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VOLUME I

ALASKA MIGRATORY BIRD CO-MANAGEMENT COUNCIL

FALL MEETING

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA
SEPTEMBER 24, 2014

Members Present:

- Doug Vincent-Lang, Alaska Department of Fish and Game
- Pete Probasco, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- Peter Devine, Aleutian/Pribilof Islands Association
- Jack Fagerstrom, Kawerak
- Cyrus Harris, Maniilaq Association, Kotzebue
- Mike Pederson, North Slope Region, Barrow
- Joeneal Hicks, Copper River Native Association
- Gayla Hoseth, Bristol Bay Native Association
- Randy Mayo, Tanana Chiefs representative, Interior
- Myron Naneng, Association of Village Presidents
- George Squartsoff, Kodiak
- Jim Ujioka, Chugach Regional Resources Commission

Executive Director, Patty Brown-Schwalenberg

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P R O C E E D I N G S

(Anchorage, Alaska - 9/24/2014)

(On record)

CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Good morning, everyone. Thank you for joining us. We're here for the fall meeting of the Alaska Migratory Bird Co-Management Council. My name is Doug Vincent-Lang, I'm the current Chair, with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Before we do a round of introduction, let's start off with a moment of silence to think about what we're doing here and pray for good work.

(Moment of silence)

CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Thank you. So the first thing we have to do is seat alternates and I think there's only one. Mike is sitting in for Taqulik and I approved that. Anybody else. Patty, any other alternates.

MS. SCHWALENBERG: No.

CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Okay. Pete.

MR. PROBASCO: Doug, I have a commitment tomorrow, so I will have Eric Taylor sit in for me for tomorrow's part of the meeting.

CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Good. Eric, you're a Packer fan, right?

(Laughter)

CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Let's do a roll call. Patty, will you walk us through the roll call.

MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: Sure. Association of Village Council Presidents.

MR. NANENG: Here.

MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: Bristol Bay Native Association.

MS. HOSETH: Here.

MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: Chugach

1 Regional Resources Commission.
2
3 MR. UJIOKA: Here.
4
5 MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: Copper River
6 Native Association.
7
8 MR. HICKS: Here.
9
10 MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: Kawerak.
11
12 MR. FAGERSTROM: Here.
13
14 MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG:
15 Aleutian/Pribilof Islands Association. Peter might be
16 coming in late. Sun'aq Tribe of Kodiak.
17
18 MR. SQUARTSOFF: Here.
19
20 MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: Maniilaq.
21
22 MR. HARRIS: Here.
23
24 MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: North Slope
25 Borough.
26
27 MR. PEDERSON: Here.
28
29 MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: Tanana Chiefs
30 Conference.
31
32 MR. MAYO: Here.
33
34 MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: U.S. Fish and
35 Wildlife Service.
36
37 MR. PROBASCO: Here.
38
39 MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: The Alaska
40 Department of Fish and Game.
41
42 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Present.
43
44 MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: Mr. Chairman,
45 we have a quorum.
46
47 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Thank you.
48 Let's go into introductions. My name is Doug Vincent-
49 Lang, the director for Wildlife Conservation with the
50 Alaska Department of Fish and Game and if we can go

1 around the table here starting with Pete to the left.
2
3 MR. PROBASCO: Good morning. I'm Pete
4 Probasco. I work for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife
5 Service as the Assistant Regional Director for
6 Migratory Birds.
7
8 MR. HICKS: I'm Joeneal Hicks. I come
9 from the Upper Copper River area, Ahtna Region.
10
11 MR. HARRIS: I'm Cyrus Harris. I'm
12 from Kotzebue. Work for Maniilaq Association.
13
14 MR. SQUARTSOFF: George Squartsoff from
15 Port Lions, Alaska.
16
17 MR. UJIOKA: Jim Ujioka, Chugach
18 Regional Resources Commission.
19
20 MR. FAGERSTROM: Jack Fagerstrom from
21 Golovin.
22
23 MS. HOSETH: Good morning. I'm Gayla
24 Hoseth from Dillingham, Alaska for Bristol Bay Native
25 Association.
26
27 MR. MAYO: Randy Mayo, Stevens Village
28 representing the Tanana Chiefs region.
29
30 MR. PEDERSON: Good morning. Mike
31 Pederson, North Slope Borough, Barrow.
32
33 MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: Patty
34 Schwalenberg, Executive Director of AMBCC. Good
35 morning.
36
37 MR. NANENG: Good morning. My name is
38 Myron Naneng from the Association of Village Council
39 Presidents on the YK Delta, the best bird country in
40 the world.
41
42 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: If we could
43 just kind of go through the audience. Thank you.
44
45 DR. SANDERS: Good morning. I'm Todd
46 Sanders, representative for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife
47 Service.
48
49 MR. MATHEWS: Vince Mathews,
50 subsistence specialist for Arctic, Kanuti and Yukon

1 Flats Refuges.

2

3 MS. NAVES: Lili Naves, Division of
4 Subsistence, Department of Fish and Game.

5

6 DR. TAYLOR: Good morning. I'm Eric
7 Taylor. I'm the Migratory Bird Chief with the U.S.
8 Fish and Wildlife Service here in Alaska.

9

10 MR. AHMASUK: Good morning. Brandon
11 Ahmasuk, Subsistence Director at Kawerak.

12

13 MR. SFORMO: Todd Sformo, biologist,
14 North Slope Borough.

15

16 DR. ROSENBERG: Dan Rosenberg, Alaska
17 Department of Fish and Game, Anchorage.

18

19

20 MR. ANDREW: Timothy Andrew, AVCP,
21 natural resources.

22

23 DR. FALL: Jim Fall, Division of
24 Subsistence, Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

25

26 MS. DEWHURST: Donna Dewhurst, Staff to
27 the AMBCC with Fish and Wildlife.

28

29 DR. OTIS: Dave Otis with Colorado
30 State University.

31

32 DR. GEORGE: Luke George, Colorado
33 State University.

34

35 MS. WILKINS: Kristi Wilkins, branch of
36 harvest surveys in Laurel, Maryland, Fish and Wildlife
37 Service.

38

39 MR. NOEL: Good morning. I'm Ryan
40 Noel, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Law
41 Enforcement here in Anchorage, Alaska.

42

43 MR. MCCAFFERY: Brian McCaffery, Yukon
44 Delta National Wildlife Refuge.

45

46 MR. FISCHER: Julian Fischer, Migratory
47 Birds here in Anchorage.

48

49 MS. BEHE: Hi. Carolina Behe with the
50 Inuit Circumpolar Council.

1 MR. TESSLER: David Tessler, Alaska
2 Department of Fish and Game.
3
4 MR. REISHUS: Brandon Reishus, Oregon
5 Department of Fish and Wildlife.
6
7 MR. HUNTINGTON: Orville Huntington,
8 Tanana Chiefs Conference.
9
10 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Thank you and
11 welcome. We have an agenda in front of us. It's under
12 tab 1 or I guess right before tab 1. Does anybody have
13 any suggestions for modifications?
14
15 Pete.
16
17 MR. PROBASCO: Mr. Chair. Just to let
18 you know that Sarah Conn will be traveling from
19 Fairbanks tomorrow. So if we get to the agenda item
20 today, we'll have to just delay it until tomorrow.
21
22 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Which agenda
23 item is that?
24
25 MR. PROBASCO: I'm sorry. Under 10(e)
26 update on Yellow-billed Loon Listing Decision and the
27 Steller's Eider.
28
29 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Okay. We'll
30 delay that until she gets here. Anybody else.
31
32 (No comments)
33
34 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Okay. Move to
35 adopt the agenda.
36
37 MR. UJIOKA: I move to adopt the
38 agenda.
39
40 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Second.
41
42 MR. PEDERSON: Second.
43
44 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: All in favor.
45
46 IN UNISON: Aye.
47
48 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: We will work
49 off this agenda then. Next on the agenda is public
50 comment. Do we have anybody wishing to testify to the

1 Council.

2

3

(No comments)

4

5

CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: I will ask
6 again right after lunch and tomorrow morning if there's
7 anybody that shows up that would like to provide
8 testimony to the Council. With that, we'll close
9 public testimony. Regional representative reports.
10 Let's see, is it right or left should I start. Do you
11 want to go first?

12

13

MR. NANENG: Adoption of Council action
14 items.

15

16

CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Oh, I'm sorry.
17 Adoption of Council action items. So, Patty, can you
18 walk us through those please.

19

20

MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: Under Tab 1
21 are the action items
22 that were passed by the Council. A full report from
23 the executive director is included under Tab 2, but, in
24 short, we did form the Handicraft Committee. It has
25 met several times and we'll be speaking about that
26 later on in the agenda.

27

28

The proposals that we did receive for
29 consideration by the Council at the April meeting were
30 all referred to various committees and the committees
31 have been meeting on those. I think that was all for
32 the action items that were included at the April
33 meeting, but, like I said, a more detailed report is
34 included under Tab 2 on the activities that the Staff
35 have been conducting since April.

36

37

Thank you.

38

39

CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: And I
40 understand the motion to approve the Bristol Bay Native
41 Association proposal to allow a limited harvest of
42 Emperor Goose for cultural and spiritual purposes has
43 been referred back to a committee.

44

45

MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: That is
46 correct.

47

48

CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: And the
49 timeline for that is over the next year to take a look
50 and report back?

1 MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: The Emperor
2 Goose Committee of the Pacific Flyway Council, which is
3 composed of Eric Taylor and Dan Rosenberg, will be
4 reporting on that later on in the agenda.

5
6 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Okay. Do we
7 need to take an action on this?

8
9 MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: You have to
10 adopt the action items.

11
12 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Okay. So
13 motion to adopt the action items.

14
15 MR. PROBASCO: So move.

16
17 MS. HOSETH: Second.

18
19 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Any discussion.

20
21 (No comments)

22
23 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Hearing none.
24 All in favor.

25
26 IN UNISON: Aye.

27
28 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Anybody
29 opposed.

30
31 (No opposing votes)

32
33 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Thank you.
34 Motion carries. So regional representative reports.
35 George, do you want to start.

36
37 MR. SQUARTSOFF: Yeah, I'm here to help
38 our people get our way of life back, some of it, in the
39 best way I could. We're just trying to just do the way
40 we lived in the past and do our thing and they just
41 want a few things down there. You guys all know all
42 about the stuff I've been asking for. That's all I
43 really have to say.

44
45 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Thank you.

46
47 Cyrus.

48
49 MR. HARRIS: Cyrus Harris. This is my
50 second meeting here. My first meeting last year was to

1 try to get an idea on how the migratory bird process
2 actually goes. So after I went back home I did write a
3 request to our tribes on getting together these village
4 representatives to help me have a voice for our
5 community and then brought that up to the Manillaq
6 board to approve. As we speak, they're having their
7 board meeting. I did submit it on an action item. So
8 as of today I still don't have that approved group of
9 six village representatives to carry on my voice for my
10 community.

11
12 And I apologize to Donna for her
13 frustration yesterday. I'd like to thank my friend
14 over here for speaking on my behalf as far as turnovers
15 go and where I'm at today. So within our board meeting
16 back home I did express this frustration with the board
17 that I am trying to get this migratory bird up and
18 rolling for our area. The process just takes time.
19 There's so much other things that they have going on
20 back home.

21
22 Thank you.

23
24 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Thank you.

25
26 Joeneal.

27
28 MR. HICKS: I'm kind of like unprepared
29 for this here. Can you come back to me.

30
31 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Do you want to
32 go next?

33
34 MR. UJIOKA: I'm going to refer to
35 Patty for Chugach Regional Resources Commission.

36
37 MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: Thank you,
38 Jim. Just a short report from the Chugach Region.
39 Since April -- well, I can't say since April. The
40 Chugach Regional Resources Commission serves as the
41 migratory bird council for the Gulf of Alaska
42 communities and we did meet twice this fiscal year.
43 The first year was to discuss current activities that
44 were going on within the council and updates on current
45 initiatives and then the second meeting was to review
46 the proposals that were submitted for the regulatory
47 cycle in April and the board took action on those and
48 they are planning to meet again within the next month.

49
50 Thank you.

1 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Jack.

2

3 MR. FAGERSTROM: Jack Fagerstrom
4 representing Kawerak. There was a transportation
5 workshop in Nome. I attended that because there's a
6 lot of people from our region and they wanted to get
7 some feedback to their concerns.

8

9 I think the first one was avian cholera
10 update and the cleanup efforts and could we get
11 something on that incident that happened in Gambell and
12 Savoonga.

13

14 Also there was a lot of concern about
15 the increased shipping traffic through the straits and
16 what is that going to do to our Eider ducks and
17 endangered species out there.

18

19 There was an incident of wanton waste,
20 I believe, in St. Michael and is there anything
21 happening on that. I believe Mr. Probasco was mailed a
22 picture from Brandon.

23

24 MR. PROBASCO: Yes. I was trying to
25 remember what email, but Brandon sent that to me on
26 Monday, I believe, and I forwarded that on to LE, law
27 enforcement.

28

29 MR. FAGERSTROM: Okay. And there was
30 also concern about global warming and the raising water
31 levels affecting the nesting areas. On a positive
32 side, I don't know what's so positive about it, but
33 we've got a lot more swans than we used to and they're
34 affecting the feeding areas of other birds.

35

36 That's about it. Thanks.

37

38 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Thank you.

39

40 Gayla.

41

42 MS. HOSETH: Hi. Good morning. I'm
43 Gayla Hoseth with Bristol Bay Native Association in
44 Dillingham. I was trying to gather our YKC meeting
45 before our meeting here today, but I couldn't get a
46 quorum together, so when we go back we're going to have
47 a meeting in October.

48

49 We are happy that the proposals, you
50 know, especially the wanton waste proposal, that we're

1 moving forward on that, the Emperor Goose one as well,
2 and also the flexible harvest season dates. We're glad
3 that at least those are in committee and that we can
4 further discuss those.

5
6 I am happy to say that when I went down
7 to -- I was traveling down the peninsula a couple weeks
8 ago and I bumped into the survey crew down there in
9 Port Heiden, so that was exciting to see them walk in
10 when they were actually doing the surveys. When we
11 were flying, we did see a lot of birds, you know, in
12 the ponds and everything. It just made me like wonder
13 and think like how are they actually capturing all of
14 the birds. It's like they were everywhere. So that
15 process would be interesting to learn more about that
16 and actually see when they do do those aerial counts.
17 There were a lot of birds when we were flying back up
18 and I think that they were focusing on Steller's
19 Eiders, I believe what they told me, so I didn't know
20 about -- I think that's what they said. I'm not sure.
21 I mean are they looking at all the birds. So that was
22 that.

23
24 Another thing, I do get a lot of calls
25 or comments about -- and I know that Donna is working
26 on it, but in our book here for the Bristol Bay map the
27 Pebble Mine site is on the map and I get a lot of
28 concerns in our area that that's even on the map for
29 Bristol Bay. It's not a -- it's an issue in our area
30 and a lot of the people in the area would like to see
31 that off of our map in the book. I mentioned that
32 yesterday and Donna said that she's in the process of
33 updating that to get that off because I think that
34 people have also been calling the office here in
35 Anchorage about that. It's on Page 13.

36
37 Other than that I think a lot of people
38 had a good hunting season and egg gathering. We had a
39 really great summer. The weather was really nice for
40 our area and we're looking forward to our fall meeting.

41
42 Thank you.

43
44 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Thank you.

45
46 Randy.

47
48 MR. MAYO: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yeah,
49 up in the TCC region we just had our regional council
50 meeting lat Friday the 19th in Fairbanks where three of

1 the six subregions were represented. In attendance was
2 Patty, executive director, and Vince Mathews. We had a
3 pretty good meeting. Also in attendance was the deputy
4 director for the Fairbanks Native Association. Patty
5 gave her an update and brought us up to speed.

6
7 Some of the topics of discussion for
8 our region was -- you know, TCC is a pretty large,
9 pretty broad region, 43 tribal communities. So, you
10 know, we talked a lot about the meager funds allowed to
11 conduct such extensive work over a large area and how
12 to bring our tribal members, our hunters and respective
13 tribal councils up to speed and in the loop on this
14 whole endeavor here as we live, as everywhere else, far
15 away from where decisions are made, whether it's the
16 State or Federal agencies, or even this body meeting
17 here. It's, you know, obviously removed from the
18 activity of gathering our food out there on the land.
19 So we talked a lot about, you know, in-house, how to
20 get more and more information out.

21
22 We also talked about where the
23 transport issue is in the discussions. Like other
24 urban areas and hubs, Fairbanks has a large population
25 of tribal membership from throughout the region that
26 rely a lot on our traditional and customary foods. So
27 we discuss those initiatives and part of the discussion
28 was we spent time on the invitation component that's
29 part of the transport issue.

30
31 One of our larger tribes in the region,
32 you know, has some technical tribal resource capacity
33 within their tribal government, so they were able to
34 develop a format for tribal members to fill out and be
35 invited back to their community of Fort Yukon to
36 participate in the spring hunt. Their representative
37 agreed to, you know, share the format with the
38 different regions here as an example of what one
39 community with some capacity can do. Patty has a copy
40 of that community's format.

41
42 So those are just some of the
43 highlights there.

44
45 Thank you.

46
47 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Thank you.
48 Patty, do you have a calendar up where all the
49 different regional meetings occur, like when the dates
50 are and locations are?

1 MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: No, we don't,
2 but I think that would be helpful. Usually we hear a
3 couple weeks in advance and try to make arrangements to
4 attend those meetings. So, yeah, as soon as people
5 have their meeting set, if they could give me that
6 information or Donna, we can -- Donna especially could
7 put it on the website.

8

9 That's a good idea.

10

11 Thank you.

12

13 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Yeah, because
14 if I was traveling some place, I might stop in if it's
15 convenient or fits in the schedule. So it would be
16 good to hear.

17

18 Mike.

19

20 MR. PEDERSON: Good morning. Our
21 regional management body will be meeting next week,
22 Monday and Tuesday. Our first day will be in Barrow
23 and then we'll be traveling to Atqasuk to discuss
24 migratory bird issues there with the community. Due to
25 issues with lodging, we're not able to spend the night
26 there, so we'll just be there for the day. I did let
27 Patty and Donna know about that meeting and invited
28 several people from the Service, but it seems like
29 nobody wants to go to one of our smaller communities,
30 so we'll make due and I'll update the people from this
31 meeting.

32

33 Our harvest this spring was good, but
34 it was late. We had a late spring, so the birds showed
35 up late, but the harvest was good. Up until two weeks
36 ago we had lots of geese around town, in people's back
37 yards and whatnot along the road systems in Barrow, so
38 they were getting ready to fly south, so all the
39 parents and their young ones were getting their full,
40 including in my own back yard. My niece and nephew
41 were visiting me and they told me that I had visitors
42 in the back and went to the kitchen window and saw
43 about three dozen geese just feeding, so that was
44 pretty cool.

45

46 We did have an incident with a
47 Steller's Eider in Barrow this year. Our department
48 hasn't been involved as much as we were in previous
49 incidents because the Service does have staff in Barrow
50 right now and they've been working on that issue.

1 I guess that's about it. But, yeah,
2 harvest was good in all the communities. Somebody
3 asked me what's going on in the migratory bird world
4 and I guess in our region it was easy to say not much
5 because we weren't dealing with stuff that we have been
6 in the past. That took up a lot of our time. We are
7 working on finalizing our final and third year report
8 on the inadvertent take of Yellow-billed Loons. As
9 soon as we get that done, we'll forward it to Donna and
10 the AMBCC.

11
12 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Thank you.

13
14 Myron.

15
16 MR. NANENG: Quyana, Mr. Chair and good
17 morning, everyone. The AVCP Waterfowl Conservation
18 Committee met in Oregon in April. Was it in April? We
19 talked about some of the concerns that we had about the
20 four arctic nesting geese as well as the Steller's
21 Eiders and Spectacled Eiders.

22
23 The Y-K Delta Goose Management Plan
24 still has to be signed yet because of major concerns by
25 the Oregon farmers and Oregon Fish and Wildlife Service
26 or Fish and Game because of the fact that there's too
27 many -- they say that there's too many Cackling Canada
28 Geese down there. So the 1984 Goose Management Plan
29 was successful in building up the numbers and to the
30 consternation of farmers down in Oregon, but it's not
31 our fault. The birds have moved north for their
32 wintering grounds from California to Oregon. That's
33 why that's creating a problem.

34
35 We hope that Oregon will sign that
36 Goose Management Plan sometime because it gives an
37 opportunity for the villages to participate in law
38 enforcement whenever there's going to be a conservation
39 concern of migratory birds. So far the only two
40 parties that have signed it are Fish and Wildlife
41 Service and AVCP Waterfowl Conservation Committee.

42
43 We're also working on the Duck Stamp.
44 Last week sent to Begich's office. Did a hotline on
45 send Bill 2621 to where they were trying to get the
46 legislation passed without putting it on the floor.
47 They went to each of the senators' offices to try and
48 get that legislation approved; however, somebody
49 objected, so we're back to pursuing that again. The
50 Duck Stamp exemption is something that we've been

1 trying to work on for quite some time.

2

3 We had a meeting at Hooper Bay with the
4 regional director regarding the Steller's Eider
5 reintroduction. AVCP at the present time is opposed to
6 the introduction unless there are major commitments
7 that the villages can agree to that will not limit or
8 restrict our subsistence migratory bird hunts or
9 gathering of eggs during springtime. So there was a
10 meeting between -- about a year and a half ago with
11 Chevak, Newtok, Hooper Bay and I believe Scammon Bay
12 was there and this is right on the coast, right between
13 the Yukon and Kuskokwim River delta areas, that they
14 want to do the reintroduction.

15

16 One of the things that I've observed
17 and something to be concerned about is loss of
18 vegetation along the coast. This loss of vegetation
19 along the coast, like at Hooper Bay and at Kokechik
20 Bay, impacts the nesting areas and that's one of the
21 things that we've observed for the past 10 years, is
22 that vegetation in low areas where the birds usually
23 nest are becoming bare and becoming nothing but mud and
24 no vegetation at all.

25

26 Some of the areas where I know I
27 personally have walked through to areas is nothing but
28 mud, so can't even walk through that or take a shortcut
29 of what used to be a shortcut right between the village
30 of Hooper Bay and the sand dunes of Hooper Bay. The
31 loss of vegetation is about like three-quarters of a
32 mile inland and that's quite substantial. So we're
33 getting concerned about it and I'm not sure if there's
34 been any aerial photos recently of the area and trying
35 to compare that with loss of vegetation in the nesting
36 areas.

