the Brant would go pile up here for
12 about a week, then they take off. There'd be 20,000 of
13 them going in a circle and blasting off somewhere. But
14 we're getting more and more swans and they're an
15 aggressive bird. Somebody else has stated that they'll
16 chase other birds away from their food. I worry about
17 the health of our forage for the Brant and also got a
18 little concern about how the environment, the eelgrass,
19 in Izembek is.

20 Are they going to be able to handle all the increase in
21 overwintering birds of whatever species there are?

22

23 MR. FISCHER: That's great information
24 and it's from times of year when we don't have any
25 data, so that's really helpful. The birds that we're
26 talking about are probably not using Izembek, which is
27 good. We want to make sure those habitats are secure
28 for Brant. If there's impacts to the eelgrass in your
29 neck of the woods where the Brant are using those beds,
30 that could be a concern.

31

32 So Brandon I'm just going to email you
33 the whole swan report that I've got on my computer
34 right after this presentation so you'll have it on
35 yours. I'll email it to you, Patty, and you can
36 distribute it to the Council. Thanks.

37

38 CHAIRMAN DALE: Gayla.

39

40 MS. HOSETH: Thank you. Thanks for
41 emailing it to Patty. I was going to tease and say
42 Brandon could then send it to us. I just had a quick
43 question. I know we have to get out of the room here
44 in just a few minutes. Can somebody tell us why Tundra
45 Swans are closed in Game Management Units 90 and 10?

46

47 MR. DEVINE: I could answer because I
48 was the one that said yeah. We were told they were
49 specifically a whole new species that they found just

50

1 unique to our area, so that was it.

2

3 MR. FISCHER: I believe you're talking
4 about the -- is it a portion of the Alaska Peninsula?

5

6

7 CHAIRMAN DALE: Yeah, it's the Alaska
8 Peninsula below Port Moller, I guess, and any
9 Aleutians.

10

11 MR. FISCHER: Yeah. So my
12 understanding is that group of birds is a population
13 that basically does not migrate anywhere. Those
14 breeders winter there and it's a small group of birds
15 that's not associated with the rest of the Western
16 population. The results of that were published in a
17 paper by Chris Dau about 12, 15 years ago now.

18

19 If I remember correctly, this issue was
20 debated and considered through the AMBCC a while back.
21 Well, Peter just mentioned that.

22

23 MS. HOSETH: Is that still the case
24 today, 15, 16 years later that they're still staying
25 there and not migrating? Do you guys have data to show
26 that?

27

28 MR. FISCHER: I think it's fair to say
29 that we don't have data that would show that they are
30 still doing the same thing that they did 15 years ago,
31 but the numbers of swans in that particular region have
32 not changed.

33

34 CHAIRMAN DALE: Todd.

35

36 MR. SFORMO: Just a quick question on
37 the Brant. Twice during the discussion you mentioned
38 change in habitat on the North Slope and specifically
39 change in temperature that seems to be maybe inviting
40 more of these birds. Has that been tested? I mean is
41 there references to this or can you specify specific
42 change or is that more of a surmising that that's
43 possibly the case?

44

45 MR. FISCHER: So what I was referring
46 to with the habitat was based on a publication by USGS
47 Ken Tape and Paul Flynn and others that documented a
48 large increase in the size of the grazing lawn habitat
49 in the Teshekpuk region.

50

1 MR. SFORMO: Thanks.

2

3 CHAIRMAN DALE: Okay. Before we find
4 out if there's any other questions we have a couple of
5 things to wrap up. First off there's a coffee jar in
6 the break room for donations.

7

8 MS. SCHWALENBERG: It's back here now.

9

10 CHAIRMAN DALE: It's back here. Please
11 don't put all the burden of that on Patty. And if
12 you've been using the snacks or if you're going to,
13 please contribute. We start at 9:00 tomorrow, is that
14 correct?