37

38 The berries were good. Salmonberries,
39 blackberries and other good food that the birds feed on
40 and compete with people in villages, the blackberries,
41 have been pretty much limited to the coastal areas and
42 one of the things that I heard from some of my
43 relatives, both that Hooper Bay and Scammon Bay said
44 they had to compete with the Cackling Canada Geese and
45 White-fronts in trying to pick the berries close to the
46 villages as quickly as they can because the birds were
47 eating them up. But there's hardly any berries further
48 inland, so it's causing a problem for many of the
49 people that usually subsistence hunt for migratory
50 birds during the fall time.

1 So I think most of the birds are on the
2 coast but most of them have started migrating. One of
3 the things that we've observed this year is that by
4 September 15th we usually see a long line of cranes
5 flying south high up in the air. This past weekend I
6 saw a crane flying around in the tundra below Bethel
7 and I said to myself, jeez, must be a change in
8 climate. The bird must feel that it's warmer here in
9 Alaska than where it's supposed to be going to. So I
10 think all of this is the impacts of climate change that
11 we're observing now.

12
13 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: I would have
14 thought you would have been thinking that looks good.

15
16 MR. NANENG: That's what I thought, but
17 it wasn't close enough to be shot at. So it looked
18 delicious. I imagined it being on my plate and the
19 rest of it bird soup or a roasted crane in place of a
20 turkey. But there's still some birds out in the Y-K
21 Delta, but not as much because most of them have
22 already started to migrate.

23
24 So we'd like to thank Oregon for
25 hosting that meeting that we had this last spring. We
26 held it at a casino down in Oregon. I think everybody
27 went home losing money instead of gaining any.

28
29 (Laughter)

30
31 MR. NANENG: So don't ever hold
32 meetings at a casino. Otherwise you'll go home poor.

33
34 Thank you.

35
36 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Thank you,
37 Myron.

38
39 Any other reports.

40
41 Joeneal.

42
43 MR. HICKS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good
44 morning, everyone. We held two meetings over the last
45 year. The last one was held about a week ago prior to
46 this meeting. We are overspent by about \$2,000 or a
47 little over \$2,000. To be exact, \$2,045.

48
49 We held our migratory bird camp, which
50 was held the first week of August. I did not attend as

1 I was in the SRC and the POC meetings and had to get
2 back to the office. Anyway, that camp was successful
3 as I'm told and I have the report here with 30
4 participants and a moose was taken. Next year the camp
5 will be held on the Nabesna Road. Again, everybody is
6 invited to attend.

7
8 There are no specific issues in our
9 area. Mother Nature played a big role during this
10 year. There was a lot of rain specifically in the
11 Mentasta/Chistochina area. Like Myron has said,
12 because of the weather it has really played a role in
13 how people harvest their subsistence foods. Berries
14 were not really available. I mean very, very light and
15 not very much as it used to be.

16
17 The other specific issue that might
18 come forward, and I think probably we can work this out
19 though in-house, and that has to do with a situation in
20 Chitina where a resident who does not live within the
21 village, is about 25 miles away from the village
22 center, although he has a post office or the way
23 explained to me that because he has a post office in
24 Chitina he is considered an eligible resident. I think
25 that might become an issue in the future. Maybe Donna
26 can speak more to that effect, but I know that it may
27 become an issue as the village learns more about this.

28
29 Other than that I've been working on a
30 Trumpeter.....

31
32 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Could you
33 explain that a little bit more just to -- having a post
34 office box makes you eligible?

35
36 MR. HICKS: Yes. As I understand it
37 from Donna.

38
39 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Thank you.

40
41 Donna.

42
43 MS. DEWHURST: Donna Dewhurst, Fish and
44 Wildlife Service. Early in the program when we were
45 trying to figure out how to deal with the folks that
46 live off the grid, that are out -- they really don't
47 live in any community. They live like you mentioned
48 way out there. The way it was dealt with or decided to
49 be dealt with early on in the program was wherever the
50 preponderance of evidence says is their residence and

1 that usually goes by their driver's license, hunting
2 license, where they get their PFD, all that.

3
4 It's usually, in the case of somebody
5 living very remote, where they get their mail because
6 that's usually their only technical address is a P.O.
7 box. So whatever community that is the closest
8 community that they get their mail that's what's
9 considered the residence. That's how it was considered
10 to be -- how do we deal with these folks and we just
11 lump them basically with the closest community that
12 they live near and that was the decision 10-plus years
13 ago.

14
15 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Do we suspect
16 that that's being abused at all?

17
18 MS. DEWHURST: This is the first time
19 anybody's questioned it.

20
21 MR. HICKS: Well, in our situation
22 like, for instance, Chitina, that's the only post
23 office there is between there and Copper Center. So
24 what does that mean like, for instance, Kenny Lake? I
25 mean where do they get their mail at? Copper Center?
26 Does that make them included? That could be an issue
27 at some point in the future is where I'm going with
28 that.

29
30 Anyhow, the last thing I wanted to say
31 is that I did a Trumpeter Swan proposal. It's on your
32 agenda and I do by have my report.

33
34 Thank you.

35
36 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Thank you. Any
37 other reports.

38
39 MR. PEDERSON: Mr. Chair.

40
41 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Yeah, Mike.

42
43 MR. PEDERSON: I forgot to add in my
44 report we didn't participate with the Service at the
45 Migratory Bird Fair this year because of scheduling
46 conflicts. They decided to do the fair right in the
47 middle of -- or right before whaling started and our
48 staff was pretty much busy dealing with whaling in our
49 communities and they wanted to do the fair at that
50 time, so we decided not to participate this year.

1 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Cyrus.

2

3 MR. HARRIS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

4 After listening to all these other reports here I
5 forgot to mention participation by resident of excluded
6 areas. That took place early on this spring back in my
7 home town and it kind of got me by surprise. We did go
8 through it, this new book that came out. And we did
9 have a hunter that was interested in going back home to
10 participate in the migratory bird hunt. So he'd like
11 to be as legal as possible, so he went through this
12 booklet here and read that, contacted his tribe back
13 home, who didn't know really anything about it, which
14 saw my name on here and got my attention. So it got me
15 reading the regulation book really quick.

16

17 So thanks to Patty and thanks to Jay
18 for helping me out on that. I did submit a letter to
19 all our tribal governments in case they run into a
20 situation like this, but that was our first practice of
21 this regulation that took place in the booklet here
22 this spring.

23

24 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Thank you.

25

26 Mike.

27

28 MR. PEDERSON: And again thank you,
29 Cyrus, for bringing that up. We had the same issue in
30 our region and then we did send out letters to the
31 tribes, but then we had some concerns about it, but we
32 went ahead and let the people know. Nothing happened
33 in our region, but we did do exactly what Cyrus said.

34

35 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Thank you.

36 Anything else?

37

38 (No comments)

39

40 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Hearing
41 nothing, lets move into old business. Pacific Flyway
42 Council Service Regulations Committee report. Patty,
43 are you going to lead us through this. Joeneal?

44

45 MR. HICKS: Yes.

46

47 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Do you want to
48 go first?

49

50 MR. HICKS: You.

1 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: I choose Patty
2 first.

3
4 MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: I was trying
5 to defer to my esteemed colleague.

6
7 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: And he deferred
8 back to you.

9
10 MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: Joeneal Hicks
11 came from Copper River to the Pacific Flyway Council
12 and the Service Regulations Committee with me and we
13 did miss Mike Pederson this year. He's been coming for
14 quite a few years. Joeneal did a really good job. We
15 went to the Study Committee meetings and then Non-Game
16 Technical Committee meeting at the Pacific Flyway
17 Council, which was held in Utah.

18
19 Last year we reported that we were
20 trying to develop a communications strategy with the
21 Non-Game Technical Committee, but now that the Alaska
22 Department of Fish and Game has appointed, I believe,
23 someone to work with the Non-Game Technical Committee I
24 believe that those lines of communication have been
25 opened and we are communicating more directly with them
26 and with the Study Committee, so things have improved
27 since a year ago. So we decided that there was no need
28 to have an official communications strategy with that
29 committee.

30
31 We recommended or the Pacific Flyway
32 Council recommended our proposals to the Service
33 Regulations Committee and again they were just the
34 consent agenda items since we didn't have any proposals
35 that were actually forwarded onto the PFC and SRC. So
36 then the next week we did go to the Service Regs
37 Committee and they approved our consent agenda
38 proposals for the 2015 subsistence harvest season.

39
40 As a side note, we had a meeting with
41 Jerome Ford and Brad Bortner and Eric Taylor and Todd
42 Sanders were in attendance. We basically talked about
43 how the AMBCC will fit into the new meeting schedule
44 that the Service Regulations Committee is considering
45 and also had discussions on improving communication and
46 coordination between the AMBCC and the Fish and
47 Wildlife Service.

48
49 So it was a very positive meeting and I
50 think we're moving in the right direction.

1 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

2

3 MR. HICKS: I just wanted to add that
4 we had discussion on
5 the handicraft bill at the SRC. There is one
6 particular area that I would like to really bring out
7 and bring forth. The Native people of Alaska has done
8 this for thousands of years and believe that needs to
9 be honored. I mean if you take a look at those that
10 live along the coast, I want to say Eskimos, but that's
11 not the word that they would like to be used. They are
12 Sugpiaq, they are Inuit, they are Inupiat, they are
13 Aleut, et cetera, et cetera, and that's who they should
14 be referred to. They have their song and dance and
15 their song and dance reflect who they are. The bird,
16 the seal, you name it. Again, that is a reflection of
17 their culture and their identity.

18

19 In my opinion, this handicraft bill
20 should not be played around with I guess you could say.
21 We need to fix it and make it right for our people.
22 That was my point that I really wanted to make clear.
23 I believe there should be an education process for
24 those who live in the Lower 48 as they do not know a
25 lot about Alaska Native lifestyle and who we are.

26

27 Thank you.

28

29 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Anything else.

30

31 (No comments)

32

33 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Thank you,

34 Joeneal.

35

36 MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: I have
37 something to add.

38

39 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Go ahead.

40

41 MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: Joeneal just
42 made me remember something too. The SRC did ask us to
43 stay in their meeting for a few minutes and they did
44 ask us to put together some kind of an educational
45 PowerPoint to present to them about subsistence in
46 Alaska Native cultures possibly next year, so we're
47 going to be working on that.

48

49 Thank you.

50

1 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Anything else
2 on this agenda item. I plan to go until 10:30 and then
3 break for 15 minutes. Next on the agenda is report on
4 results from the invitation regulation first year.
5 Patty.

6
7 MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: Thank you, Mr.
8 Chairman. As Cyrus mentioned, there was one request
9 from his region for the invitation process and how to
10 go about that, so we worked with him to get the
11 information to the communities in his region. We
12 actually received one letter but it was very broad. It
13 said all of our tribal members are always welcome to
14 come and hunt, so it didn't have any name, so we have
15 to refine the process, I think, through education and
16 working with the communities.

17
18 As Randy mentioned, the Native Village
19 of Fort Yukon has a natural resource person on staff
20 and they actually developed a form, which I will make
21 copies of, an application form, to request to be
22 invited back to the community. It also includes a
23 survey form so that they know how many birds are
24 captured or caught and what species.

25
26 The one discussion point that I think
27 we have to have with the Fish and Wildlife Service
28 about this invitation process -- let me go back. Those
29 are the only two requests that we had for invitation.
30 In regards to the Fort Yukon one, they actually made
31 their requirements to participate as an invited hunter
32 more strict than what the regulations say. So we need
33 to talk about how that's going to work.

34
35 One issue in particular and Donna and I
36 had spoken with the Native Village of Fort Yukon about
37 this was they were restricting the invitation to tribal
38 members only. As the regulations state, it's open to
39 indigenous inhabitants, which includes non-members. I
40 guess we just need to refine how we're going to address
41 issues like that. We did talk to Andrew, who is the
42 natural resource director, and he said that we could
43 share this information form or application with the
44 attached survey form with the other regional management
45 bodies and any others who are interested in seeing it
46 and maybe we can develop a model, I guess, for other
47 regions to use that would be acceptable to law
48 enforcement and to the Service and the State.

49
50 Thank you.

1 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Thank you.
2 Questions, comments.

3
4 (No comments)

5
6 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Okay. Hearing
7 none, move on to Council committee reports. The first
8 one is handicrafts. Oh, Gayla.

9
10 MS. HOSETH: Sorry, I do have a
11 question. How is it actually enforced when people are
12 out there hunting? Like to show proof.

13
14 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: We have
15 somebody from Fish and Wildlife Service that could
16 probably answer that question.

17
18 MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: I was just
19 going to ask if Ryan could come up.

20
21 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Ryan, I'm not
22 sure if you heard the question or not, but the question
23 refers to how is invitational hunting enforced in the
24 field, I think. Gayla, is that right?

25
26 MS. HOSETH: Uh-huh.

27
28 MR. NOEL: Good morning, Chairman and
29 the rest of the distinguished members of the Council.
30 To answer your question, if a Service special agent or
31 a Refuge officer were to contact a subsistence hunter
32 in the field, they would first ask for their
33 identification and to see if they were members of that
34 included area. If they were there by invitation, the
35 next question they would probably ask is your immediate
36 family member you're here to support and assuming they
37 had a family member there they were supporting and that
38 they were either from the included area or invited,
39 then they would be free to continue their hunting
40 activity.

41
42 If there's something specific about --
43 we have no specific cases this year at all, so I can
44 only speak in hypotheticals right now.

45
46 MS. HOSETH: Thanks. I just wanted to
47 know the procedure.

48
49 MR. NOEL: Absolutely.

50

1 MR. HARRIS: Cyrus Harris. I've got a
2 question to follow along with that. I'm thinking about
3 our folks that are living out in the country that
4 seldom goes into town obviously not carrying their ID.
5 How do you handle that?
6

7 MR. NOEL: Well, I mean obviously it
8 certainly would be helpful if they had identification
9 on them, but that's not a requirement that we've
10 imposed at this point. So what we would continue to do
11 as we've done in the past is either try and establish
12 their residency by going back to the village council or
13 meeting up with them later. One of several methods I
14 think that we could use at a later time to establish
15 the residency rather than take any enforcement action
16 at that moment.
17

18 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Thank you.
19 Gayla, any other questions.
20

21 MS. HOSETH: No.
22

23 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Myron.
24

25 MR. NANENG: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm
26 getting concerned about having to carry identification
27 or law enforcement stopping someone out hunting and
28 asking if he or she has an invitation to either gather
29 eggs or even shoot birds. I might be saying it in the
30 extreme, but you know we recognize Fish and Wildlife
31 Service staff when they come around because they're
32 wearing uniforms. It seems like at some point in the
33 future that some of our people that are going out
34 hunting are going to have to wear on their camouflaged
35 coats or hunting gear initials of which village they're
36 from and all that stuff.
37

38 You know, it just gets -- are we
39 becoming a policed state for the fact that we're trying
40 to gather food out in our villages for our families?
41 You know, it's just -- I thought we lived in a free
42 country is what they say, but it's just getting to the
43 point where we're talking about regulations that are
44 going to be further and further restricting our people
45 from being able to hunt for food and it's getting
46 extreme.
47

48 The State of Alaska did that a couple
49 years ago on people that were fishing on the river
50 because they wanted food. I think that we have to keep

1 in mind that as we go through these regulations let's
2 not make them so restrictive to the point where our
3 people become criminals because they want to put food
4 on the table. So that's my major concern about all
5 this. At some point in the future it's going to
6 require people that are going out hunting to have an ID
7 like they're now asking people to have voter ID just to
8 be able to vote.

9
10 So where are we heading to? That's my
11 concern. I think that if we keep pushing this are we
12 going to use our invitation of hunting and having an ID
13 to vote for someone that will support our positions at
14 some point in the future because this country is going
15 to voter ID status. Now we're going to hunter ID
16 status and that's not a good place to be. With that,
17 Mr. Chairman, thank you.

18
19 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Thank you,
20 Myron. Of course there's always a fine line balance
21 between trying to keep eligible people out hunting
22 versus ineligible people and we'll keep that in
23 consideration as we move forward because we certainly
24 don't want to make it hard to put food on the table of
25 eligible people.

26
27 MR. NANENG: And just from my
28 observation of hunters that are coming back from the Y-
29 K Delta, especially boarding the plane coming from
30 Bethel, with sports hunters from the Lower 48, they
31 seem to have easier access to be able to go hunting. I
32 sat by a guy from Houston, Texas who came back last
33 week after moose hunting. Last night too there were
34 other hunters that came by. We asked them, well, what
35 did you do with the moose meat and he said they all
36 donated it, but we know that hunters out in the Y-K
37 Delta find occasionally a moose without a head, with
38 their heads removed and the whole carcass that's been
39 left behind.

40
41 You know, if that's going to be a case,
42 I think there should be a requirement and monitoring of
43 these hunters that are going out there to make sure
44 that all this meat is being brought back for the
45 benefit of the people instead of just being told
46 hearsay, yeah, we donated the meat and who did they
47 donate it to and that's what we'd like to know as well.
48 This might not be a migratory bird issue, but it's
49 getting to that point where other people have more
50 access to these resources than the people that have

1 been trying to conserve them for their own use.

2

3 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Thank you,
4 Myron.

5

6 Randy.

7

8 MR. MAYO: Yeah, Thank you, Mr. Chair.
9 I just left something out related to this topic here in
10 my regional report. I mentioned that, like I say, the
11 Native Village of Fort Yukon have local tribal
12 capacity, tribal natural resources department of their
13 tribal government. In our region, some tribes have
14 capacity and others don't.

15

16 I mentioned here at one of these
17 meetings that because this was a topic of discussion at
18 our regional meeting that the need and how to meet that
19 need through help and tribes develop your own tribal
20 technical capacity and tribal enforcement of different
21 things like hunting and fishing through tribal code and
22 ordinance.

23

24 In my home community, we were building
25 our capacities and we at one time had -- it wasn't
26 VPSOs, but fully uniformed, armed tribal police that
27 patrolled our area there. We worked real well with the
28 Fish and Wildlife Service and also the State troopers.
29 So eventually that -- I want to continue working on
30 that, but in my home community there we worked out
31 protocol with law enforcement, that they were to check
32 in at the tribal government building there. There's a
33 local protocol.

34

35 So that's just something to think about
36 down the road as we push for more and more tribes to
37 develop their capacities. Some of our regional members
38 did talk about this centralized, far away of
39 administering and enforcing activities out on our area.
40 We're experiencing the same thing in some of our
41 regions as Myron mentioned. You know, outside hunters
42 and whatnot coming in. So I just wanted to make
43 mention of that again, the tribal component.

44

45 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Thank you,
46 Randy. Any other comments.

47

48 (No comments)

49

50 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Hearing none.

1 We're going to move into committee reports. Todd,
2 Handicraft Committee. Just hit the microphone and
3 introduce yourself.

4
5 MR. SFORMO: Todd Sformo, North Slope
6 Borough. As most people know, the Handicraft Committee
7 formed at the end of April last year at the last AMBCC
8 meeting. Since then we've been meeting pretty
9 regularly by teleconference and have numerous calls
10 among members and even outside of the committee all
11 with the express goal of getting a proposal to Patty
12 and Donna before the next SRC meeting in late July.

13
14 Just about a week or two before that
15 there was sort of -- it's been described as kind of an
16 unfortunate coincidence where handicraft-related bills
17 in Congress kind of were mixed up and caught the
18 attention of State Department, Fish and Wildlife,
19 Department of Justice, Legislative Affairs. So a
20 meeting was held among those agencies. A number of new
21 fundamental questions have come up. So rather than
22 deal with the bills separately and our regulatory
23 proposal separately, they were kind of lumped together
24 and everything was kind of put on hold at that point.

25
26 In order to resolve this though, a
27 meeting was scheduled for late August among those
28 agencies and Pete was nice enough to -- he was going to
29 report on how the State Department is interpreting some
30 of these fundamental questions. Unfortunately that
31 meeting didn't take place either.

32
33 So where we are right now is that we
34 kind of have two parallel processes going on. One is
35 this Fish and Wildlife, State Department, Department of
36 Justice work on the bills and the regulatory proposal
37 that we are putting forth. Pete is actually going to
38 be -- he's making calls and emails right now to try to
39 see how and when these kind of issues will be resolved
40 and he's going to be reporting to us when that's -- by
41 a certain date.

42
43 The second process though is that we're
44 still resolving the proposed regulatory changes and I
45 think we have -- we've gone through a number of drafts
46 and I think we've come down to about maybe two or three
47 things. Two or three sticking points that we're still
48 working on. One is the use of the Silver Hand Program
49 for authentication of these works of art and then the
50 other is the sale of these handicrafts that have non-

1 edible migratory bird parts. The sale is only by
2 Alaska Natives.

3

4 So we're still trying to resolve
5 exactly what that means as it's written right now. We
6 can't tell whether would an Alaska Native artist be
7 able to sell a work or send a work to a consignment
8 shop and allow that consignment shop to sell it on his
9 or her behalf especially if the consignment shop is not
10 owned or operated by an Alaska Native. Is the Alaska
11 Heritage Center owned and operated by Alaska Natives
12 and, if not, are they allowed to sell things?

13

14 So those are the main sticking points.
15 There are probably a few other minor problems, but
16 we're working on this pretty regularly. Anybody else
17 from the Handicraft Committee have anything else to
18 add?

19

20 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Anyone?

21

22 (No comments)

23

24 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Well, I want to
25 say something. This handicraft proposal has been in
26 front of us now for a long time. At least from the
27 State's perspective, I think it's time to move forward
28 on some kind of action here. I understand the legal
29 constraints. I understand the treaty constraints and
30 everything else, but I don't know if we should wait to
31 get a complete package to move forward. I think even
32 at this point in time an incremental step would be
33 something that would demonstrate the willingness to
34 address these issues. So I guess I urge the committee
35 to look at the things you can do versus looking at the
36 package in its entirety and start moving forward with
37 this issue to get some significant movement on
38 allowances for the sale of handicrafts that should be
39 allowed.

40

41 Again, the way I understand it, there
42 are some steps we could take that are outside of the
43 treaty and I'm just encouraging the committee to come
44 back to us with very positive language to allow us to
45 move that forward.

46

47 Pete.

48

49 MR. PROBASCO: Thanks, Doug. Todd,
50 thanks for your report. Very well done. As far as the

1 Service's position, we are committed and I sit on the
2 committee representing the Service to develop pretty
3 much what you just articulated. Our goal is to have
4 that submitted for this coming April.

5
6 Like I said yesterday during our work
7 session, I think we do have some time, not a lot, that
8 it would be wise to at least give the opportunity for
9 the Department of Justice and the State Department to
10 identify their concerns, but I also stated that if we
11 don't view that as a timely response, we will continue
12 to work on it.

13
14 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: We don't want
15 to irritate the State Department. They have our
16 passports.

17
18 (Laughter)

19
20 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Patty.

21
22 MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: Thank you, Mr.
23 Chairman. I said this yesterday, but I wanted to make
24 it a matter of record today that the AMBCC Native
25 Caucus were not the body that initiated the
26 congressional legislation with Congressman Young and
27 Senators Begich and Murkowski. How that occurred was
28 the artist from the Southeast who was cited for selling
29 a mask with Flicker feathers. Sealaska went to
30 Congressman Young. They proposed a bill. The draft
31 bill was sent to the Native Caucus. We reviewed it and
32 made three or four pages of comments, very few of which
33 they considered and included in the bill.

34
35 So we were actually trying to work
36 within the AMBCC system to get this regulatory language
37 passed and maybe work to improve it in the future, so
38 it's unfortunate that our efforts, our cooperative
39 efforts with Fish and Wildlife and State of Alaska were
40 stymied by this other effort by Sealaska and the
41 congressional delegation. Although it was well-
42 meaning, they were trying to address similar issues
43 that we were, but unfortunately there was no
44 communication between their group and ours. So I just
45 wanted to make sure that that was a matter of record.

46
47 Thank you.

48
49 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Other comments.
50

1 (No comments)

2

3 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Thank you,
4 Todd. Standard Operating Procedures Committee. Patty,
5 I think you're going to handle that one.

6

7 MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: The Standard
8 Operating Procedures Committee has been tasked with
9 trying to take the form for proposing a regulation to
10 put it on the website so that it's a fillable form and
11 it's easier to understand as well as a companion
12 process for proposing regulations and where you can get
13 help to develop your regulation, et cetera. That is
14 still being worked on right now so we didn't have a
15 meeting yesterday. We will have something to report at
16 the spring meeting.

17

18 Thank you.

19

20 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Questions,
21 comments.

22

23 (No comments)

24

25 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Okay, next.
26 Technical Committee - Invitation (transportation). I
27 think, Patty, you're going to handle that one too?

28

29 MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: Yes. I don't
30 think we have a chairman for that committee. We did
31 meet yesterday and discussed the issue of
32 transportation. It was assigned to the Invitation
33 Committee because that was kind of a companion issue
34 that was identified as we were drafting the invitation
35 language. We discovered that there was really no
36 language allowing for the transportation of migratory
37 birds harvested during invitation situation back to an
38 excluded area. So we have been working on that issue.

39

40

41 I met with law enforcement, with Ryan
42 Noel last week, I believe, or the week before and I
43 think that we are close to identifying a path forward.
44 We will be calling another meeting of that committee
45 probably within the next couple of months to have them
46 consider what we're working on. We're trying to make
47 it as easy as possible for the subsistence hunters but
48 also for enforcement as well, so we're working on that
49 together.

50

1 Thank you.

2

3 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Comments,
4 question.

5

6 (No comments)

7

8 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Hearing none.
9 Law Enforcement Committee, wanton waste. Joeneal.

10

11 MR. HICKS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We
12 held our meeting yesterday. We did not have a quorum,
13 so we had a discussion. From the discussion we are
14 recommending this, I suppose is a better way to say it,
15 is that we take the State's definition -- Patty, I need
16 your help here. We take the State's definition but
17 expand on it a little further and the reason why is the
18 State's definition is more restrictive.

19

20 We are also recommending that the
21 entire bird be salvageable. When we say that, if you
22 were to take a bird, you would have to take it back to
23 your place of domicile or your home where you would
24 take care of it. Everything except the head, the
25 nonedible parts and parts of the -- what do you call
26 it? Not the gizzard. I like the gizzard, but the
27 other nonedible parts. Entrails.

28

29 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Nonedible
30 parts.

31

32 MR. HICKS: Yeah, nonedible parts.
33 I'll defer to Patty now. Thank you.

34

35 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Patty.

36

37 MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: All I'll refer
38 to Donna. No, I'm just kidding. I have my draft notes
39 from the meeting yesterday and the committee members
40 did express a desire to draft language that will
41 alleviate the issues where people are taking large
42 birds and only taking the breast meat. So Donna
43 Dewhurst and Dan Rosenberg agreed to draft something
44 that was inline with what the committee's desires were
45 and is going to be using the State -- as Joeneal said,
46 the State language as a starting point and then go from
47 there.

48

49 There was some discussion about whether
50 we wanted to have a regulation at all because it would

1 further restrict the subsistence hunters, but those in
2 attendance said, yes, we do want to alleviate the issue
3 of wanton waste during the subsistence season, so we
4 are moving forward with that. In the initial draft, we
5 are going to also be including a member of the Native
6 Caucus.

7
8 Is there anything else I missed, Dan or
9 Donna?

10
11 DR. ROSENBERG: I think you're fine.

12
13 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: My
14 understanding is this will be a proposal that applies
15 to the spring hunt, is that correct?

16
17 MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: Yes.

18
19 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: And it will be
20 brought to us at the next.....

21
22 MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: At the spring
23 meeting, yes.

24
25 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Thank you.

26
27 Dan.

28
29 DR. ROSENBERG: Good morning, Mr.
30 Chair. Members of the Committee. I'm Dan Rosenberg,
31 Statewide Waterfowl Program coordinator with the Alaska
32 Department of Fish and Game. As you may know, last
33 January the Board of Game stiffened the salvage
34 requirements for waterfowl and the initial proposals
35 came from the AVCP. One was submitted to salvage the
36 entire bird and another citizen in Kachemak Bay also
37 submitted one. So the AVCP one was only for Game
38 Management Unit 18, but as a result of two proposals
39 being submitted the Board of Game decided to make it a
40 statewide -- discuss it at a statewide meeting and make
41 it a statewide regulation.

42
43 So we now have more restrictive salvage
44 regulations for the sport hunt for waterfowl that adds
45 to the former salvage requirement, which was at a
46 minimum the meat of the breast, and now for larger
47 birds, geese, cranes and swans, you have to salvage the
48 meat of the breast plus the leg and the thigh. What
49 the AMBCC is talking about here is making a more
50 restrictive regulation than that, but using that as a

1 model.

2

3 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Thank you, Dan.

4

5 Myron.

6

7 MR. NANENG: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Is
8 this proposal going to go to the Pacific Flyway Council
9 too or to the International Fish and Wildlife
10 Association or whoever is in charge of the whole
11 Federal migratory bird system? Because the wanton
12 waste occurs during the fall hunting season and
13 supposedly the sports hunting season we want to make
14 sure that it applies to all birds if we can because all
15 edible parts should be harvested and not just the
16 breasts of the migratory birds regardless of size.

17

18 I think that trying to push it forward
19 regardless of size would be a better deal than just
20 limiting it to the big birds and we'd look forward --
21 because, you know, when you pick up a chicken, it's
22 probably the same size as a ptarmigan or a spruce hen,
23 yet we're told that we've got to buy a whole chicken
24 rather than the just the breasts. I know that they
25 divide them up in the stores, but that's what we end up
26 doing is buying the whole chicken other than the
27 entrails and whatnot. So I think that same concept
28 should apply to all migratory birds.

29

30 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Pete.

31

32 MR. PROBASCO: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
33 I'm sure you're aware of this, Myron, that we're
34 talking about two arenas here. We have the subsistence
35 arena, which this body has the authority to make
36 recommendations to the SRC. The other process, as far
37 as looking at the fall hunt, we could still submit a
38 proposal, but it would go through a different process.

39

40 Mr. Chair.

41

42 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Thank you.

43

44 Myron.

45

46 MR. NANENG: I know it may be a
47 different process, but I think we're talking about the
48 same thing that should apply to the rest of the country
49 if it applies to us. You know, we're all American
50 citizens, so what difference does -- a Nebraska hunter,

1 does he have more rights to just take the breasts and
2 leave the rest of the bird when they're hunting out
3 there? We've made a concerted effort to try and get
4 our subsistence hunt recognized by the whole U.S.
5 government, so I don't see any reason why we should not
6 request that harvest and retention of the bird other
7 than just the breast should not apply to the rest of
8 the United States.

9

10 Thank you.

11

12 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Myron, I think
13 what Pete was saying is that we could definitely get
14 this proposal written, we could take an action for the
15 seasons that deal with the subsistence one, lead by
16 example, and then submit that for the larger question,
17 which is going to involve many other people other than
18 this Bird Council. I think Pete was just trying to
19 make you aware that we don't have authority over
20 somebody in Nebraska. So I think getting the proposal
21 written is the first step in that process.

22

23 Dan.

24

25 DR. ROSENBERG: Yeah, Myron, just so
26 you are aware the Fish and Wildlife Service is
27 currently in the process of revising the Federal wanton
28 waste regulations, which are not an annual regulation,
29 but they are in the process and I assume that there
30 will be a comment period at some point on those. If
31 I'm wrong, someone in the Fish and Wildlife Service can
32 correct me on that.

33

34 Thank you.

35

36 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: You just got a
37 thumbs up from behind you. Okay, anything else on
38 that.

39

40 Gayla.

41

42 MS. HOSETH: If we can get emailed that
43 information on that public comment process for that
44 wanton waste, to comment on that, to the group.

45

46 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Okay. We will
47 make sure that gets out to the group. Patty can put
48 that in the notes. Okay. Anything else on this issue.

49

50 (No comments)

1 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Let's take a
2 break now. I think Liliana should be able to get set
3 up because I think she's next on the subsistence.

4
5 MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: No, it's
6 actually Dave Otis and Luke George.

7
8 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Okay. But I
9 think they probably want to get set up, so let's take a
10 10-minute break and then come back and deal with the
11 harvest survey.

12
13 Thank you.

14
15 (Off record)

16
17 (On record)

18
19 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Okay. I think
20 the next thing on our agenda here is an update on the
21 subsistence harvest survey program review. I think we
22 have some people from Colorado State what's going to
23 walk us through this. Since the light is blinding me
24 in the eye here, I think I'm going to take a different
25 seat.

26
27 DR. OTIS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My
28 name is Dave Otis. I'm from Colorado State University.
29 On behalf of my colleagues Luke George and Paul
30 Doherty, I'm grateful for the opportunity to bring you
31 up to date on where we are with our review of the
32 survey.

33
34 Just to remind everyone how we got
35 here, the Fish and Wildlife Service issued this request
36 for a survey review last year and it's really
37 structured in kind of two stages. Obviously we're just
38 beginning the first stage.

39
40 What you can see from these bullets
41 emphasizes gathering information on the desires and
42 objectives of the stakeholders and an understanding of
43 how the data are currently being used, what the desires
44 of the stakeholders are for how it might be used and
45 then given that information we can then move forward
46 with actually technically evaluating the survey to see
47 whether or not it's doing what it's intended to do.

48
49 So this part one is actually what will
50 occupy our team for the next -- for the first year. So

1 that, of course, is what I'll spend most of my time
2 talking about. Just to go into the potential out-
3 years, what happens in part two, if there even is a
4 part two, is conditional on what we find in part one.
5 So if it is decided that some revisions or
6 modifications of the survey are needed based upon our
7 first year's evaluation, then we'll go ahead and do
8 some evaluation of alternative approaches,
9 recommendations and evaluations of those preferred
10 alternatives if, again, that's deemed necessary.

11
12 So here's sort of the first review of
13 kind of the steps of the first year and these first two
14 are really again where we are right now. Trying to
15 understand the uses of the current survey data, its
16 strengths and weaknesses and identification of the
17 objectives, what stakeholders want from the survey.
18 You'll notice on the side over there that those steps
19 are where our reliance upon this technical working
20 group advisory committee really is going to help our
21 team put that all together. I'll come back to that in
22 a second.

23
24 The idea is again to take those
25 objectives and the information gathered from the TWG
26 and then, given that information, we can go ahead and
27 do our job in terms of evaluating the survey relative
28 to those objectives and, if necessary, make
29 modifications as we move forward.

30
31 So here's the tentative timeline. Our
32 first task was to form this technical working group and
33 I want to thank members of the committee for assisting
34 us in this formation. We asked representatives from
35 each of the three organizations to nominate staff
36 members to serve on the working group and we appreciate
37 that being done in a pretty timely manner so we could
38 get that group together, have a meeting, which I'll
39 tell you about in a second, all sort of driven by the
40 timing of this meeting.

41
42 So we have 15 members on the technical
43 working group. We're nominated from, again, each of
44 the three organizations. We had the first meeting of
45 that group Monday. Again, I want to thank everyone for
46 -- I think we had everyone there except for perhaps two
47 members. That happened in a fairly short period of
48 time and with Donna's help and again the cooperation of
49 all the individuals we managed to do that.

50

1 We spent our time on Monday getting to
2 know each other a little bit. I think there's a lot of
3 value in getting everybody in the same room at the same
4 time. We went through a little bit of background to
5 bring everyone in the working group up to date and kind
6 of make sure that everybody was on the same page
7 because some people had a lot more experience with the
8 survey obviously than others.

9
10 Then we asked each individual to just
11 informally, sort of went around the table, give their
12 perspectives on the survey, its values, whatever they
13 wanted to say about the objectives, current use of the
14 data, et cetera. This was sort of a gentle beginning,
15 so to speak, in this process of trying to articular
16 specifically what the objectives are.

17
18 The results from that exercise, we took
19 notes, Paul transcribed basically all the conversations
20 that occurred there, and we're going to summarize
21 everyone's comments, try to synthesize them in some --
22 organize them a bit and then send those back out to the
23 working group members for their review to make sure we
24 got it right or let them have an opportunity to add
25 anything or subtract anything they want. That will be
26 just a document and we'll get that out to the members
27 next week, ask them to take a quick look at it, get it
28 back to us and we'll revise it as necessary, then get
29 it back out to the committee members.

30
31 In terms of communication, actually
32 throughout the next year, I think that's sort of the
33 first opportunity. I guess we think about this as
34 maybe three levels, I guess, or three groups, if you
35 will, that are involved in the communication. There's
36 obviously the three of us from Colorado, the technical
37 working group members and then there's a broader
38 communication that's necessary to keep the council
39 members involved in the process, in the loop. So
40 that's sort of the first opportunity, I think that,
41 again, both the technical working group and their
42 representatives, if you will, on the Council have a
43 chance to have input and see where we are with this
44 process in terms of identifying objectives.

45
46 These two months right here you can
47 see, in September and October, when we're going to be
48 working through all that. The second step in that
49 process will be also in October and we ask the
50 technical working group members, after having heard the

it a little bit, having a chance to perhaps
3 ask -- get input from others that they think might be
4 relevant to the process, whatever process they want to
5 use to gather input and report that back to us in a
6 little bit more specific manner in terms of objectives,
7 documented uses of the data, which we think is really
8 important.

9
10 So we'll roll all that up again and
11 produce a report by the end of December on what
12 specific survey objectives have been articulated and as
13 well as documentation of the use of the data. That
14 report again will be reviewed by the TWG, the technical
15 working group. Presumably then they can make sure
16 their committee members are in that loop, have a chance
17 to review that report.

18
19 That's a pretty important milestone
20 because what's in that report in terms of identified
21 objectives are what's going to drive our actual
22 evaluation of the survey because then we take off,
23 given those objectives, after the first of the year and
24 begin actually doing the technical evaluation.

25
26 Probably the last sort of milestone
27 then in that process would be the next AMBCC meeting
28 where again we will not be finished with the technical
29 review, but we'll be far enough along that certainly
30 we'll give the committee a report in April, get
31 feedback on where we are. If we need to do more, if we
32 need to do something different, again we have time to
33 do that based on input back from the AMBCC, and then
34 actually do the final report by the beginning of summer
35 and then see where we go from there.

36
37 So, again, just a little bit of review
38 for what's going to happen in the next couple of months
39 is all focused on this sort of first progress report on
40 survey objectives and what the goals of the survey are
41 so that we can launch off into the second phase and do
42 the review.

43
44 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Thank you.
45 Questions.

46
47 (No comments)

48
49 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Well, I have
50 one. Maybe that will get some discussion going here.

1 Yesterday when we talked a little bit during the work
2 session we talked about the need to have an opportunity
3 to check back with this group on the objectives so that
4 you don't get so far along that we can't do a course
5 correction if necessary. I'm trying to figure out the
6 best way to do that. Is to wait until April or do you
7 have some recommendations that we should work with our
8 technical work group representatives or how best would
9 you like that input? Again, I would hate to get to the
10 April meeting and say, whoops, course correction.

11
12 DR. OTIS: Right. Yes. I think
13 probably the critical opportunity and milestone there
14 is when our December report comes out on what we think
15 we heard from the technical working group about what
16 the objectives are. I guess our presumption is that
17 that will be shared with whoever it needs to be shared
18 with to make sure we're good to go.

19
20 MR. PEDERSON: And as chair of the
21 Harvest Survey Committee I'll make sure that the Survey
22 Committee is involved in the discussions as well from
23 this group.

24
25 DR. OTIS: Thank you. I might mention
26 too I think in your notebook tab I think there is a
27 list of -- number four, there's a list of committee
28 members -- or not committee, working group members.

29
30 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Other comments.

31
32 MR. NANENG: I've got a question.

33
34 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Okay. Myron.

35
36 MR. NANENG: Over the years we've had a
37 lot of surveys and many of them have been done in the
38 Y-K Delta for quite an extensive time before AMBCC was
39 formed. After all these surveys, harvest surveys, have
40 been done what really is going to change? What change
41 do you expect to find as a result of all these, a new
42 survey objective or whatever objective that this survey
43 presentation is making? Because in the Y-K Delta we've
44 had surveys starting back in the 1980s. So what's
45 going to be different?

46
47 DR. OTIS: I don't think I can answer
48 that. I guess I would -- potentially nothing will be
49 different, I guess. I mean it depends on what we hear
50 back from what the working group members want from the

1 survey. Specifically how are the data being used to
2 actually make -- to achieve basically the two goals of
3 the survey, which I think are to sustain harvest
4 traditions and sustain bird populations. So
5 understanding how the data actually gets used in making
6 decisions is important. Again we're counting on the
7 technical working group to help inform us whether
8 that's happening or not.

9

10 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Go ahead,
11 Myron.

12

13 MR. NANENG: With the surveys that have
14 been done for over 20 years or so haven't you at least
15 kind have gotten a picture of what the objectives are
16 of the surveys? Our people in the villages are the
17 most surveyed people in the world. It seems like year
18 after year with any kind of subsistence resources
19 that's gathered from the lands, the seas and even the
20 air it seems like we're always being surveyed.

21

22 So it's just hard for me to understand
23 what the new survey objectives will be when back when
24 we were negotiating the treaty the objective of the
25 association of fish and wildlife organizations, Audubon
26 Society, Fish and Wildlife Service said that we're
27 going to work on the objective that you will harvest 3
28 percent of the total harvest. That is what was stated
29 at the negotiating table.

30

31 So I'm kind of wondering are we trying
32 to increase that 3 percent, which I'm fine with, which
33 I don't have any objections with, up to about 10 or 15
34 percent of the total harvest. I'd like to see that
35 happen, you know, but I'm kind of wondering what
36 ultimately the objective will be of the new survey
37 plan, if any.

38

39 DR. OTIS: Well, I think that's a good
40 example of the kind of objective that we would hope to
41 get feedback on and then be able to take a specific
42 objective like that and look at the survey and say are
43 we getting reliable estimates of what percent of the
44 harvest. Is it 3 percent, is it -- or what is it and
45 on what scale do we want to know that; at the subregion
46 level, at the regional level, at the state level.
47 That's the sort of examination we can do in terms of
48 looking at the data to see if it meets that specific
49 goal, which is fine, and it may be perfecting adequate.

50

1 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Myron.

2

3 MR. NANENG: So all the surveys that
4 have been done in the
5 past does not reflect any changes or is it -- according
6 to your estimation, it seems like it's only -- we're
7 trying to find ways that if any of the surveys that
8 were done in the past justify any increases or even
9 reductions. I'm not talking about reductions. I'm
10 talking about trying to see if there's going to be
11 increase to some of the activities that we've done in
12 the past in our villages, like driving birds, egg
13 gathering and all those other stuff that were customary
14 and traditional uses by our people.

15

16 A lot of these things that we used to
17 do in villages are pretty much not being practiced
18 today, which takes away a lot of cultural knowledge
19 that our young people don't have today. I'm just
20 hoping that some of the survey will also build up some
21 information that some of these cultural activities that
22 our people have had in the past will be done again.

23

24 Right now we know that there's quite a
25 number of White-Fronts and we're not saying that we're
26 not going to be harvesting them, but we're trying to
27 help our counterparts down in Oregon in trying to
28 address some of their migratory bird concerns, so some
29 of these cultural activities that were done in the past
30 also helps sustain the birds and the habitat for the
31 birds to be able to survive and thrive.

32

33 So I'm just trying to figure out how
34 this new survey method can help in trying to push that
35 forward for the benefit of people that live in the
36 villages.

37

38 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Maybe I can add
39 to that. One of my concerns too is that we move away
40 from a general survey or at least start looking at
41 potentially moving away from a generalized survey that
42 gives us an accurate accounting of harvest of even
43 common species and move into more focusing on the
44 species of special concern or endangered species.

45

46 It seems to highlight the necessity of
47 taking regulatory action to reduce harvest on those
48 species, but what it would also do is force us largely
49 to become more conservative in nature as we move into
50 the regulation of common species on the landscape

1 because we will no longer have information on the
2 harvest numbers.

3

4 I would hate that the result of this
5 survey redesign is that we move away from an
6 estimation, even if it's a small proportion of the
7 harvest and, as a net result, become more conservative
8 in our harvest approach because we have less
9 information on those species. The net result of that
10 could be actually a net impact on the local subsistence
11 user because we just don't have information.

12

13 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Pete.

14

15 MR. PROBASCO: We're talking about the
16 importance of harvest surveys and we've all been around
17 the block in many arenas, fisheries and wildlife, and
18 we also know the importance of harvest surveys. We're
19 doing a lot of speculation right now and the whole
20 purpose of this review is to help us focus on the
21 methodology if you will or the development of one that
22 will provide us information that safeguards what we're
23 charged for, this spring harvest. If we don't have
24 accurate estimates or have an idea of what our take is,
25 we're very vulnerable from other entities.