15

16 MS. SCHWALENBERG: Yes, it is.

17

18 CHAIRMAN DALE: All right. At 4:30
19 promptly we're going to vacate this room if not a
20 couple minutes before. So we can take a couple more
21 questions for Julian before we adjourn.

22

23 Roland.

24

25 MR. WHITE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I
26 just have a couple sort of questions. After your
27 presentation and doing all the counts everywhere within
28 the small state of Alaska I was wondering if you guys
29 use nothing but aerial surveys for all these different
30 counts that you guys are conducting.

31

32 MR. FISCHER: Thanks for that question.
33 Our program primarily uses aerial surveys. There's a
34 few things that we do that differ. One is a nesting
35 survey in one portion of the Yukon Kuskokwim Delta.
36 I'm just speaking here about waterfowl surveys. There's
37 many other types of things that other biologists in the
38 Migratory Bird Division do.

39

40 In that a study was actually started
41 back in the mid '80s during the goose crisis to try to
42 understand what was happening, why the numbers of geese
43 had gone down so far. So there's a portion of the
44 Delta that's visited by crews that we've talked about
45 before where we calculate the number of nests that are
46 active for each species out there. That's one thing.

47

48 We're also transitioning a lot of our
49 surveys towards photographic methods. I believe it's

50

1 wise and prudent to try to always increase the safety
2 of the biologists that are collecting the data. So by
3 increasing the altitude of the planes, keeping them
4 further from the ground and with the new types of
5 cameras that can get high resolution images we can also
6 overcome biases associated with the numbers of birds
7 that you count with your eye looking outside of an
8 airplane versus a photograph. So we're doing more
9 photographic surveys now.

10

11 MR. WHITE: Thank you. And the other
12 question is -- it doesn't necessarily pertain to geese,
13 swans or ducks. Several years back I asked this
14 question to some biologist about those little -- I
15 don't know what their real names are, those little
16 black birds. They're a miniature size of ravens.
17 They're really tiny. When I was growing up I used to
18 see lots, millions, and then suddenly they disappeared.

19

20

21 After so many years they just
22 reappeared out of nowhere. I asked this biologist, you
23 guys keep bringing scientific methodologist up to the
24 surface and I'm just curious out of your professional
25 scientific hypothesis where do you think or what do you
26 think happened to these birds. Since you guys study
27 all these, do you guys know where they disappeared to.
28 I had the answer that they didn't know or had any
29 hypothesis or theories for the disappearance and
30 reappearance of these birds. So I was hoping that
31 someone can answer that question in this room today.

32

33 MR. FISCHER: Eric has an answer to
34 that one.

35

36 (Laughter)

37

38 DR. TAYLOR: Roland, would you describe
39 the bird as a shorebird, as a bird with kind of a
40 longer bill?

41

42 MR. WHITE: No. They're actually all
43 black, they stay on trees. I don't know what their
44 names are. I asked James Charles who works with Board
45 of Game management and I was hoping that he would know
46 the names, but he told me that they just call them
47 little black birds.

48

49 DR. TAYLOR: Well, I'm stumped. I'm

50

1 going to have to call my lifeline back to the real
2 biologists back in the regional office.

3

4 (Laughter)

5

6 DR. TAYLOR: I was going to say Black
7 Oystercatcher because that's a shorebird that has
8 declined and is somewhat making its way back, but if
9 it's in the trees, I'm stumped.

10

11 MS. NAVES: Is this on the YK Delta?

12

13 MR. WHITE: Yes, it's on the YK Delta.

14

15 CHAIRMAN DALE: All right. There's our
16 homework for tonight, the mystery bird. With that
17 we'll adjourn and come back tomorrow at 9:00 o'clock.
18 Like requested, please visit the snack jar and also
19 we've got to vacate this room right now, so take your
20 conversations downstairs, please.

21

22 (Off record)

23

24 (PROCEEDINGS TO BE CONTINUED)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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