26

27 I hate to speculate too much of what
28 the results will be. We've got to wait and see, but I
29 think the end result is going to provide us with useful
30 information that this group can use. A good example is
31 what happened when we first started looking at Yellow-
32 billed Loon harvest and what not having a good survey
33 methodology led to and we'll hear more about that
34 tomorrow. Anyway, I just wanted to make that point.

35

36 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Myron, let me
37 go first. And I agree with that. The reason that I
38 raise this up is it comes back to that one spreadsheet
39 we had up there where there's going to be decisions
40 made and objectives prior to our April meeting because
41 I certainly don't want to be in a position as a council
42 member to have had the technical work group or Colorado
43 State University making decisions that narrow down the
44 objectives and then find in April that some of those
45 objectives should have been looked at that were thrown
46 out. So my questions are more on making sure that this
47 group understands and the technical work group
48 committees understand that I want a broader range of
49 objectives to carry forward as we move forward with
50 this analysis than simply a narrow one.

1 Myron.

2

3 MR. NANENG: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I
4 had one question. We're trying to talk about getting
5 good numbers on survey harvest yet if we take a look at
6 some of the proposals that have been brought forth to
7 this AMBCC, especially the Emperor Geese, we've only
8 been living with indexes, which is not a true number of
9 the population. There's been proposals made by Bristol
10 Bay and others that they want to be able to harvest at
11 least one or two Emperor Geese or something like that,
12 yet we don't have a true number to really work off
13 from.

14

15 So if this survey is going to be done,
16 I think we need to get better numbers on Emperor Geese
17 if we're going to require people to provide survey
18 results of what they've harvested so that, you know,
19 people are working with true numbers and we would
20 really know exactly what we're trying to conserve
21 instead of continually saying since 1986 that there's
22 74, 70,000, 68,000 Emperor Geese based on an index that
23 has been used since then.

24

25 So that's the concern I have about
26 trying to get accurate numbers when it could also
27 provide an opportunity and ability of our people to
28 harvest some of these other species that they'd like to
29 hunt during springtime for subsistence purposes.

30

31 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Go ahead, and
32 then Peter.

33

34 DR. OTIS: We certainly understand your
35 point, Doug, about the fact that both the technical
36 working group and our Colorado group we don't make any
37 decisions. You know, we're being advised by the
38 technical working group. I think certainly at the
39 first stage that list of objectives is going to be big,
40 it's not going to be prioritized, it's going to be
41 something we're going to take a look at. Eventually
42 perhaps that's going to -- if we move forward into more
43 years, some different alternatives may be examined, but
44 I think our job is simply to try to provide you with
45 information that you can use to make an informed
46 decision about the tradeoffs. If we do this, this is
47 what we're going to sacrifice. If we're going to do
48 this, this is what we're going to sacrifice because we
49 can't get it all.

50

1 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Peter.

2

3 MR. DEVINE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. So
4 we are saying this would be a good place to change the
5 methods and means of the surveys? Because I mean when
6 we do our marine mammal surveys you're a quarter mile
7 off the beach and you're counting what's in there.
8 With the bird surveys they're doing a grid pattern at
9 300 feet. I mean can we raise the elevation? Can we
10 change the methods of how the surveys are done? Can we
11 get a hold of a satellite and do satellite imagery?
12 You know, there's all kinds of different options and
13 I've been stressing for years that I think the survey
14 is done wrong. You know, raising elevation would be
15 one good way of getting it.

16

17 I mean once you fly past the birds at
18 300 feet, you know, and then you turn around and do the
19 grid, I mean do you count them zero birds that are not
20 there because the planes scared them away? They're
21 using drones and stuff for getting pictures. I mean
22 there's different options out there of how surveys are
23 done. I think it's time they start listening to what
24 we're trying to say and, you know, maybe we could get
25 some real numbers.

26

27 MR. PROBASCO: Mr. Chair.

28

29 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Pete.

30

31 MR. PROBASCO: Peter, I hear what
32 you're describing and discussing. What David is
33 discussing is the harvest survey and you're talking
34 about assessment of the population of Emperors. Later
35 we'll hear from both the State and the Service, Dan and
36 Eric, on surveys and what the plans are. Those
37 questions you're having would be appropriate to those
38 two individuals at that time.

39

40 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Other
41 questions.

42

43 (No comments)

44

45 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Let me pass on
46 appreciation from the council. I think you guys are
47 doing good work. You pulled together a group of people
48 to talk about these issues and certainly appreciate it
49 and continue the good work. Thank you.

50

1 Next on our agenda we have -- we're
2 going to postpone 10(3), which is the updated Yellow-
3 billed Loon listing decision and Steller's Eiders until
4 tomorrow, so update on the Emperor Goose Management
5 Plan. Dan.

6
7 DR. ROSENBERG: Good morning again.
8 I'm Dan Rosenberg, Waterfowl Program coordinator with
9 the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and this time
10 I'm also wearing the hat of the Pacific Flyway chair of
11 the Emperor Goose Subcommittee.

12
13 As you recall, as you know, as you are
14 well aware just from the discussion, Myron started the
15 segue into this, Peter continued to segue into this.
16 The size of the Emperor Goose population and whether we
17 can open it up to a hunt or not has obviously been a
18 real concern of this group and it's been a focus
19 lately.

20
21 There have been several proposals to
22 open up a limited harvest of Emperor Geese in Western
23 Alaska and there's been frustration with the fact that
24 the Emperor Goose population index has hovered just
25 below the management plan threshold to allow for the
26 consideration of hunting again, which has been closed
27 for subsistence hunting since 1987 when the population
28 went below 60,000. To consider an opening we have to
29 be up to 80,000 in the plan. Then we also have a
30 population objective of 150,000, which we've never
31 achieved. Never even come close to since we started
32 surveys in the early '80s, consistent surveys.

33
34 So Eric is going to talk more about the
35 population surveys later on today, so I don't really
36 want to go too far into that, but what I want to get
37 into is just that we've had these proposals to open up
38 the harvest and we've had -- the management plan
39 criteria has frustrated some people. So we started
40 looking at revising the management plan. We're
41 actually directed by the AMBCC bi-council to revise the
42 management plan.

43
44 Emperor Geese are somewhat unique to
45 the Pacific Flyway because they only occur in Alaska
46 and I can't off the top of my head at least think of
47 any other bird population that we have a management
48 plan for. That only occurs in one state. So, as a
49 result of that, the committee consists of Eric Taylor
50 and myself, some biologist from the Fish and Wildlife

1 Service and some representatives from this body.

2

3 The AMBCC regional management body
4 members were involved in the 2006 re-write update of
5 the Emperor Goose Management Plan, which is what is
6 guiding us today. At that time, Peter Devine, who was
7 just here a second ago, Austin Ahmasuk from Kawerak,
8 Ralph Anderson from the Bristol Bay Native Association
9 and Tim Andrew were the representatives on that 2006
10 management plan.

11

12 Before I talk about what we're doing
13 now I just want to conduct some business here from the
14 subcommittee and that's that several of the members
15 that are on that subcommittee have left this body and
16 we're going to need new members. Let me tell you who
17 is on it because we last officially met in September of
18 2013, a year ago. At that time we had Rick Rowland on
19 it from Sun'ag, Frank Woods from Bristol Bay, although
20 Gayla was at the meeting as well, Carol Brown from the
21 AVCP and Joel Saccheus was sitting in for Brandon.

22

23 Anyway, Frank is not here, so we need
24 to replace Frank and I don't know if we ever officially
25 did that with Gayla or not.

26

27 MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: We did.

28

29 DR. ROSENBERG: We have? Okay. And
30 then have we replaced the other people?

31

32 MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: Yes. The
33 council took action last April and the Native Caucus
34 members on the Emperor Goose Management Committee now
35 are Brandon Ahmasuk, Carol Brown, Peter Devine, Cyrus
36 Harris and Gayla Hoseth and Jack Fagerstrom. I don't
37 have him on here. But that is under the eighth tab in
38 your meeting binder.

39

40 DR. ROSENBERG: Okay. Thank you.
41 Pardon me for not looking at that. I just wanted to
42 make it clear that everybody who was on that committee
43 was aware of that. Okay. So we met a year ago to look
44 at revising the management plan. What came out of that
45 or at least the most significant item I think and
46 important topic that came out of that was reviewing the
47 current population assessment methods.

48

49 We have four different surveys that go
50 on for Emperor Geese and actually five if you count the

1 age ratio photo counts. We currently use the spring
2 survey. Bob Stehn of the Fish and Wildlife Service has
3 reviewed all of these survey methods and suggested that
4 we use a more sophisticated modeling approach to try to
5 find out if it's best to mash up all these surveys and
6 try and extract data from all these surveys to give us
7 a better indication of what the population is and also,
8 in doing that, assess the individual surveys to see if
9 we're using the best one.

10

11 As a result of that with a biometrician
12 from Fish and Game and with Bob Stehn working together,
13 they're developing a model doing that and trying to see
14 if we can come up with a better way of assessing the
15 population using the existing datasets that we
16 currently have. Once we do that, then we also will
17 need to review the population objectives and even the
18 management thresholds, but the first thing we're trying
19 to do is figure out if our current assessment method is
20 good, if it's accurate, or if there's better ways to do
21 it that may give us -- and we don't know that. We
22 won't know that until we're finished with the process
23 if they're going to help us identify a better way to do
24 it, a better way to look at the data or that what we're
25 doing is as good as we're going to get. But that's
26 where we stand right now.

27

28 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Questions,
29 comments. Gayla.

30

31 MS. HOSETH: Are we going to have a
32 meeting anytime soon and when do you expect that?

33

34 DR. ROSENBERG: At the latest, I hope
35 to have a meeting before the April AMBCC meeting to
36 update everybody on this model that Bob and Steve
37 Fleischman, a biometrician from Fish and Game, are
38 working on. Hopefully by then we will have some
39 results of that. Again, we're not going to know what
40 we're going to get until we get it. They're
41 essentially doing this on their own time and that's why
42 it's not moving as fast as we would like because their
43 jobs are not dedicated to doing this. They're trying
44 to fit it in as they can. Bob is actually retired and
45 doing it on his own time and Steve works in the
46 Fisheries Division.

47

48 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: We're pulling
49 fish expertise into this. Other questions. Gayla.

50

1 MS. HOSETH: Is there no funding
2 available that this isn't a priority that we can move
3 it up?

4
5 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: I don't know if
6 it's a funding issue as much as it is a resource issue.
7 Division of Wildlife Conservation is trying to hire
8 some additional biometricians, but we've run into a
9 couple roadblocks in finding qualified candidates, so
10 we're re-tooling our approach to do flexible positions
11 to get people that are qualified to do these jobs.
12 Right now we're reallocating resources from existing
13 staff to try to get this done. It's a priority, but
14 biometric help is hard to come by.

15
16 MR. PROBASCO: I asked Eric to come up
17 if he will and speak to what funding we've reallocated
18 to look at Emperor Geese. We're also in the same
19 situation as the State where our biometrician, Bob
20 Stehn, has retired and we're in the process of filling
21 that position. So our capacity to do this analysis is
22 limited. Eric, do you have anything to add to that,
23 please, as far as funding?

24
25 DR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I'm
26 Eric Taylor. I'm with the Fish and Wildlife Service,
27 Division of Migratory Bird Management. Dan certainly
28 accurately characterized the Emperor Geese in terms of
29 concern about our survey methods, the population
30 objectives, the management plan and we have indeed
31 heard concerns from Myron and others regarding interest
32 to open this species to hunting. As Dan mentioned,
33 it's been closed to subsistence hunting since 1987 and
34 sport hunting since 1986.

35
36 We have recognized, and, as Dan
37 mentioned, participated in the Emperor Goose
38 Subcommittee with the AMBCC as well as the Pacific
39 Flyway Emperor Goose Subcommittee. The Fish and
40 Wildlife Service put in a proposal to Landscape
41 Conservation Cooperatives. That was a \$1.5 million
42 fund for request for proposals earlier this year from
43 two Landscape Conservation Cooperatives. The one in
44 Western Alaska with Myron and then where Peter lives,
45 the Aleutian Landscape Conservation Cooperative.

46
47 Unfortunately, that proposal to look at
48 how we assess the Emperor Goose population and how the
49 four surveys, as Dan referenced, all kind of coalesce
50 or whether they support each other or disagree with

1 each other. We put in a proposal to look at those
2 methods. Unfortunately it was not funded. When it was
3 not funded, we decided within the Division, to
4 reallocate some projects and make this a higher
5 priority.

6
7 So we just have awarded a grant for
8 \$77,000 to Josh Dooley, who is a consultant with Harris
9 Environmental out of Portland. Josh has significant
10 population ecology and waterfowl experience. Along
11 with Todd will be working three other individuals, two
12 biometricians, Dr. Todd Sanders, who is here today, as
13 well as Guthrie Zimmerman, who is another biometrician
14 with our Migratory Bird Office along the Pacific
15 Flyway, and then Julian Fischer, who is here today
16 also, our waterfowl section lead, was also an
17 investigator on this project.

18
19 I'm really pleased to hear the
20 Department of Fish and Game is also working on this.
21 The more creative minds that address this, the better
22 the result will be. So I look forward to working with
23 Steve Fleischman and Bob Stehn. As Pete mentioned, Bob
24 retired in May of this year. As a result of that
25 retirement, we decided the best approach is to try to
26 involve other biometricians that we know have had
27 significant experience in looking at waterfowl
28 populations and survey methods and that's why we
29 decided to go the way we did.

30
31 Indeed, I'm pleased to hear some
32 collaborative efforts on both parts of the department
33 as well as the Fish and Wildlife Service. I think
34 we'll get some answers that Peter and others have
35 suggested be looked at in terms of perhaps if Emperors
36 change their distribution, are there better survey
37 methods that we can use, should we be looking at one
38 survey method versus another or one geographic area, if
39 climate change, for example, caused the distribution
40 shift in Emperor Geese. Those are all things that
41 we're going to be looking at very closely in this
42 effort.

43
44 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Peter.

45
46 MR. DEVINE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
47 Well, the only question I have is what are the numbers
48 this year? You said we rely on the spring results. Do
49 we have any numbers?

50

1 DR. TAYLOR: I do, Peter. I can't
2 remember the number off the top of my head. Let me
3 borrow Dan's reading glasses since we're both getting
4 up there in age that we require them.

5
6 UNIDENTIFIED VOICE: You're sitting in
7 the right spot.

8
9 DR. TAYLOR: That's right. You can
10 tell we work closely together. We share glasses.

11
12 (Laughter)

13
14 DR. TAYLOR: So the Emperor Goose
15 estimate 79,883 in 2014 and the three-year average is
16 73,879. So the 2014 estimate went up to 79,883 and the
17 three-year average is now 73,879. Again, when I do the
18 presentation on abundance and trends, you'll actually
19 see that number.

20
21 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Patty.

22
23 MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: Eric, what is
24 the timeline for the project? When will it start? Is
25 it a one year, two year? And will you have any
26 information available, like an update, at the April
27 meeting?

28
29 DR. TAYLOR: The grant has been
30 awarded. It's been signed off as of last week. It is
31 a one-year grant, so we hope
32 to have an update certainly by the April meeting.

33
34 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Other comments.
35 I'd just encourage you, as you do that contract that
36 you work with the committee that's formed to talk about
37 this issue and move forward with it. Myron.

38
39 MR. NANENG: Is there any funding from
40 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the State of
41 Alaska that they're currently working on projects that
42 wouldn't make any great results at all that can be
43 transferred to this project so that we can know what a
44 good population number is of Emperor Geese?

45
46 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: I see a bunch
47 of people passing microphones here. Pete, do you want
48 to answer?

49
50 MR. PROBASCO: Well, Myron, if I

1 understand your question, you're asking are there
2 projects that are a priority but a lesser priority, can
3 those funds be reallocated. The answer is Eric has
4 utilized some other dollars that we took, if you will,
5 surplus dollars as well as some other project dollars,
6 and reprioritized them to this so that we can do that
7 study. So we don't need additional dollars. I think
8 we have sufficient dollars to get at this analysis.
9 Mr. Chair.

10

11 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Eric.

12

13 DR. TAYLOR: Sorry, Myron. I
14 misunderstood your question. In terms of Fish and
15 Wildlife Service dollars, that's exactly what we did.
16 So I looked at our budget. One of the benefits of not
17 filling positions and having vacancies is that we had
18 some extra year dollars at the end of the year and we
19 use that information. We looked at some other
20 priorities and the Division decided, and rightfully so,
21 that this is a priority and put the \$77,000 toward this
22 contract. I'm not for sure if that was your question
23 or not.

24

25 MR. NANENG: Yeah, that was my
26 question, but if it can also sweep the national budget
27 of Fish and Wildlife Service for this project I think
28 it would help enhance the amount of money going into
29 this project, if there's that possibility.

30

31 DR. TAYLOR: I agree and, indeed, I
32 think that is exactly why we put the proposal in for
33 Landscape Conservation Cooperative funding. First off,
34 the funding was a significant amount at 1.5 million and
35 we thought we had a very competitive proposal not only
36 for one Landscape Conservation Cooperative like the
37 Western Alaska, but also it was obviously very
38 important for the Aleutian/Pribilof Islands Landscape
39 Conservation Cooperative.

40

41 Unfortunately, it was a nationwide
42 request for proposals and other regions of the United
43 States ended up with the funding and Alaska did not.
44 So I agree with you. I think it is of national
45 interest, but in this case we were able to write it off
46 at the region.

47

48 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Go ahead.

49

50 MR. SQUARTSOFF: All I see here so far

1 is we're talking about the birds and stuff, all you
2 guys are doing smiling back and forth at each other,
3 laughing. It's like a joke. This is our livelihood
4 you're talking about, you know, what we feed and what
5 we eat for our families. It's not a joking matter.

6
7 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: I don't think
8 anybody.....

9
10 MR. SQUARTSOFF: No, all you've been
11 doing is laughing and smiling back and forth.

12
13 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Well, I don't
14 think anybody is laughing about it.

15
16 MR. SQUARTSOFF: Okay, okay.

17
18 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: I think the
19 State is putting a lot.....

20
21 MR. SQUARTSOFF: Well, that's what I'm
22 seeing.

23
24 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG:and the
25 Federal government is putting a lot of resources into
26 answering the very questions that.....

27
28 MR. SQUARTSOFF: You go back and forth
29 smiling at each other when you guys are talking about
30 it, you know.

31
32 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: George.....

33
34 MR. SQUARTSOFF: In other words, you
35 guys don't really care about it. It's just what you're
36 doing.

37
38 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: George, I think
39 that's a bit unfair. I think when you hear what's
40 being done.....

41
42 MR. SQUARTSOFF: Let's be serious about
43 it. Let's be serious.

44
45 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Yeah, we are.
46 We're being serious and I think there's a lot of money
47 going into it and I think people are trying to answer
48 the very questions that are in front of this board.
49 Pete.

50

1 MR. PROBASCO: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
2 George, I've known you for a long time, so I'll take
3 your comments to heart, but I -- and you've known me a
4 long time from our Kodiak days. So I'll just state,
5 knowing our friendship, that I do take this very
6 serious. I know my staff takes this very serious and
7 our partners that we work with the State are. I
8 apologize if my smile and joking back and forth with my
9 staff was misinterpreted and I hope you accept my
10 apologies, but this is very serious.

11
12 Thank you, Mr. Chair.

13
14 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Other -- Gayla.

15
16
17 MS. HOSETH: Are we -- could you
18 disclose what the grant award -- how much money was
19 received with the grant that you got?

20
21 DR. TAYLOR: In terms -- it's really --
22 Gayla, it's not a grant. It's actually -- it's a grant
23 to another purse in terms of its Federal funds from the
24 Division of Migratory Bird Management from Fish and
25 Wildlife Service. The amount was 77,000 and that is to
26 cover the salary, travel and producing the analysis and
27 report. So there are three primary principal
28 investigators for the project.

29
30 I'll have this in a slide later this
31 afternoon perhaps, but Todd Sanders, who is here today,
32 who is the Pacific Flyway representative, Guthrie
33 Zimmerman is with the Fish and Wildlife Service, the
34 Division of Migratory Bird Management and Josh Dooley,
35 who is a biometrician, a statistician with a company
36 called Harris Environmental out of Portland, Oregon, as
37 well as a person that is in our division, Julian
38 Fischer, the Waterfowl Section chief. He'll also be a
39 principal investigator. Julian has the best knowledge
40 in terms of the databases and the survey information
41 that is being used in this analysis, so Julian is also
42 involved.

43
44 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: I think, Gayla,
45 there was some confusion there. I think Eric said they
46 had applied for an LCC grant and that grant was not
47 given out, so they basically found money internally
48 within the existing Migratory Birds budget to address
49 this issue.

50

1 Dan.

2

3 DR. ROSENBERG: Yeah, Gayla, if I may.
4 Essentially we have two parallel processes going on
5 here and hopefully we can find a way to meld them into
6 one and be a little bit more efficient in doing it or
7 we can go with two, I guess, and just see if they come
8 to the same conclusion. So we'll discuss that later
9 on.

10

11 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Myron.

12

13 MR. NANENG: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I
14 just want to make a comment. In the past, our village
15 corporation Sea Lion Corporation that owns the lands of
16 Kokechik Bay that produces a large number of nesting
17 birds of migratory birds every year has worked with
18 Fish and Wildlife Service with Luckenbach funds and
19 that was primarily to try and get that lands to be able
20 to produce more birds.

21

22 The other one is that we were offered
23 by Nature Conservancy one time to give us a million
24 dollars to get our lands into conservation easement for
25 in perpetuity. If they're willing to give out money, I
26 think we ought to ask them and see if this project can
27 be useful to try and get a better number of birds. If
28 they want to put our lands in conservation easement in
29 perpetuity for only a million dollars, I'm sure that if
30 we're asking for \$1.5 million, they should be willing
31 to come up with the money to help support this project.

32

33

34 We have a lot of Emperor Geese that
35 nest in that area where Nature Conservancy was looking
36 at. Also the Luckenbach project. I'm sure Brian
37 McCaffery is familiar with it because we worked with
38 him out at Hooper Bay to try and get some of that land
39 to inform our people of the impacts of all-terrain
40 vehicle use and other things that affect the nesting
41 geese. So I'd recommend that maybe the Service take a
42 look at Luckenbach and Nature Conservancy to see if
43 they have any extra monies available for this project.
44 So that's my suggestion.

45

46 Thank you.

47

48 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Good idea,
49 Myron. We have a written proposal now that went to the
50 LCC, so we'll shop around. That's one good area to

1 shop around on. Other comments.

2

3 (No comments)

4

5 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Thank you, Dan.
6 Thank you, Eric. Draft handicraft proposal. An action
7 item. Patty.

8

9 MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: Thank you, Mr.
10 Chairman. That was kind of a place holder. We were
11 hoping to have handicraft language available for this
12 meeting, but as you heard from the Handicraft Committee
13 that was not going to happen, but I am happy to say
14 that the Fish and Wildlife Service and the Alaska
15 Department of Fish and Game are committed to working on
16 this and having language available and ready for the
17 Council's consideration in the spring.

18

19 Thank you.

20

21 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Comments,
22 questions.

23

24 (No comments)

25

26 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Okay. We're at
27 a point in our agenda where we're done with old
28 business and we're moving into new business. It's now
29 about quarter to 12:00. We could break now and come
30 back at 1:00 and start with the migratory bird
31 population status and trends or we could start that
32 now. Wishes?

33

34 I'm hearing a call for lunch. So we
35 will reconvene at 1:00. Remember we need to be out of
36 here at 4:30, so I will reconvene at 1:00 and we'll
37 take up the bird status and trends report.

38

39 Thank you.

40

41 (Off record)

42

43 (On record)

44

45 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Okay. We're
46 going to get going here with the next thing on our
47 agenda. Before I start I wanted to give anybody an
48 opportunity to provide public testimony that may be
49 interested. We opened it this morning.

50

1 (No comments)
2
3 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Hearing none.
4 I also wanted to give people that walked in an
5 opportunity to introduce themselves that may not have
6 been here for the first round of introductions this
7 morning. So anybody new in the audience that wasn't
8 here this morning during introductions please introduce
9 yourselves. Come on, no shyness.
10
11 MS. ANDERSON: Anna Anderson, Migratory
12 Birds, Anchorage.
13
14 MR. SHULTS: I'm Brad Shults, Migratory
15 Birds, Anchorage.
16
17 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Thank you.
18 Okay. Next on our agenda we have.....
19
20 MR. DEVINE: Mr. Chair.
21
22 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Oh, go ahead.
23
24 MR. DEVINE: Peter Devine,
25 Aleutian/Pribilof Island Association.
26
27 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Peter, before
28 we start with the status, did you want to give -- we
29 went through and gave our regional reports this
30 morning. Did you have a regional report you wanted to
31 give?
32
33 MR. DEVINE: Due to me being out of
34 town and fishing in a different location I was not able
35 to bring together a fall meeting. So I guess nothing
36 to report.
37
38 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Okay. Thank
39 you. Eric, I'm going to turn this over to you to talk
40 about the Migratory Bird population survey and trends
41 information.
42
43 DR. TAYLOR: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And
44 thank you, Council, for the opportunity this afternoon.
45 Today I'm going to talk about abundance and trends of
46 migratory birds that are important to subsistence
47 users. The objective is similar as before when I've
48 given this presentation is to talk about distribution
49 and abundance but also current population trends
50 particularly in the last 10 years. I'll touch upon

1 survey area and the design for the species that I'm
2 going to talk about.

3
4 So these three species are important to
5 subsistence users and rural residents throughout the
6 range; Cackling Canada Geese, Black Brant and Greater
7 White-Fronted Geese. Clearly there are additional
8 species that are important to subsistence users and I
9 asked you to jot down what species that you would like
10 information on and I'll make sure I get that to you.

11
12 I'll also talk about Emperor Geese,
13 Spectacled Eiders and Steller's Eiders and Yellow-
14 billed Loon, species that we're concerned with in terms
15 of their population status but are currently closed to
16 subsistence harvest.

17
18 The results of the presentation today
19 are brought to you by a team of wildlife professionals.
20 We have three pilot biologists; Heather Wilson, Anna
21 Anderson and Brad Shults. I'm
22 going to ask Anna to stand up again to introduce
23 herself. There's Anna in the back and Brad Shults in
24 the corner. So if you have questions in terms of
25 survey methodology, survey techniques -- oh, there's
26 Heather Wilson who snuck in. Heather, would you stand
27 up. All right, Heather Wilson. So we have our three
28 pilot biologists. We also have Julian Fischer, who is
29 the program section lead for the Waterfowl Branch.
30 Julian, can you stand up. All right, thank you.

31
32 The additional individuals that work to
33 provide you the results that I'm going to talk about
34 today; Debbie Groves, Chris Dau, Dennis Marks, Tamara
35 Zeller and Bob Platte, our biologist observers that sit
36 in the right-hand seat. As I mentioned, Julian Fischer
37 oversees the group. Tim Bowman is our Sea Duck Joint
38 Venture Coordinator and then we have additional people
39 that work as statisticians and database managers.

40
41 An important point here is I added up
42 the numbers of years that these individuals have been
43 in the field of wildlife biology and it totals over
44 200. So, indeed, I'm blessed to have a significant and
45 substantive group of individuals to address it.

46
47 In addition to their substantive
48 numbers of years, they have advanced training in
49 wildlife biology, statistics, GIS, geographic
50 information systems, as well as mapping and vegetation.

1 So, again, these are the individuals that you're going
2 to hear about the results that they have collected.

3
4 Our surveys, our primary method for
5 monitoring populations are via aerial surveys. So in
6 order to determine population size and trend we
7 currently have two aircraft. Both are Cessna 206
8 amphibians. Surveys are custom designed depending on the
9 species in the geographic area. So we do sometimes
10 lake sampling surveys or we do coastal surveys, but our
11 primary method is through transect surveys, which are
12 straight line, low level surveys. You can see both the
13 pilot and the observer have headsets, so they record
14 the species into a microphone as well as the numbers of
15 birds and whether they're pairs or singles or flocks.
16 That information is recorded into a laptop and at the
17 same time a GPS is recording their exact location. So
18 we have the species, the numbers of birds and the
19 geographic location.

20
21 The first species that I'll talk about
22 are Pacific Brant. About 80 percent of the population
23 or so nest on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. The remainder
24 of the population nest on the Arctic Coastal Plain,
25 Russia and the Seward Peninsula. About 6,000 what are
26 termed Western High Arctic Brant nest on Melville
27 Island in the Canadian Arctic, but both Pacific Brant
28 and Western High Arctic Brant migrate along the Pacific
29 Coast and then stage at Izembek at Cold Bay where the
30 entire population occurs and then they migrate
31 primarily to Baja Mexico and the western mainland of
32 Mexico, but we also have birds that winter along from
33 British Columbia through Oregon, Washington and
34 California.

35
36 MS. HOSETH: Excuse me, Mr. Taylor. Do
37 you have a handout of this information for us here?

38
39 DR. TAYLOR: What I'll do, Gayla, is
40 I'll just present the PowerPoint. I can provide you
41 with hard copies of the PowerPoint or actually provide
42 you the electronic copy as well.

43
44 MS. HOSETH: Okay. For in the future,
45 can we have them in our book? I like to take notes
46 along the.....

47
48 DR. TAYLOR: Yes, we can do that.

49
50 MS. HOSETH: Okay, thank you.

1 DR. TAYLOR: You'll see this graph for
2 other species, so I'll just kind of go through it to
3 begin with. We have the population index here along
4 the vertical axis and the years on the horizontal axis
5 from 1960 through 2014. The population objective for
6 Brant is 162,000 and the dark line that goes up and
7 down is what's termed a three-year average and that is
8 how we manage the species in the Pacific Flyway.

9
10 Again, the population objective is
11 162,000. In terms of the population right now, it's
12 around 160,000. We're seeing Brant increase at about 4
13 percent per year, so the population is growing. Again
14 the population objective is 162. The three-year
15 average about 161,000 right now. We're seeing the
16 population grow at 4 percent per year, so for every
17 1,000 birds about 40 birds are being added to the
18 population.

19
20 One thing that we have seen thanks to
21 Heather's work on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta over the
22 last decade is we're seeing a decline in the historic
23 colonies that Brant have used on the Y-K Delta, but
24 we're seeing an increase in the numbers of birds on the
25 North Slope or the Arctic Coastal Plain.

26
27 The other thing that we're closely
28 monitoring is the shift in winter distribution.
29 Peter's been out at Izembek for a long time and knows
30 that 10 or 20 years ago only about eight to ten
31 thousand or so Brant would overwinter at Izembek. Last
32 year we had a record number of 48,000 Brant overwinter
33 at Izembek and Sanak Island, so it's the highest count
34 on record. The additional shift that we're seeing is
35 we're seeing more birds in Mexico winter in north
36 Mexico than in south.

37
38 The next species, Pacific Greater
39 White-Fronted Geese. They nest to the west of this
40 line right here. About 95 percent nest on the Yukon-
41 Kuskokwim Delta. Additional birds nest on the Bristol
42 Bay lowlands and Innoko River basin. They migrate
43 along the coast. So, again, 95 percent of these birds
44 nest on the Y-K Delta. They migrate along the coast to
45 Sacramento Valley, where they overwinter. We've got
46 additional birds in the Klamath Basin in northeast
47 California and southeast Oregon.

48
49 We monitor Pacific.....
50

1 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: What is that
2 white line through Alaska?

3
4 DR. TAYLOR: That's the general line
5 between what's termed Pacific Greater White-Fronted
6 Geese and what are termed the Mid-Continent White-
7 Fronted Geese, so I'll get to that next.

8
9 We measure the index of Pacific Greater
10 White-Fronted Geese through the Yukon Delta Coastal
11 Breeding Waterfowl Survey. Based on that survey we've
12 seen a substantive increase in Pacific Greater White-
13 Fronted Geese. The population objective is 300,000.
14 Right now the current three-year average is at 627,000
15 birds, so twice of what the population objective is.
16 They're still growing at about 3 percent per year. So
17 just as a point of reference, the Yukon Delta Goose
18 Management Plan that Myron referenced was signed in
19 1984 and certainly was effective to help recover this
20 population.

21
22 Again, the population objective is
23 300,000. We're at twice that at 627,000. It's growing
24 at 3 percent per year. As a result of that growth rate
25 and the population, we're seeing an increase in
26 agricultural crop depredation in California to the
27 point where they've asked the Fish and Wildlife Service
28 to start to issue depredation permits and we started
29 that last year. It's been a relatively low number of
30 depredation permits issued to farmers, but it's a way
31 for farmers to try to decrease that loss of
32 agricultural crops.

33
34 The next population in terms of Mid-
35 Continent White-Fronted Geese nest along the Central
36 Arctic or the upper arctic tundra habitats of Central
37 Canadian Arctic here as well as the North Slope. They
38 also nest in the Taiga and Boreal habitats of Interior
39 and Northwest Alaska. These birds winter along the
40 Gulf Coast, Texas, Louisiana and Mexico.

41
42 We've got a population index estimate
43 for Mid-Continents via the Arctic Coastal Plain. A
44 transect survey that goes from Point Lay over to the
45 Canning River Delta. Again, we're seeing an increase
46 and just like Pacific Greater White-Fronted Geese we're
47 seeing an increase of about, in this case, 6 percent
48 per year. The three-year average for Mid-Continent
49 White-Fronts is 236,000. That's down slightly from
50 257,000, but, again, the population 10-year growth rate

1 is about 6 percent per year.

2

3 MR. DEVINE: Eric, can we go back one
4 slide, please.

5

6 DR. TAYLOR: You bet.

7

8 MR. DEVINE: What's the difference
9 between that graph there? In the middle, the transects
10 get tighter.

11

12 DR. TAYLOR: Okay. And I could have
13 Julian provide additional data or information, but the
14 density of our transects is also dependent upon where
15 most birds are. So in areas that have the highest
16 density of birds we try to get a better estimate in
17 terms of their numbers. So it's what's termed a
18 stratified design, but you can talk to Julian and
19 Heather as well and get some better information or
20 additional information.

21

22 So again the Mid-Continent Greater
23 White-Fronted Geese, the three year average 236,000.
24 It's growing at 6 percent per year. If you remember --
25 so Alaska is only one portion of the Mid-Continent
26 White-Fronted Goose range. Remember they nest in
27 Canada as well. The population is monitored in
28 Saskatchewan, Canada during the fall, is when the
29 actual aerial survey occurs to get the overall
30 population. Right now the most recent 2010 to 2012
31 index is 723,000 birds in that population. Again,
32 above the population objective of 650,000. So Mid-
33 Continents, just like Pacific Greater White-Fronted
34 Geese are doing very well.

35

36 Emperor Geese.....

37

38 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Can I ask you a
39 question. The survey seems to be really centered
40 around Teshekpuk versus any place out east in the
41 Arctic Refuge or anything. Why is that? Is there just
42 not as many birds out east? There's like big gaps
43 where there's no surveys flown.

44

45 DR. TAYLOR: Heather, do you want to
46 take a crack at that? Can you come to the microphone
47 and introduce yourself.

48

49 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: I'm guessing
50 because there's no water.

1 MS. WILSON: Heather Wilson, Mig Birds.
2 The reason is that as you move further east essentially
3 the density of wetlands goes way down and becomes a lot
4 more kind of upland country. So we see birds out
5 there, but they're really sparse. Whereas the highest
6 density of wetlands and basically good habitat is all
7 around that area in Teshekpuk and that Barrow triangle.

8

9 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Thank you.

10

11 DR. TAYLOR: In terms of Emperor Geese,
12 the primary breeding area is the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta.
13 About 90 percent of the birds in Alaska nest there. We
14 have additional birds that nest on the Seward Peninsula
15 and St. Lawrence Island. Wintering area is along the
16 Alaska Peninsula, Kodiak and the Aleutians.

17

18 The population objective, as has been
19 mentioned a couple times today based on two plans, the
20 Emperor Goose Pacific Flyway Management Plan and the
21 2005-6 Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Goose Management Plan, is
22 150,000. Those two plans identify that the Spring
23 Population Index Survey will be the survey to assess
24 that population. It's an aerial survey along the
25 Alaska Peninsula in late April.

26

27 Hunting may be considered when the
28 three-year population average is greater than or equal
29 to 80,000 birds. Right now the three-year -- 2011 and
30 2013 we did not conduct a survey, so the three-year
31 average is 2011-12 and 2014, just about 74,000 birds.

32

33 This is a map of our aerial survey for
34 Emperor Geese. It starts out at Jack Smith Bay, goes
35 along the coast to King Salmon and then along the
36 northern coastal line of the Alaska Peninsula out to
37 Bechevin Bay and then along the southern coast line to
38 Wide Bay. We conduct that survey in April.

39

40 The population objective for Emperor
41 Geese was set at 150,000. This is the population where
42 hunting could be resumed at 80,000. Right now the
43 population, as I said, is around 74,000 for the three-
44 year average. So, in summary again, 150,000. We're
45 currently sitting at about 74,000. We can consider
46 hunting when the population is 80,000 or greater. The
47 population is relatively stable to slightly increasing
48 at 2 percent per year. As has been mentioned, Emperors
49 have been closed to fall hunting since 1986 and
50 subsistence hunting since 1987. Average annual

1 subsistence harvest based on our subsistence harvest
2 surveys around 3,500 birds.

3
4 In terms of factors that are
5 contributing to slow population growth for Emperor
6 Geese, three primary factors that we believe are
7 contributing to that, low egg and gosling survival
8 likely due to fox and gull predation on the Yukon-
9 Kuskokwim Delta. Emperor Geese could be more highly
10 susceptible to disease, infection or contaminants than
11 other species. Again, we believe that subsistence
12 harvest of breeding adults during spring could be
13 contributing to those.

14
15 Now the role of those three factors or
16 which ones are most important it's difficult to say.
17 As a result, I'm going to give a brief introduction to
18 two new studies to address Emperor Geese.

19
20 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Before you go
21 there, do you think there's any nesting competition
22 between Brant and Emperor Geese on nesting grounds or
23 do they overlap similar nesting grounds? We're seeing
24 significant increases in Brant. Are they out-competing
25 Emperors on nesting areas?

26
27 DR. TAYLOR: No, I do not think there's
28 a competition in terms of if nest sites were limiting
29 or that habitat was limiting on the Delta. If
30 anything, we're seeing a loss of the numbers of Brant
31 on the Y-K Delta. So if there was any sort of overlap,
32 it would be being decreased as opposed to increased.
33 The increase in Brant population could be a
34 contribution primarily from the Arctic Coastal Plain,
35 but we're seeing certainly less numbers of birds on the
36 Y-K Delta.

37
38 MS. HOSETH: Mr. Taylor, could you go
39 back to the slide where it shows the graph. Is there
40 an increase in population or a decrease?

41
42 DR. TAYLOR: The population is growing
43 about 2 percent per year for Emperors.

44
45 MR. FAGERSTROM: What's that 2010?
46 That one there. Why do you think there's such a
47 difference between that and the mixtures? Was it
48 timing of the survey? Any theories?

49
50 DR. TAYLOR: It's a good question,

1 Jack, in terms of if you pick any year, for example,
2 why in 2004 did we count that estimate versus a few
3 years later. In terms of year to year variation, it
4 can be due to timing of when that survey occurs. It
5 could be due to weather conditions and visibility in
6 terms of the numbers of birds that both the pilot and
7 the observer are seeing. It could be due to difference
8 in migration where birds have not yet moved into an
9 area or have moved out of an area.

10

11 That is the primary reason that --
12 year-to-year variability is the primary reason why the
13 Pacific Flyway has adopted from nearly all species a
14 three-year average. That average hopes to kind of
15 mitigate that year-to-year variability and get a more
16 ideal or true estimate of the population.

17

18 MR. FAGERSTROM: Thank you.

19

20 DR. TAYLOR: But there are many factors
21 that can contribute to that year to year. Then again
22 how we try to at least address some of that is we try
23 to use the same pilots and the same observers. We try
24 to time our surveys at the same time in terms of trying
25 to get estimates of weather conditions and timing. So
26 we work in terms of both standardizing our pilots and
27 our observers when we do that survey, so we try to
28 address that the best possible.

29

30 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Okay, Eric,
31 hold on a second. I think Tim has a question here.

32

33 MR. ANDREW: Thank you, Mr. Chairman,
34 for allowing me to ask a question. Can you go back to
35 your map that's showing the index. Weather has not
36 always been great probably flying in those areas. I
37 know there's snow storms and fog and high wind
38 conditions and whatnot that limits your ability to see
39 Emperor Geese. I was just wondering what the
40 confidence intervals are like or what do you use for
41 sightability correction factors or what do you use to
42 compensate for that?

43

44 DR. TAYLOR: There is no variability
45 estimate. What we try to do is just get an estimate of
46 the numbers of birds and it's a total count. We do try
47 to take into factors -- if there's a visibility
48 problem, we try to record that in our survey and that's
49 in our reports on a year-to-year basis. We have
50 certain standards relative to our surveys so that we

1 fly only when visibility we feel is excellent at least.

2

3

4 But, yeah, you're right, there's going
5 to be areas that you fly into a bay and there's going
6 to be fog and you can't -- no one wants the risk of
7 human life to try to count the last Emperor Goose. We
8 try to standardize all that and if there's a variance
9 in terms of weather conditions or that we couldn't get
10 to an area, that's recorded as well.

11

12 MR. ANDREW: If I may, Mr. Chair, do a
13 follow up. I know this species of geese had quite a
14 bit of interest primarily because of its low population
15 and inability to reach the population objective and
16 various issues around it. Is this the only accounting
17 system that is currently in place? Is there like
18 breeding pairs or anything like that? Anything that
19 can at least help with the counting?

20

21 DR. TAYLOR: That's a good question,
22 Tim, and we've been wrestling with that. There are
23 several other surveys, both ground and aerial surveys,
24 that we conduct in Alaska. When I jump to this next
25 slide, I'll go into how we're going to try to use the
26 data that we collect on the breeding grounds, the data
27 that we collect during the fall staging period as well
28 as data that we collect at Izembek to try to look at
29 those four datasets to see if they complement each
30 other or if they're giving different results.

31

32 Indeed, that may help us to say where
33 is the problem occurring. For example, if we're
34 producing healthy populations of broods on the Y-K
35 Delta and those birds are leaving and we feel like
36 we've got a good estimate of recruitment and then those
37 birds are not coming back, is that an indication that
38 there's a change in wintering areas, that survival is
39 lower due to any numbers of factors, has food changed
40 in the wintering areas.

41

42 We're going to get to that. We're
43 going to jump to a study here. But it's an excellent
44 question and I think we're finally going to be able to
45 address some of your concerns as well as our concerns.

46

47 So we've heard you basically is what
48 the short story is. The Fish and Wildlife Service and
49 USGS is funding a four-year study by Dr. Joel Schmutz
50 with the Alaska Science Center and the title of his

1 presentation or his proposal, his study, is
2 Cross-Seasonal Effects and Disease as Constraints on
3 the Numbers of Emperor Geese. So the objectives, two
4 major or primary objectives, is how do conditions on
5 the wintering areas or the spring staging areas impact
6 breeding success on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. So Joel
7 will be looking at where birds are wintering or staging
8 and then following their recruitment or their
9 productivity when they return on the Yukon-Kuskokwim
10 Delta.

11
12 He's also looking at the amount or the
13 prevalence of blood parasites in relation to goose
14 density, in relation to Emperor density and what are
15 the potential impacts to clutch size. So Joel has some
16 indication that, indeed, as the infection with blood
17 parasites increase, clutch size decreases and his
18 question is, is that enough to affect the population.

19
20 So that is one study that's getting
21 underway in 2015. That's quite a substantive effort.

22
23 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: So as he's
24 looking at that with Emperors, is he looking at some
25 other geese populations to find out whether -- you
26 know, as a control to find out whether other geese
27 suffer -- that are growing, for instance, have blood
28 parasite levels also? I hate to blame blood parasites
29 if it's not the cause.

30
31 DR. TAYLOR: Sure. No, it's a good
32 question and he does have some comparison data relative
33 to other species, but I'd be happy to have Joel forward
34 his proposal to you. No, it's a good question and,
35 indeed, it's not just Emperors.

36
37 DR. ROSENBERG: If I may speak, there
38 is an alternate sort of hypothesis here. If Eric could
39 go back to the graph that he has of the population
40 surveys.

41
42 DR. TAYLOR: That one or the.....

43
44 DR. ROSENBERG: No, the -- yeah, the
45 bar graph. Our whole population objective and all our
46 thresholds are based on a survey done in 1964 off of
47 the Y-K Delta in a year of sort of abhorrent weather.
48 I mean it was the coldest, latest spring on record
49 until last year. We have one dataset of that, roughly
50 140,000 Emperor Geese in 1964. Then you fast forward

1 to 1981 when the consistent surveys were begun in a
2 different area at a different time. So there was a
3 very different number there. What's that number a
4 result of? Is it a result of that there really were
5 fewer geese or is it a result of methodology and
6 timing?

7
8 So since that time it's been fairly
9 consistent. The population has been relative stable.
10 So it's possible that there's nothing limiting the pop
11 -- I mean there's always something limiting a
12 population, but it's possible that it's no smaller now
13 than it was historically depending upon, you know, in
14 the historic timeframe that we have to assess this
15 population. There is some other data out there. Some
16 people have looked at it and have come up with various
17 estimates.

18
19 Anyway, this is something that we're
20 trying to also get at in our review of the management
21 plan. It's not just necessarily that -- you know,
22 something is always limiting populations, of course,
23 but those factors could have been around forever. So
24 we're trying to arrive at whether there truly is --
25 there should be, I guess, or historically has been a
26 much larger population or not.

27
28 The estimates that Bob Stehn came up
29 with for just using, I think, the nest plot surveys and
30 maybe the breeding ground surveys was -- you know, in
31 his model that he put together, sort of a rough model,
32 was there could be as many as 130,000 Emperor Geese
33 right now, where our index is 77,000 or 73,000 on a
34 three-year average. So trying to scale that index to
35 what the true population is is sort of one thing that
36 we're trying to do right now.

37
38 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: But I think --
39 so that leads me to the question of one of the things
40 we put up there as a probable cause to this population
41 not responding is subsistence harvest. One could
42 easily argue that subsistence harvest has not been
43 limiting if the population really has been maintaining
44 a stability over the last 25 years.

45
46 DR. ROSENBERG: Absolutely. It's
47 growing.

48
49 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: I, for one, if
50 I was a wildlife manager, I certainly wouldn't be

1 setting a population objective based on a single year
2 count that I would not know is comparable to a multi-
3 year count. That would be fairly problematic.

4

5 DR. ROSENBERG: Anyway, thank you.
6 Sorry to interrupt, but I just wanted to get that out.

7

8 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Peter.

9

10 MR. DEVINE: Thank you. It's more of a
11 comment, I guess. From what I'm seeing on the numbers,
12 out of five species the only ones who aren't making
13 their objective are the ones that we want to hunt. All
14 these other numbers you have I mean they're leveled out
15 at 80, 120,000. I mean you have the Emperor Goose
16 objective for 150,000 and so why is the Brant
17 different? I mean they're at 160,000 that they need,
18 but the graph says, no, we need 162. I mean how did
19 that 2,000 come into play when you guys were doing the
20 numbers?

21

22 DR. TAYLOR: In terms of the population
23 objectives and the harvest strategies, those were all
24 decided on two documents in terms of the species that
25 you talked about, both the Goose Management Plan on the
26 Y-K Delta back in 1986 and then each of those species,
27 Brant, Greater White-Fronted Geese, Cackling Canada
28 Geese and Emperor Geese have management plans in the
29 flyways and those are -- I don't know the dates for
30 each one of those plans when they were originated, but
31 that's where the population objectives and the harvest
32 strategies were decided upon by the agencies. In the
33 case of the Y-K Delta, multiple representatives in
34 terms of Native representatives, State of Alaska, USGS
35 and other agencies.

36

37 So your question still is good in terms
38 of is it healthy to go back to those management plans
39 and say was the population objective, what was the
40 rationale for it, should it be looked at again. For
41 example, for Cackling Canada Geese, where we're seeing
42 a population objective set at 250,000 and yet now we're
43 seeing that population winter in a different area than
44 when that population objective was established.

45

46 So is it reasonable for management
47 agencies to go back and say given that change in
48 wintering grounds, given that they're no longer in
49 California but now in Oregon, and given the potential
50 management challenges associated with trying to manage

1 that population, is it important to lower that
2 population objective to provide relief to Oregon
3 hunters or should we find some balance and maintain a
4 population objective to allow residents on the Yukon-
5 Kuskokwim Delta to meet their subsistence needs.

6
7 The point is it's never set in stone
8 necessarily and it is, indeed, I think reasonable to go
9 back and look at a management plan and say should the
10 population objective be changed or should harvest
11 levels be changed in reflection of different potential
12 variables, whether it's change in wintering areas or
13 other factors.

14
15 In terms of the specific question for
16 Emperor Geese, why haven't Emperor Geese obtained their
17 population objective, we're trying to get at that.
18 We're trying to address those factors. That's one of
19 the reasons for Joel's research.

20
21 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Eric, just one
22 last question and then I'll let you get going on it.
23 So what's the formal process for changing the
24 population objective? Is that through the Technical
25 Committee or is that through the flyway? I should know
26 this. As a representative of the flyway, can I make a
27 recommendation to lower that objective or does that
28 have to come out of the.....

29
30 DR. TAYLOR: It starts with -- there's
31 a subcommittee for the species and I could ask Todd
32 Sanders to perhaps come to the microphone, but I'll
33 take a crack at it. If I misspeak, Todd I'm sure will
34 come up. Each species has a subcommittee, for example,
35 Cackling Canada Geese. It's typically the coastal
36 states representative. So Dan Rosenberg, myself,
37 Brandon Reishus from Oregon, Melanie Weaver from
38 California, Don Kraege from Washington. Those
39 biologists sit on that Cackling Canada Goose
40 Subcommittee for the Pacific Flyway. In this case, the
41 Cackling Canada Goose Management Plan is under revision
42 and the population objective will be discussed at that
43 time among those individuals on that subcommittee.

44
45 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: I think Gayla
46 has a question.

47
48 MS. HOSETH: I just wanted to jump in,
49 like what Peter said about it's the bird that we can't
50 hunt. During our council meetings back at home, one of

1 our elders that sits on our council says the Emperor
2 Geese are our geese and need to understand clearly that
3 these are the Natives' birds. It's our resources.
4 They don't migrate down south and this needs to be
5 respected and understood. So hopefully we could get to
6 a point where we could hunt these birds.

7
8 DR. TAYLOR: So I talked about the first
9 study by Joel Schmutz at the Alaska Science Center.
10 The second one I mentioned briefly today when I came to
11 the microphone earlier. The Fish and Wildlife Service,
12 Division of Migratory Bird Management is funding Josh
13 Dooley with Harrison Environmental Group out of Oregon.
14 Todd Sanders and Guthrie Zimmerman with Fish and
15 Wildlife Service, the Division of Migratory Bird
16 Management and Julian Fischer out of our shop here in
17 Anchorage. The title of the work is Demographic
18 Analyses to Identify Limiting Factors in Emperor Geese.

19
20 The objectives, I think, which many
21 people have voiced interest in, is trying to determine
22 whether the spring staging survey is the best method to
23 monitor population size. So we're going to look very
24 closely at the methods, the geographic and the temporal
25 -- the timing of that survey, the geographic area as
26 well as the temporal or timing of that survey to see
27 if, indeed, that spring staging survey maintains the
28 best method.

29
30 We're also going to compare that spring
31 staging data, the population index, how it relates to
32 other demographic or population data that are collected
33 during the breeding, fall staging and wintering
34 periods. So we're trying to get at that idea of what
35 this population is doing and potentially identifying
36 where, if at all, the population is being limited.

37
38 That study is being funded this year.
39 It's getting underway in 2015 and it's a one-year
40 effort.

41
42 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Eric, are any
43 of these studies specifically asking the question about
44 what the appropriate population objective size is or
45 will it be information that could be used by this
46 committee to decide that? Again, I'm deeply concerned
47 that we have a population objective for this species
48 that's based on a single year count that's not
49 comparable potentially to the current data. I would
50 hope that as we collect information over the next

1 couple years with these studies that we're asking the
2 very question what is the right population objective to
3 manage for.

4

5 DR. TAYLOR: To answer your question,
6 neither study is going to look at whether the
7 population objective of 150,000 or the threshold of
8 80,000 are the right numbers. Indeed, those two
9 questions would be addressed by the Emperor Goose
10 Subcommittee for the Pacific Flyway. But you're
11 exactly correct, the information that's going to result
12 from these two studies will certainly feed into those
13 discussions.

14

15 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Go ahead.

16

17 MR. NANENG: Eric, I know that Emperor
18 Geese don't nest until they're probably three years old
19 according to the studies that have been presented over
20 the years to Alaska Migratory Bird Co-Management
21 Council as well as to Waterfowl Conservation Committee.
22 My question, and since I've observed this when I was
23 younger out at Hooper Bay, some of the Emperor Geese
24 don't show up in our area around Hooper Bay or even
25 some of the nesting areas until late summertime. Are
26 those birds part of the survey that's done during
27 springtime or do those birds wait until later on during
28 the summer to make their migration up north before they
29 molt?

30

31 DR. TAYLOR: If I understand you
32 correctly, Myron, I think what you would like to know
33 in terms of if birds are arriving on the Delta at
34 different times during the summer and you've got then
35 different departures, so oftentimes -- for example,
36 some species, if they're a non-breeding bird or if
37 they're a failed breeding bird, those birds may leave
38 the breeding grounds earlier than successful breeders,
39 birds that are still with broods. What you're seeing
40 is sometimes immature birds or birds that are not
41 breeding, non-breeding birds, are migrating later than
42 other portions of that population.

43

44 It's an excellent question. Again, it
45 gets to, I believe, Jack's question of what causes that
46 inter-year, between year variability. We try to
47 account for that. So when we do that staging survey in
48 the spring, we try to account for when the maximum
49 numbers of birds would be there. Now, is it always
50 perfect? I can assure you it's not. I can assure you

1 that at some times the birds were too early to doing
2 the survey and sometimes were too late in the sense
3 that birds had moved already toward the Yukon-Kuskokwim
4 Delta. That's one factor that we try to get a good
5 estimate in terms of when those birds -- when the
6 maximum amount of population is there.

7

8 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Okay.
9 Continue.

10

11 DR. TAYLOR: All right. Cackling
12 Canada Geese. This is a map I want to stress for all
13 Canada geese. So Cackling Canada Geese occur on the
14 Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, but the rest of that green are
15 the other subspecies of Canada and Cackling Canada
16 Geese in North America. So Cacklers did winter in
17 California. Since the 1990s that population has
18 shifted to the north and now winter primarily in Oregon
19 and southern Washington.

20

21 In terms of Cackling Canada Geese, the
22 population objective is 250,000. The three-year index
23 right now is sitting just around 260,000. I'll get the
24 exact number on the next slide. The population is
25 relatively stable, growing slightly at about 1 percent
26 per year, but it's not significantly different from a
27 0 percent growth or 0 percent stability, so it's
28 slightly increases I guess would be a reasonable thing
29 to say.

30

31 As I mentioned, wintering Cackling
32 Geese in Oregon. Prior to the 1990s the birds wintered
33 in California but now about 95 percent winter in
34 northwest Oregon. It's pretty safe to say, even though
35 there are refuges in Oregon and other public lands,
36 there's insufficient winter habitat on public lands in
37 Oregon. Consequently the birds have moved to private
38 lands. We have heard from the Oregon Farm Bureau and
39 Oregon farmers relative to complaints about their
40 agricultural crop depredation.

41

42 In 2014 Oregon and the state of
43 Washington increased the Cackling Canada Goose daily
44 bag limit from three to four because that population is
45 over population objective and because of the
46 depredation issue in Oregon, both states agreed to a
47 more liberalized season.

48

49 Again the population objective 250,000.
50 The three-year average 2012-2014 about 265,000 birds.

1 Relatively stable to slightly increasing population
2 growth rate. As I said, the wintering area has changed
3 from California to Oregon and, as a result, there's an
4 increased depredation of agricultural crops,
5 particularly in Oregon. The Oregon Farm Bureau has met
6 with Association of Village Council Presidents and the
7 Fish and Wildlife Service and the Department of Fish
8 and Game interested in lowering the population
9 objective and decreasing the population as an attempt
10 to get at trying to decrease the population of Oregon
11 and Washington to liberalize their seasons.

12
13 In terms of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta,
14 we feel Cackling Canada Geese play several important
15 roles. They're the second most important species of
16 subsistence hunters on the Y-K Delta. They also
17 provide prey to arctic foxes and gulls. When I talk
18 about Spectacled Eiders on the Y-K Delta and the
19 increase that that population is incurring, it could be
20 due in part that Cackling Canada Geese provide prey for
21 arctic foxes and gulls and, therefore, decrease
22 predation both on Brant and Specs.

23
24 We also think that Cacklers play a role
25 in creating and maintaining grazing lawns for brood
26 rearing Brant. So Cacklers are very important not only
27 as a subsistence food for hunters but also toward the
28 ecosystem on the Refuge.

29
30 Next up, Spectacled Eiders. They were
31 listed as threatened in 1993 and closed to all hunting.
32 They were listed as threatened primarily because of a
33 decline of 96 percent from about 50,000 pairs in the
34 early '70s to 1,720 pairs by 1992. Primary breeding
35 grounds for Spectacled Eiders are on the Y-K Delta and
36 the Arctic Coastal Plain.

37
38 In terms of molting areas during the
39 flightless period, Ledyard Bay, eastern Norton Sound
40 and then everyone knows by now and I've shown this
41 slide before the wintering population is south of St.
42 Lawrence Island.

43
44 We estimate Spectacled Eiders by two
45 aerial surveys. The map you've seen before. The Yukon
46 Delta Coastal Zone Breeding Waterfowl Survey and then
47 the Arctic Coastal Plain aerial survey.

48
49 This is a bit of a busy figure, but the
50 graph here in blue, the histograms, again this is the

1 years of the survey, population estimate or index.
2 Again it's an index of the population, not a total
3 population count. You can see for the Y-K Delta we're
4 seeing an increase of about 4 percent per year.
5 Meanwhile on the Arctic Coastal Plain, the white
6 histograms here, population is relatively stable. The
7 population index 6,700 birds, and I believe there's
8 about 6,700 birds and 6,200 birds are the two
9 population indices for Spectacled Eiders.

10
11 In terms of why Specs are increasing on
12 the Y-K Delta, I try to touch upon that. It's a good,
13 reasonable question on why we're seeing two different
14 population trends. We don't have complete answers, but
15 certainly the decreased use of lead shot probably has
16 played a role in the recovery of Spectacled Eiders on
17 the Y-K Delta. Also the increase in Cackling Canada
18 Geese and decrease in potential predation on Spectacled
19 Eiders could be playing a role and certainly the
20 decrease in subsistence hunting on Spectacled Eiders
21 has played a role as well.

22
23 In terms of the Arctic Coastal Plain on
24 why that population doesn't have the same sort of trend
25 as the Y-K Delta is a difficult one to address.

26
27 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: I think last
28 year we talked about
29 this and, personally, I feel that this species is no
30 longer a threatened species on the landscape. I know
31 we've been thinking about submitting a petition for de-
32 listing and we've been encouraged to not do that
33 because the Service is doing it on its own. Where are
34 you with de-listing of this species? Again, with the
35 hope that we can start providing some harvest
36 opportunity for this species that's no longer at risk
37 of extinction.

38
39 DR. TAYLOR: We've got a couple
40 representatives on the recovery team. I think Dan
41 serves on the recovery team and Julian serves on the
42 recovery team. Sarah Conn from the Endangered Species
43 Program will be here. I'll open it up to see if Dan or
44 Julian, either one of you, want to come to the
45 microphone and give an update on where we're at
46 relative to looking at this as a possible de-listing.

47
48 MR. FISCHER: Julian Fischer, Fish and
49 Wildlife. I think this would be a good question to
50 pose to Sarah tomorrow when she's here. She represents

1 the Endangered Species Office with Ecological Services.
2 But, briefly, under the recovery plan there was a model
3 developed that was used to assess where the population
4 is relative to the recovery criteria.

5
6 It's a complex model that was developed
7 and there's a representative on the recovery team who
8 specializes in population modeling. His name is Barry
9 Grand. He's at Auburn University. He's been tasked by
10 the team to review all the population data and
11 determine where the population is relative to those
12 benchmark criteria at this time. So he's working on
13 that actively with his graduate students.

14
15 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: You realize
16 though that a decision to de-list is not tied to the
17 recovery plan itself, that you can make a decision even
18 though you don't meet outdated recovery criteria to de-
19 list a species if you feel that the threat of
20 extinction is now gone for that listable entity?

21
22 MR. FISCHER: So I'm not an expert in
23 listing actions. The decision to list or de-list is
24 certainly going to be related to the recovery plan that
25 was established at the time of listing or following
26 listing as part of a decision-making process. As I
27 understand, there's a number of different steps that
28 need to be taken in terms of looking at continuing and
29 ongoing threats to a population to determine whether
30 those have been alleviated or not. But a large, very
31 important element to a de-listing process would be to
32 look at what the population is doing relative to the
33 criteria that we're set up for listing in the first
34 place.

35
36 But it's important to note that the
37 original listing decision for Spectacled Eiders was
38 focused mainly on it was proposed for listing largely
39 because of the Yukon Delta population. As you can see
40 here, the Yukon Delta population has experienced a
41 large amount of growth and the North Slope population
42 is variable but generally stable over the long term.
43 Then the third population is the Russian Arctic Coastal
44 breeding population, which we believe is stable at this
45 time.

46
47 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: One last
48 question. What's your timeline for this Georgia
49 professor to get some work done?
50

1 MR. FISCHER: That's -- I can't speak
2 to this.

3
4 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Are we years
5 away from de-listing under your timeline or is it a
6 priority to get these looked at within the next 12
7 months or 16 months?

8
9 MR. FISCHER: Well, it's not for me to
10 say that a de-listing decision would be made within a
11 certain time period. Certainly decisions about that
12 would be made in a relatively short period of time,
13 within a year or two, but I can't say that a de-listing
14 action would be taken at this time based on what we
15 know.

16
17 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Okay. Thank
18 you.

19
20 DR. TAYLOR: Let's see. Next up.
21 Steller's Eider, like Spectacled Eiders, Steller's are
22 currently closed to hunting. The North American
23 breeding population was listed as threatened in 1997.
24 Steller's are sparsely distributed across the Arctic
25 Coastal Plain. The highest density of breeding birds
26 occurs near Barrow.

27
28 Our best estimate for the Alaska
29 breeding population about 5-600 birds in total. The
30 population trend, in looking at the last 10 years is
31 stable. Again, as I mentioned in the red, Steller's
32 Eider breeding range, at one point they were common on
33 the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta. Now they're largely absent
34 from the Y-K Delta. They are still breeding on the
35 Arctic Coastal Plain primarily at Barrow. The
36 important molting areas where these birds go
37 flightless: Kuskokwim Shoals, Seal Island, Nelson
38 Lagoon and Izembek Lagoon are the primary molting
39 areas. Steller's winter from Kodiak island along the
40 Alaska Peninsula all the way to Kamchatka, Russia.

41
42 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Before you
43 leave this, just a minute. So how certain are we that
44 those are closed populations both in the Yukon Delta
45 and the North Slope? Are we at all certain that those
46 are closed populations that warrant management?
47 Assuming management of the closed population or do we
48 suspect that they may be more open with movement
49 between there and Russia and Canada, for instance?
50

1 DR. TAYLOR: So you're asking do birds
2 interchange their breeding areas, I think, Doug, if I
3 understand your question.

4
5 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Yeah.

6
7 DR. TAYLOR: So birds that nest.....

8
9 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: If you're
10 trying to assess the stability of a population, one of
11 the most important things is to figure out if it's a
12 closed population or not. I know we had asked some
13 serious questions about how closed these populations
14 were in the past and wanted to collect some
15 information. So I guess I'm asking you now how certain
16 are you or are you conducting any surveys to estimate
17 how closed those populations are?

18
19 DR. TAYLOR: We are not conducting any
20 surveys to my knowledge nor any research is being done
21 in terms of trying to get at that question. My guess
22 is there is some exchange between those populations.
23 To the degree that it affects the population estimates
24 I'm not an expert to say.

25
26 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: One could
27 easily imagine -- say if you had 20 percent interchange
28 in a population of 500, that's a significant amount of
29 interchange and you couldn't make any judgments based
30 on a decline in any given year if you have that much
31 interchange in a population.

32
33 DR. TAYLOR: I would agree.

34
35 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Peter's got a
36 question.

37
38 MR. DEVINE: Not a question, just a
39 comment if we go back to the Eiders. You know, I mean
40 we keep hearing that there's only five, six hundred.
41 Well, I've been reporting that there's, you know, five,
42 six hundred right on the north end of Popof Island that
43 come back every winter, but I was told that those are
44 Russian birds. I mean you say five, six hundred
45 breeding pair or is.....

46
47 DR. TAYLOR: Correct. Our estimate is
48 five to six hundred breeding birds in Alaska.

49
50 MR. AHMASUK: Breeding birds or

1 breeding pairs?

2

3 DR. TAYLOR: Breeding birds. Indeed,
4 what you were told before is correct. The birds that
5 breed in Russia as well as birds that breed in Canada
6 or in Alaska all winter along the Alaska Peninsula and
7 Aleutian Islands. So, indeed, it's a mixture of
8 population that you're seeing.

9

10 We estimate Steller's Eider abundance
11 from the same survey I've cited, for example for Mid-
12 Continent Greater White-Fronted Geese and Spectacled
13 Eiders, the Arctic Coastal Plain aerial survey. As a
14 result, because there's so few birds that we count,
15 every year you can see there's a large amount of
16 variability in our estimates. This year we only
17 estimated a total of 49 birds and the three-year
18 average right now is around 286 birds. Again, because
19 of the sparse population in the Arctic Coastal Plain
20 you see that large variability. In terms of the trend,
21 based on that, it's pretty difficult to put a trend
22 line on it, but our best estimate is that it's
23 relatively stable.

24

25 The last species I'm going to talk
26 about are Yellow-Billed Loons. The distribution for
27 breeding birds in Alaska from Point Lay to the Canning
28 River. They also occur on St. Lawrence Island and
29 Seward Peninsula. Best population estimates for
30 Yellow-Billed Loons in Alaska 3-4,000 birds, but
31 there's been no systematic surveys in Canada or Russia,
32 so we don't really have best estimates. In terms of
33 the overall world population, our best estimate is 20-
34 32,000 birds.

35

36 In terms of the Arctic Coastal Plan,
37 the last three-year index 2012-2014 about 2,400 birds
38 we've counted. The good news is the population is
39 growing at about 5 percent per year based on the last
40 10 years. The birds have been closed to subsistence
41 harvest since 2003. In 2009, due to a petition, the
42 Fish and Wildlife Service determined Yellow-Billed
43 Loons were warranted but precluded for protection under
44 the Endangered Species Act. This year the Fish and
45 Wildlife Service will announce our decision whether
46 listing is warranted or not.

47

48 In terms of population index for
49 Yellow-Billed Loons on the Arctic Coastal Plain, the
50 total bird index for 2014 about 2,700 birds. The

1 three-year index about 2,400 birds. They're growing at
2 a population growth rate of about 5 percent per year.

3
4 The last thing I want to talk about is
5 not so much population trend or abundance, but several
6 folks mentioned today about the avian cholera event
7 that occurred last year November 2013 near St. Lawrence
8 Island where Auklets, Murres, Fulmars and a Common
9 Eider washed up onshore. Indeed, it was a very
10 surprising event in the history of Alaska.

11
12 The first time avian cholera has been
13 diagnosed in birds and what's even more surprising, as
14 opposed to where typically avian cholera occurs in
15 birds that are densely in wintering areas in warm
16 water, this was obviously a cold water environment, so
17 it caught us off guard. In terms of the Fish and
18 Wildlife Service's response, I think it was certainly
19 anything but stellar and we've taken corrections to
20 correct that.

21
22 Luckily, thanks to the Department of
23 Fish and Game and others, we had a good response plan
24 back in 2013, but the Service has made an effort to try
25 to correct our avian disease response. So we're
26 forming a multi-agency network of biologists who are
27 trained to respond to avian mortality events.
28 Certainly the first thing you want to do and a goal is
29 we're going to have to do it safe and not panic over
30 it. We're going to establish procedures in place to
31 get diagnostic samples. So if you see an avian disease
32 or an event where birds are injured or starting to wash
33 up on shore, we want to get a process in place where we
34 get good samples.

35
36 Also a primary important goal is the
37 communication network or framework both within and
38 among communities and agencies. So that's Fish and
39 Wildlife Service, the Department of Fish and Game,
40 Department of Environmental Conservation, the USGS
41 National Wildlife Health Lab and the USDA Wildlife
42 Services. Certainly other Federal and State agencies
43 are going to be involved as well as academic
44 institutions and Native corporations and villages.

45
46 We're getting that underway right now.
47 This is a map of where we have people that have been
48 trained in avian disease response. Right now we've got
49 29 people located across the state and you can see, you
50 know, there's large numbers, no surprise in kind of the

1 metropolitan areas, Fairbanks and Anchorage, but we've
2 got people scattered all the way from Juneau to Barrow.
3 Our hope is that those numbers and the geographic
4 spatial coverage is going to increase within the year.

5
6 So we had a first workshop. This is
7 kind of a precursor and kind of a dry run of avian
8 mortality even workshop. The purpose was to provide
9 those that are in attendance with information and the
10 tools in terms of both knowledge and the actual skills
11 to respond to avian disease events. So we looked at --
12 we had experts come up from various different agencies.
13 We talked about avian diseases that have been found in
14 Alaska. We talked about what equipment is necessary,
15 what would be in a response kit. We actually did a
16 field exercise in terms of how one would implement
17 looking for birds and how one would collect birds and
18 safely put them in for transport and then also what
19 type of response in terms of how communication would
20 occur.

21
22 The instructors were the National
23 Wildlife Refuge system veterinarian, Samantha Gibbs,
24 came up from Colorado. Kimberly Beckman from the
25 Department of Fish and Game, the State wildlife
26 veterinarian, was there. ADEC State veterinarian Bob
27 Gerlach, and then USGS National Wildlife Health Center
28 sent up Barbara Bodenstein. We had attendees from Fish
29 and Wildlife Service, we had three biologists from the
30 Department of Fish and Game and several biologists from
31 the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

32
33 Again, this was the first workshop and
34 what we're hoping to do in 2014 and certainly in 2015
35 is establish future workshops and provide training both
36 in person and online. We're going to include other
37 Department of Interior agencies, the National Park
38 Service and BLM and other biologists, but also Alaska
39 Native community members and biologist. So our hope is
40 that we get certainly a higher number of responders and
41 a greater geographic coverage.

42
43 We've re-established the 1-800 number
44 or 1-866 in this case for avian disease and that's
45 being answered by three different phones in my office.
46 There's also a Department of Fish and Game number that
47 one can call. The main thing is when this happens the
48 next time I think we'll all be better prepared.

49
50 With that, I appreciate your attention.

1 If you do have specific questions, I'll reiterate if
2 there's species that you have questions about that you
3 would like additional information, please jot it down
4 and stop me while I'm here. I'll be here the next two
5 days. If you've got additional specific experience or
6 questions on survey methodology, I encourage you to
7 talk to Julian, Heather, Brad or Anna. As Julian
8 mentioned, we'll have an endangered species
9 representative here. Sarah Conn will be here from the
10 Fairbanks office.

11

12 Brandon, did you have a question?

13

14 MR. AHMASUK: Brandon Ahmasuk,
15 subsistence director at Kawerak. If you could back up
16 a few. There was a five number you were talking about.
17 There it is. Maybe I missed it. Could you go in depth
18 on the five, the number five.

19

20 DR. TAYLOR: So you're asking about
21 this number here?

22

23 MR. AHMASUK: Yes.

24

25 DR. TAYLOR: Yeah. You know, I think
26 we're saying if you see one bird or two birds, is it
27 worth a call and I think -- you know, I'm not for sure
28 where that five number originated. There was an avian
29 disease response plan and I failed to mention that
30 that's currently being revised and it will be revised
31 and distributed by the end of this year. I think the
32 number five was settled upon because certainly if you
33 see a bird crash into a window or wash up on shore,
34 birds can die from any number of reasons. They can die
35 from a collision, they can die from exposure, they can
36 die from starvation, they can die from predation or any
37 number of reasons.

38

39 There comes a point where is it
40 worthwhile to start a whole response plan starting
41 people in implementing some sort of field exercise for
42 one bird or two birds. In this case, the number five
43 was held upon because it seemed like a reasonable
44 enough number that if you saw five birds wash up on
45 shore, you'd say, okay, this is unusual, something is
46 wrong.

47

48 MR. AHMASUK: Okay. Second question.
49 I mean this was the reason I was asking about the
50 number five. A ballpark figure, I guess, what was the

1 number of birds that washed up on St. Lawrence Island?

2

3 DR. TAYLOR: You know, it's a good
4 question. Our best estimate is somewhere between 6-
5 7,000 birds were probably affected by that event.

6

7 MR. AHMASUK: Thank you. That's why I
8 wanted to go more in depth on that number five because
9 what we had out at St. Lawrence Island, this wasn't
10 just a couple birds. Everybody in the region, we all
11 understand, you know, they die off. You'll have a bird
12 die off here, you'll have a bird die off there, but
13 this wasn't just one or two. This was in the
14 thousands.

15

16 DR. TAYLOR: Yeah.

17

18 MR. AHMASUK: So it's definitely
19 something very serious to take into consideration for
20 any region. Again, just like all the communities, this
21 is food security. It was very scary when it happened.
22 But we would like to thank the Service for when they
23 did act, they acted.

24

25 Thank you.

26

27 DR. TAYLOR: Again, you raise a really
28 good point. This number five is, again, not set in
29 concrete. Three birds or four birds washed up on
30 shore. You saw birds acting in a manner that indicates
31 there's something wrong. By all means, please call us.
32 It's not that there has to be five birds before we
33 would respond to you.

34

35 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Okay. We have
36 a couple questions around the table. First off, Eric,
37 I wanted to thank you for your presentation. It was
38 well done as usual. Myron first.

39

40 MR. NANENG: Thank you, Eric. With the
41 avian diseased birds, are you talking about the same
42 species of birds or can these five birds be of
43 different species? I think that needs to be clarified
44 so a lot of people in the villages can understand.

45

46 DR. TAYLOR: Myron, what we would be
47 interested in would be
48 any sort of event that you feel like warrants attention
49 by avian disease experts. So it can be one, two,
50 three, four, five. It can be one species or five

1 different species. If there's a concern in a village
2 regarding avian -- of mortality or behavior of a bird
3 or birds that you feel is unusual, please call. That's
4 what that number is set up for.

5

6 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Mike.

7

8 MR. PEDERSON: Just two comments. This
9 summer, later in the season, it seems like those of us
10 that are on the ground there in Barrow we're noticing
11 large family groups of Yellow-Billed Loons. We see them
12 flying around together and swimming together. So I
13 just wanted to comment on that.

14

15 Another thing with the aerial surveys
16 since the pilots are here. How high are they flying
17 off the ground and when they're doing their surveys, do
18 they make any efforts to keep away from fish camps and
19 other hunting activity that's going on up there on the
20 Slope? Over the last year we've had lots of complaints
21 about low flying aircraft. We do realize that you guys
22 are not the only group out there using airplanes to do
23 surveys, so I was just a little bit curious about that.

24

25 DR. TAYLOR: I might ask Heather to
26 step up. Heather does the surveys on the Arctic
27 Coastal Plain and she can comment on the altitude that
28 she flies as well as how she deals with Native fish
29 camps and other communities.

30

31 MS. WILSON: Heather Wilson, Fish and
32 Wildlife Service. We fly that survey at 125 feet AGL
33 and as best we can we try and avoid anything on the
34 ground, any type of structure that we can see ahead.
35 We don't always miss that if we're on our flight line
36 and we're both looking and counting birds. We try and
37 be really sensitive to that.

38

39 Bill Larned, who is a right seat
40 observer, was the pilot for the survey for 20 or 25
41 years, and he's still flying it with me in the other
42 seat. He also has been good and continues to sort of
43 train me in calling ahead to communities that we know
44 would have seal hunting going on or other things to let
45 them know we're going to be in the area and ask if
46 there's certain -- we've even sent maps ahead to see
47 where we should abbreviate lines so that we don't
48 disturb them or if they're doing beluga work or
49 whatever is going on. So we try and be really
50 sensitive to it.

1 We also know there's increasing aerial
2 work all over with development and a lot of different
3 surveys and stuff, so we try and be cognizant. We're
4 kind of a quick pass through most areas. Most of our
5 lines are somewhere around 60-plus miles long, so we're
6 not really hovering. But, yeah, as best we can we will
7 wiggle off the line to avoid being right over someone's
8 camp or someone in a boat.

9
10 DR. TAYLOR: The other thing, Mike,
11 when I distribute this presentation you'll see the
12 color pattern on our two planes as well as the tail
13 numbers and certainly, if there's a concern or a
14 complaint, jot down if it's our aircraft or if it's not
15 our aircraft try to get the best description possible
16 and fire me off an email and say were you there. If we
17 were, we'll be the first one to tell you.

18
19 MR. PEDERSON: Thank you.

20
21 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Okay. Other
22 questions. Gayla.

23
24 MS. HOSETH: I just had a comment.
25 Thank you for the presentation. And I just wanted to
26 stress again for the record how important it would be
27 for us to have this information in our binders. These
28 are the numbers that we could bring back to our region
29 and have that information on hand and not wait for it
30 after the meeting.

31
32 DR. TAYLOR: The other thing I want to
33 mention too, and I've made this offer in the past, is
34 that while we don't have an unlimited budget, certainly
35 communication with regional bodies is extremely
36 important. I'm sure there are species that you're
37 sitting there going why didn't Eric talk about this and
38 this species is important in my region or important to
39 subsistence hunters. Again, I would offer that if you
40 would like the Migratory Bird Program to attend a
41 regional meeting, please fire me off a note and we'll
42 try to make it happen.

43
44 I know we weren't able to help out with
45 the North Slope Borough in their meeting, but we have
46 in the past. We've also gone to Glennallen and given a
47 presentation at Joeneal's workshops. That offer still
48 stands. So if there are specific questions on species
49 or distributions or migrations or how we do counts or
50 the health of bird populations, we'll be happy to do

1 it.

2

3 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Peter.

4

5 MR. DEVINE: I just have a comment.
6 You opened it up, Eric. You said any other information
7 we want. I don't see any information on the migratory
8 raven.

9

10 DR. TAYLOR: Okay. Well, I can
11 certainly go to our land bird experts, our biologists.
12 We don't have any particular raven studies ongoing
13 right now. There will be some population data that are
14 available from other surveys. We don't have any aerial
15 surveys to assess the population or abundance of
16 ravens, but certainly I can get you that information.

17

18 MR. DEVINE: Thanks.

19

20 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Okay. Other
21 questions or comments.

22

23 (No comments)

24

25 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Okay. Why
26 don't we take a 10-minute break and let Liliana set up
27 and come up and do that. My intent is to break today
28 at 4:30 and hopefully get through the financial report
29 by the end of the day.

30

31 (Off record)

32

33 (On record)

34

35 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Okay. Next on
36 the agenda we have the AMBCC harvest surveys by
37 Liliana.

38

39 MS. NAVES: My name is Liliana Naves
40 and I work for the Division of Subsistence of the
41 Alaska Department of Fish and Game. I'm the statewide
42 coordinator for the Harvest Survey Program of the AMBCC
43 and I will give an overview of ongoing, completed and
44 pending work for a range of years. After the fall
45 meeting I usually also make a presentation where I
46 bring some sort of harvest data to share information
47 and show some new information that's going to be
48 released.

49

50 So I will start -- all handouts for

1 this part is behind tab 5 on the meeting binder. I
2 will start where we stopped at the last AMBCC meeting.
3 We adopted the 2012 harvest estimates. Just as an
4 update, the final report was completed. It was
5 distributed to all partners that get a hard copy.
6 There's some extra on the table there behind. So this
7 is good. 2012 is done.

8

9 Then moving to 2013, the survey in 2013
10 covered only the Y-K Delta and the draft data was made
11 available at the last meeting. It's now on revision
12 and it is on the agenda, the adoption of the 2013
13 estimates this year, but I think that the regional
14 partners have not completed yet the review. So we
15 agreed on a plan to complete the review of the data in
16 the next couple months. I work closely with Tim and
17 Myron and get this done and we agreed on a deadline on
18 that for late November.

19

20 We will do the adoption with a call
21 vote as we have done in the past. Sounds good? So
22 that would allow us to complete the final report and we
23 don't keep carrying things from one meeting to another.
24 I think that's a fine plan.

25

26 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Okay. Any
27 comments or discussion on being able to meet those
28 deadlines Liliana laid out.

29

30 (No comments)

31

32 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Okay. Sounds
33 like a good plan.

34

35 MS. NAVES: So moving to 2014. The
36 original plan was to do a survey in the Y-K Delta. The
37 Y-K Delta accounts for about one-third of the statewide
38 harvest for that data. It has been a priority for
39 harvest monitoring and also is a cost-effective place
40 to survey because you get more bang for the buck on the
41 proportion of harvest covered. So as for that we'll
42 keep trying to do it in the Y-K Delta.

43

44 For the first time since the beginning
45 of surveys in the Y-K Delta, more than 20 years, the
46 conditions at the Refuge this year are such that
47 they're really short-staffed and there are no RITs to
48 help doing the survey. The RITs are the main body for
49 data collection there and help coordinating the local
50 surveyors.

1 So we are working on an alternate plan
2 to do a survey in the Upper Yukon in Interior Alaska.
3 These are recent developments. We are coming with a
4 work plan and cost estimates and we'll keep our
5 partners for that region updated through Randy. We are
6 working with the Yukon Flats and Arctic Refuges for
7 that work. So the data collection will happen later
8 this year.

9
10 As far as for the 2014 work, this was
11 the first year that we had subsistence hunting in
12 Cordova and we worked with SERC and the Forest Service
13 and the Native Village of Eyak to set up a registration
14 process for that hunt as required in the regulations
15 that allowed that opening. We also worked with SERC.
16 Patty was our direct line of communication there. So
17 we had a registration process and all households that
18 registered were mailed out a survey. There are two
19 other reminders that were sent out.

20
21 At this point now I think we already
22 have all the surveys that we're going to get back. So
23 there was a handout there that shows preliminary
24 estimates for Cordova in 2014. It has also a sample of
25 the registration and the regulations and also a sample
26 of the mail-out survey.

27
28 So only 36 households registered out of
29 more than 900 households in Cordova. We prepared for a
30 couple hundred registrations. Things may change for
31 next year, so it's good that we have a beefy system in
32 place. The estimated harvest based on the returned
33 surveys expanded to all registered households is a
34 total of 47 birds and 137 gull eggs.

35
36 Patty, do you have anything else you'd
37 like to say about the Cordova hunt?

38
39 MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: I'd just add
40 that the community meetings were pretty well attended.
41 There was a lot of interest. I think that the amount of
42 people that actually did come and apply for a permit
43 was a little bit lower than we expected, but not by
44 much. So I talked to John Whissel, a biologist at the
45 Native Village of Eyak and he is planning on not
46 putting any proposals to expand that hunt for next
47 year. They want to keep it status quo and continue to
48 monitor that harvest. Thanks.

49
50 MS. NAVES: Thanks, Patty. For

1 2015.....

2

3 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Any other
4 comments on the 2014 Cordova project.

5

6 (No comments)

7

8 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Okay. Proceed
9 to the next. Thanks.

10

11 MS. NAVES: For 2015, we start now
12 discussing plans for the next year of survey. It's
13 important that we have funding decisions and planning
14 decisions by December because it takes lots of time to
15 line out a survey, lots of communication. I think that
16 we are already working this process with the cost
17 estimates that were provided in this meeting, so we
18 think that we're on track for that.

19

20 Next I would like to make a brief
21 presentation about the sea duck harvest in Alaska.

22

23 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Hold on. I
24 just want to make sure. So you've done one, two, four
25 and five now on this agenda?

26

27 MS. NAVES: Yes.

28

29 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: And you're
30 moving into sea ducks now. So is there any other
31 comments on anything other than sea ducks. Yeah,
32 David.

33

34 DR. OTIS: I had just one question.
35 The work that you're proposing for 2015, the survey in
36 the Upper Yukon, is that a mail-out survey or is that
37 an in-person survey?

38

39 MS. NAVES: Face to face.

40

41 DR. OTIS: Okay.

42

43 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Before we move
44 off this I know that I had expressed some concern prior
45 to this meeting about whether we were going to conduct
46 regional surveys while we're conducting this review and
47 I want to thank the Service for working with us to
48 actually get a survey on the ground and work through
49 some of the funding issues. So thank you, Pete. I
50 think it's important to continue regional surveys as we

1 conduct this larger survey and I'm glad we're able to
2 find an accommodation.

3

4 MR. PROBASCO: Thanks for those
5 comments, Doug.

6

7 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Migratory
8 birds. I'm going to go move so I don't get blasted in
9 the eye by a sea bird.

10

11 MS. NAVES: So this presentation is an
12 overview of sea duck harvest estimates and patterns in
13 the Alaska subsistence hunt. This is part of a peer
14 review book chapter done in collaboration with Tom
15 Rothe, Bo Patten (ph) and Greg Robertson on sea duck
16 harvest in North America. So the book will be released
17 in January 2015. This specific chapter covers
18 subsistence hunt in both the U.S. and Alaska. This
19 presentation here will focus on subsistence hunting in
20 Alaska.

21

22 There's a handout for this there behind
23 tab 5 and also on the table there in the back of the
24 room. Maybe I'll be able to do this in 15 minutes.
25 It's kind of a short presentation. I would propose
26 that you save questions for the end of the presentation
27 if that sounds okay.

28

29 So why sea ducks. We're interested in
30 looking at those numbers. So sea ducks present unique
31 challenges to waterfowl harvest management because they
32 are relatively long-lived and have low breeding output,
33 so this means that populations are likely sensitive to
34 adult mortality. So also there were population
35 declines that were detected in the '80s and '90s. This
36 is the list of studied group of waterfowl as a whole.
37 Sea ducks are subjected to several hunting traditions
38 and management systems across their distribution
39 ranges. In general, there is poor understanding of
40 harvest demand on those different harvest traditions.

41

42 The subsistence harvest estimates were
43 generated by a specific set of analyses combining AMBCC
44 data and data from other surveys. Those other surveys
45 mostly come from the Community Subsistence Information
46 System, which is an online database that compiles most
47 research conducted by the Division of Subsistence over
48 more than two decades of research.

49

50 So the dataset included 368 community

1 years from the AMBCC dataset between 2004 and 2012 and
2 50 community years from the CSIS data between '93 and
3 2011. So the idea was to have a recent harvest
4 estimate, so as for that I didn't use much of the older
5 data that was available and this older data that was
6 plugged in was mostly to get representation of some
7 communities that were not represented in the CSIS
8 database. So this estimates summaries about the nine
9 most recent years of data and are presented as
10 reference year 2011.

11
12 The estimates presented to regions
13 eligible for the subsistence harvest including all
14 seasons. They are presented as an average annual
15 harvest in numbers of birds per year for regions and
16 also statewide for both birds and eggs. For birds
17 there is also a breakdown by seasons.

18
19 A little explanation there how this
20 information was put together as you see the numbers
21 that you'll follow next. So Goldeneye and Merganser
22 species were combined. These species are difficult to
23 tell apart and I usually combine in harvest surveys.
24 Not only the harvest surveys but also in the population
25 surveys the species are combined.

26
27 There are other potential species
28 identification issues specific to sea ducks. For
29 instance, female Eiders, which are difficult also to
30 tell apart. We don't know how people treat this
31 species when reporting harvest surveys. Similar
32 situation for female Scoters that also look similar.
33 Also they may be confused with Black Scoter because all
34 Scoters are black and Scoters also sometimes are
35 locally called black ducks.

36
37 Another potential species
38 identification issue referred to those species that
39 have common in their Western name. For these sea ducks
40 these species are Common Eider, Common Goldeneye,
41 Common Merganser, although Goldeneyes and Mergansers
42 have been lumped. But species with common in their name
43 may not be common at all in an area, but the common
44 word leads to confusion with the species most common in
45 that area. So this may affect harvest estimates for
46 Common Eiders for instance. For instance the case of
47 female Eiders no matter the species may be reported as
48 Common Eiders. So this is how these things may
49 interact.

50

1 So these species identification issues
2 are not exclusive to the subsistence harvest surveys
3 and the species identifications also may challenge in
4 the sea duck population surveys.

5
6 In the top left chart shows total sea
7 duck harvest in the Pacific Flyway. This includes
8 harvest in the Lower 48 as measured by the HIP survey,
9 sport harvest in Alaska also as measured by the HIP
10 survey, and subsistence harvest as measured by the
11 AMBCC survey, including all seasons.

12
13 So the subsistence harvest of sea ducks
14 in Alaska, which is the dark green part of the chart,
15 is about 62,000 birds per year and this represents
16 about 37 percent of sea duck harvest in the whole
17 Pacific Flyway. Sport harvest in Alaska, which is the
18 yellow slice, it's about 12,000 birds per year or 7
19 percent of the flyway harvest. The Lower 48 part of
20 the flyway in light gray was about 94,000 birds per
21 year.

22
23 Moving to the bottom left chart, this
24 was pulled from an older report and it has numbers
25 based in the mid '90s, so this is to give an idea of
26 the importance of sea birds along all other migratory
27 birds. So sea birds are the light blue part of the pie
28 and represent about 17 percent of all migratory birds
29 harvested in the subsistence harvest.

30
31 The bottom right chart shows species
32 composition in the sea duck subsistence harvest and
33 those again are 2011 estimates. So the main species
34 are King Eider in light gray and the 16,000 birds
35 represent about 26 percent of the sea duck harvest.
36 Black Scoters in light green, this is about 19 percent
37 of the sea duck harvest and the White-Winged Scoter
38 here about 12 percent and Goldeneyes there in brown
39 about 12 percent.

40
41 So just some brief information on egg
42 harvest. The average annual harvest was about 6,000
43 eggs per year and these are mostly common in King Eider
44 harvest in the Bering Straits and Norton Sound Region,
45 so these two regions account for about 84 percent of
46 the sea duck harvest in the subsistence harvest.

47
48 This next slide is about seasonal
49 harvest patterns. The pie chart on the right side
50 shows the general breakdown by season. So 54 percent

1 of the harvest occurs in the spring, 17 percent in
2 summer and 29 percent in fall/winter.

3
4 The graph at the left further breaks
5 down by species, so species are in the vertical axis
6 and on the horizontal axis there are number of birds
7 average per year from 0 to 16,000 birds. So light gray
8 is spring, medium gray summer, and fall/winter is
9 black.

10
11 So the spring harvest is largely
12 composed of King Eider and this harvest is in the Y-K
13 Delta/North Slope. Black Scoter in the Y-K Delta.
14 White-Winged Scoter in Interior and Y-K Delta. The
15 summer harvest, the medium gray, mostly occurs in the
16 North Slope. Those are Common Eiders and King Eiders
17 and they likely refers to harvest in the post-breeding
18 migration. Fall/winter harvest is composed by
19 Goldeneyes and Buffleheads in the Kodiak region, Black
20 Scoter again in the Y-K Delta and White-Winged Scoter
21 in Interior.

22
23 MR. PROBASCO: Is that fall harvest all
24 users or just subsistence?

25
26 MS. NAVES: Just subsistence.

27
28 MR. PROBASCO: How do you distinguish
29 them?

30
31 MS. NAVES: The AMBCC survey results.
32 So here are regional harvest patterns. Here now in the
33 vertical axis are the regions, the AMBCC regions, and
34 the horizontal are numbers of birds per year from 0 to
35 20,000. The different patterns on the bars are the
36 different species here. You see that Bufflehead,
37 Goldeneye and Merganser they were lumped just to
38 simplify the chart. So the Y-K Delta here is the main
39 region in terms of harvest amount with about 20,000
40 birds per year.

41
42 Another harvest of sea ducks in the Y-K
43 Delta is that it has a large diversity of species, but
44 the main species are Black Scoter with 40 percent, King
45 Eider 23 percent, Long-Tailed Duck 8 percent and
46 Goldeneye 6 percent. So this was in the Y-K Delta.

47
48 North Slope on the top of the chart
49 comes in second place in terms of harvest amount with
50 about 20,000 sea ducks per year. Only two species

1 represent the vast majority of the harvest, King Eider
2 with 82 percent and Common Eider with 17 percent.

3
4 Interior Alaska comes in third place
5 with about 10,000 sea ducks per year and the main
6 species are White-Winged Scoter with 46 percent,
7 Goldeneyes with 14 percent and Bufflehead with
8 11 percent.

9
10 Just one more region. This is Kodiak
11 in fourth place with about 8,000 birds per year.
12 Mostly Goldeneyes with 42 percent, Bufflehead 28
13 percent and Harlequin Duck with 11 percent.

14
15 MR. DEVINE: Liliana, how does that
16 many sea birds get into Interior Alaska?

17
18 MS. NAVES: Those are mostly White-
19 Winged Scoter that breed in Interior areas.

20
21 MR. DEVINE: So why do we call them sea
22 ducks?

23
24 MS. NAVES: Because I think they are in
25 the sea for most
26 part of the year, but they go on land to breed.

27
28 So next I show a little more detail for
29 two species of conservation concern and that are the
30 most important for the subsistence harvest in terms of
31 numbers of birds. So starting with Steller's and
32 Spectacled Eiders. They are listed under Endangered
33 Species Act and although they are closed to harvest
34 some birds and eggs are taken in the subsistence
35 harvest.

36
37 There's one graph that's not showing
38 there. I think I have a glitch. I don't know what's
39 going there, but the graph on the right side is not
40 showing. I'm going to tell you the numbers and you
41 have to believe me. They're in the handout too. So
42 this graph shows harvest estimates in three different
43 time periods. So in the mid '80s and early '90s these
44 are previous studies conducted in the past, then in the
45 mid '90s and the recent estimates in 2011 here.

46
47 For Steller's Eiders, the graph that's
48 showing there on the left side harvest estimates have
49 been a few hundred birds per year across the time
50 periods and the most recent estimates are the lowest so

1 far with 229 birds per year. For Spectacled Eiders
2 previous estimates were about 900 birds per year in the
3 mid '80s, 1,100 in the mid '90s and with the current
4 estimates going down to about 200 birds per year in the
5 most recent estimates.

6
7 So Russian breeding birds for both the
8 species likely comprise most of Alaska harvest in
9 fall/winter, so fall/winter is 65 percent of Steller's
10 Eider harvest and 32 percent of Spectacled Eider. The
11 Russian birds are also part of the spring harvest and
12 the spring harvest is 24 percent for Steller's Eider
13 and 42 percent for Spectacled Eider.

14
15 The Alaska breeding populations of the
16 Spectacled Eiders is currently stable in the Arctic
17 Coastal Plain or increasing in the Y-K Delta.
18 Steller's Eiders wintering in the Y-K Delta have
19 declined since the '90s. But for both the species the
20 populations are still below historical levels, so there
21 are concerns about the potential range-wide decline in
22 Steller's Eiders population and the security of winter
23 Spectacled Eiders because those birds are situated in a
24 small area.

25
26 So for those two species the recent
27 estimates suggest a decline in Alaska subsistence
28 harvest and this may be due to a combination of factors
29 such as alteration of location, law enforcement
30 efforts, reduced reporting rate due to law enforcement
31 and the reduced availability of the species at least in
32 some areas in the last 25 years.

33
34 So next I'm going to talk about King
35 Eiders and Scoters as a group because those are the
36 species that counted for most of the harvest in numbers
37 of birds. So harvest estimates for King Eider on the
38 left side were about 11,000 birds in the mid '80s and
39 about 16,000 birds in both mid '90s and the recent
40 estimates. So the recent estimates do not indicate the
41 changing harvest in the last 15 years.

42
43 The spring harvest amounts for King
44 Eiders are similar in the North Slope and Y-K Delta,
45 each of those regions harvesting about 3,500 birds per
46 year. One difference between these two regions is that
47 the North Slope also has a strong summer hunt with
48 about 6,000 King Eiders per year and this harvest
49 likely corresponds to the post-breeding migration. In
50 western North America, King Eiders declined

1 substantially between the '70s and the '90s and the
2 recent data suggests regional differences, but an
3 overall stable population.

4
5 So moving to Scoters on the right side.
6 All the species are lumped here into these numbers. I
7 also lumped the species specific estimates first
8 available in the 2011 estimates. So for Scoters there
9 are no estimates available for the mid '80s and in the
10 mid '90s there is some breakdown by species, but there
11 is still a large proportion of species that are
12 reported as unidentified Scoters. So the most recent
13 study is the first time you're seeing the breakdown by
14 species.

15
16 So estimates in the mid '90s are about
17 18,000 Scoters per year and the recent estimates at
18 about 22,000 birds per year were higher in the previous
19 ones by about 4,000 birds. Population trends for
20 Scoters are pretty known as a group. Scoters decreased
21 in the early '80s to early 2000s and the Pacific Black
22 Scoter has declined substantially since the '70s, but
23 the numbers of Black Scoters started to increase again
24 in the last decade.

25
26 Some final considerations. Compared
27 to Alaska, the subsistence harvest information is
28 fragmentary for Canada, both in time and space, and
29 very limited for Russia. We had Greg Robertson, that
30 was our Canadian partner, working together on this
31 chapter. He was doing the Canada subsistence harvest
32 and he was impressed with how much data we have. It
33 was interesting to get his perspective in that regard.

34
35 The management of this species or
36 population shared among countries requires
37 collaboration of information across borders. New
38 information provided in this study and older
39 information assemble allowed better understanding of
40 harvest patterns and quantification of harvest demand.
41 Information on harvest demand is important to set
42 minimum management and conservation objectives as
43 better knowledge on population dynamics and trends are
44 gathered.

45
46 We hope that this information is
47 accessible and usable to all partners and that it will
48 help support in collective work to maintain sustainable
49 harvest opportunities.

50

1 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Thank you,
2 Liliana. Good work. It's nice to get these estimates.
3 Questions or comments from Council members.

4
5 Peter.

6
7 MR. DEVINE: Yes, I'd like to thank
8 Liliana for the presentation and thank you for putting
9 the fall and winter information in there. We are
10 hunting and we just need to get dates set so that we
11 could actually go out and do it legally, but there is
12 fall and winter harvest happening and it needs to be
13 recognized, so thank you for putting that on there.

14
15 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Myron.

16
17 MR. NANENG: Quyana, Liliana, for the
18 information. There's a comments that I'd like to make
19 that may affect the population of sea ducks. One, we
20 all know that there's going to be more heavy traffic on
21 the Bering Sea where most of these sea ducks either
22 winter or go to their feeding areas before they
23 migrate. I was wondering if there's a possibility of
24 looking into the potential impacts of more maritime
25 traffic out there in the Bering Sea.

26
27 The other one that I have is, you know,
28 you reported that some of these sea birds have declined
29 in numbers and we know very well the Spectacled Eiders
30 as well as the Steller's Eiders. Is commercial trawl
31 out in the Bering Sea having impacts on these birds?
32 We've never discussed these, but they are potentially
33 probably one of the reasons why we have restrictions
34 and population declines of these sea birds. The only
35 factors that we look at are the people that live on
36 land and not for these birds, but we never seem to
37 consider other potential impacts like the Bering Sea
38 trawl fleet.

39
40 So I'd like to know if there's a
41 possibility of trying to find a baseline number or
42 something like that that could help us in making
43 determinations that the only people that are not
44 causing the declines are the subsistence users that
45 live on land.

46
47 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Myron, that's a
48 good question, but not one Liliana can answer, but I
49 think we can possibly get Eric back up or somebody else
50 from the Service because it's not a harvest survey

1 question.

2

3 MR. NANENG: I realize it's not a
4 harvest survey question. Remember back in 1984 when we
5 put together the Hooper Bay agreement to address the
6 declining Cackling Canada Geese numbers. Who were the
7 people that they were pointing at and putting pictures
8 of as causing the decline of the Cackling Canada Geese.
9 It was pictures of subsistence users that were living
10 in villages, it was pictures of migratory bird hunters
11 with a few geese around their necks from the villages,
12 but there was never any indication that sports hunters
13 in California were harvesting 100,000 birds during that
14 time.

15

16 And guess who the people were that they
17 first asked to make sacrifice on trying to rebuild the
18 bird populations out in villages. That's why we came
19 up with the Goose Management Plan. That's why we have
20 the high numbers that we put, like 150,000 for
21 Emperors, maybe 250 for Cacklers and about 300 for
22 White-Fronts and we still have this concern about some
23 of these sea ducks.

24

25 We cannot forget the fact that the
26 people that they ask first to conserve and give up
27 their food that they relied on year after year and
28 asking us to reduce our harvest. That's why I'm asking
29 that question. If the State has to find out about
30 that, I really would appreciate Fish and Game asking
31 about that. I really would appreciate Fish and
32 Wildlife Service to ask about that with the National
33 Oceanic Administrative.

34

35 So that's the reason why I'm asking it,
36 because it impacts our people and our ability to hunt
37 at certain times a year. All we get are numbers and
38 surveys. It seems like whenever we sit around the
39 table it's a harvest survey by subsistence users but we
40 are never provided with other potential factors that
41 impact the population.

42

43 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: And those are
44 fair questions. What I was suggesting is that we
45 shouldn't ask Liliana those questions because she's
46 doing the harvest survey on subsistence use, but you
47 can ask me those questions as a State representative.
48 Many of these fisheries that you're talking about are
49 observed and I imagine we could start putting together
50 some information on the bycatch of sea ducks and bring

1 that forward to the council here.

2

3 MR. NANENG: And the reason why I ask
4 that is it impacts our harvest.

5

6 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: I don't
7 disagree with you. I think that's a good question.

8

9 MR. NANENG: And I think that's the
10 reason why I'm requesting that this be taken a look at.

11

12 MR. PROBASCO: Mr. Chair, I'd like to
13 ask Eric to come up. We do know that there's -- you
14 said bycatch, but even more so we think there's more
15 collisions with not only the trawl fleet but you've got
16 a crab fleet and the longline fleet out there.
17 Mr. Taylor.

18

19 DR. TAYLOR: Myron, Eric Taylor with
20 Fish and Wildlife Service. Thank you, Mr. Chair.
21 Myron, you asked a good question. I know you and Tim
22 have asked that question repeatedly and I'm not for
23 sure if we provided you a satisfactory answer.
24 Certainly increase of ship traffic in an area like the
25 Bering Sea or Arctic Ocean has and is likely going to
26 occur in the future for a number of reasons.

27

28 One, oil and gas development that's
29 being considered by the Bureau of Ocean and Energy
30 Management, BOEM, a Department of Interior agency right
31 now that's developing an EIS for the Chukchi Sea.
32 Certainly the transport of goods. As we see the ocean
33 become more and more ice free, there's going to be an
34 increased amount of shipping traffic. Increased amount
35 of tourism associated with areas that the public has
36 never seen before. Associated with that you've got
37 disturbance, you've got increased chances of oil
38 spills.

39

40 Associated with fisheries, I just
41 jotted down that if there is an increase in fisheries
42 associated with areas that have become ice free, again
43 there's disturbance, the change of fisheries stock, a
44 change of invertebrates both in the column and possibly
45 in the benthos and consequently changes of food
46 resources for sea ducks.

47

48 So you raise good issues. As Doug
49 mentioned, there's some expert agencies out there that
50 we hope to rely on. NOAA, for example, in terms of the

1 amount of fisheries that occur out there and the Bureau
2 of Ocean Energy Management for oil and gas development.

3

4 I will tell you there are other areas
5 in North America, Hudson Bay and other areas, that have
6 never incurred ship development. I wish Tim Bowman was
7 here because he would be an expert at this in terms of
8 what we are hearing with the Sea Duck Joint Venture.
9 Certainly your concern is warranted, particularly as
10 areas become more ice free.

11

12 I think, you know, we need to rely on
13 other agencies to provide us with sort of information
14 to say how is this being monitored and is it being
15 considered as these activities are being permitted in
16 the future.

17

18 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: And we'll bring
19 that back. Peter.

20

21 MR. DEVINE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
22 Touching on Myron's concern about the trawl fleet. You
23 know, they have observers on board so I mean they're
24 pretty -- they stay within the lines. I mean they're
25 not running with their forward lights on. They have
26 deck lights. I know this because I pissed them off
27 because I was on a crabber and we're cutting through
28 and we've got all our bright lights on. It looked like
29 a big city, but they didn't have any forward facing
30 lights, but the crab fleet is still using their lights,
31 you know, shining forward and that's where a lot of
32 collisions are happening with sea birds running into
33 lights. Usually if a crab boat runs into something
34 like that, the crew just shuts the lights down until
35 you're through that area or whatever. I would say the
36 drag fleet is pretty much monitored because of the
37 observers and stuff.

38

39 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Myron.

40

41 MR. NANENG: I know that they have
42 observers for certain purposes and at the request of
43 both the Yukon and the Kuskokwim that they start
44 observing for chinook salmon bycatch as well as chum
45 salmon. If we ask them maybe to also observe for other
46 wildlife, including migratory birds, we might find a
47 number that might be surprising because -- not
48 necessarily those that are listed on here that we're
49 talking about today, but there's marine birds that they
50 said are decreasing in numbers that stay out in the

1 waters.

2

3 Those too maybe some of the issues that
4 they might bring up by saying, well, let's take a look
5 at what potential impacts the trawl fleet or other
6 fisheries have on these other species and why are they
7 declining. Are the trawl fleets or the fishermen part
8 of the problem? Let's find a way to have them be part
9 of the solution and trying to help us increase the
10 numbers.

11

12 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Eric, I've got
13 a question for you. These numbers seem to indicate
14 there's two or three hundred Steller's Eiders harvested
15 annually, but our population estimates are five to six
16 hundred. That seems inconsistent. It seems like one
17 of those two numbers is not congruent. What are your
18 thoughts on that?

19

20 DR. TAYLOR: I'd have to go back and
21 look at -- and I haven't read the publication yet, but,
22 if I remember correctly, I thought those estimates were
23 primarily Russian birds that were being harvested.

24

25 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: I thought that
26 was for Spec Eiders. I wasn't sure that was Steller's.
27 I don't know. Other questions.

28

29 MS. NAVES: Lili Naves, Division of
30 Subsistence. So for both the Steller's and the
31 Spectacled Eiders it's likely that a big part of the
32 harvest in Alaska is from the mix of populations
33 because a large part of the harvest happens in
34 fall/winter and those are when all the birds are mixed
35 in here. Also at least part of the harvest in the
36 spring maybe from the mixed population, so that is a
37 big proportion of the total harvest.

38

39 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Any other
40 questions for Liliana?

41

42 MR. FAGERSTROM: I have one. Going
43 back to your overview of the harvest amounts and
44 species. There's 11,977 taken by Alaska sport. What
45 species were those and were they caught by guided
46 hunters?

47

48 MS. NAVES: Dan, help me if I say
49 something wrong here. I think the species that are
50 open to sport harvest are largely the same that are

1 open for the spring and summer harvest. Steller's and
2 Spectacled are closed for everyone. The difference is
3 that for fall harvest, the sport harvest, there are bag
4 limits and for sea birds there is a number of -- there
5 is a bag limit for species for sea ducks. This is the
6 first part of the question, the species. Now the
7 second part again?

8

9 MR. FAGERSTROM: Were they guided
10 hunters?

11

12 MS. NAVES: This is the total sport
13 hunt in Alaska, so this includes people that go out on
14 their own boats or hunt from the beach and also people
15 that do guided hunts, so it's everyone.

16

17 MR. FAGERSTROM: Thank you.

18

19 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Dan, do you
20 have a question?

21

22 DR. ROSENBERG: No, I just have a
23 comment I'd like to make. Back to Myron's question. I
24 sort of missed that question on the
25 sport harvest, but I do have that data, just not at my
26 fingertips if anybody would like it.

27

28 In response to Myron's question about
29 studying the impacts of the trawl fishery on sea ducks,
30 I just wanted to mention that Fish and Game prepared a
31 report as part of a habitat conservation planning grant
32 a few years ago entitled The Potential Interactions
33 Between Commercial Fishing Vessels and Steller's and
34 Spectacled Eiders in Alaska and I do have a copy of
35 that if you'd like to see it. I don't have a hard copy
36 with me right now. So we have been looking into that a
37 little bit.

38

39 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Do you know
40 anything about the magnitude of those?

41

42 DR. ROSENBERG: I haven't looked at
43 this in a long time. I've got it here and I can look
44 up things.

45

46 MR. PROBASCO: Dan, is it just species
47 specific to those two or does it go broader?

48

49 DR. ROSENBERG: No, it's part of a
50 habitat conservation planning grant from the Service,

1 so it was focused on threatened and endangered species.

2

3 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Maybe if you
4 could provide that link to Patty she can get it out to
5 everybody.

6

7 DR. ROSENBERG: Yeah. That's all.
8 Thank you.

9

10 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Okay. Any
11 other questions on this topic. Myron.

12

13 MR. NANENG: I just wanted to say thank
14 you, Liliana, for that information. I'd also like to
15 recognize Cynthia Wentworth who has done a lot of
16 survey work out in the Y-K Delta for the Y-K Delta
17 Goose Management Plan. So thank you very much.

18

19 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Other
20 questions, comments.

21

22 (No comments)

23

24 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Okay. Next
25 we're going to go into the financial report. Pete, I
26 think you'll walk us through this.

27

28 MR. PROBASCO: I'll start us out. The
29 financial report was handed out yesterday during the
30 work session and I believe there's still copies in the
31 back. Correct, Donna?

32

33 MS. DEWHURST: I don't know.

34

35 MR. PROBASCO: Well, there were copies.
36 It's this document. It has two columns, FY14, FY15.
37 The left-hand column shows actual expenditures for
38 fiscal year '14. Keep in mind our fiscal year closes
39 on September 30th and fiscal year '15 will start
40 October 1st. By the end of fiscal year '14 the Service
41 will have allocated \$837,947 to the AMBCC process with
42 the caveat that \$60,000 that was identified for the Y-K
43 Delta survey is still there and hasn't been spent to
44 date yet. We've heard from Liliana that they are
45 working with the Yukon Flats Refuge on a fall survey.

46

47 For FY15 we are on a continuing
48 resolution that takes us through December. We're in a
49 much better place than we were last year. Keep in mind
50 we went on furlough, we had no idea what our budget

1 was. So I'm anticipating, based on my finger on the
2 pulse of the budget, that we can anticipate funding as
3 presented in the column there for FY15 of approximately
4 \$843,314 for the AMBCC process. In other words, we're
5 looking at status quo funding with the exception that
6 the Chugach Regional Resource Commission will get their
7 allocation of \$14,400, which both Patty and I
8 overlooked in FY14.

9

10 That's my best guess at the budget
11 right now. I feel somewhat confident that we will be
12 able to contribute to that level with the caveat that
13 no telling what will happen after the first of the
14 year. Mr. Chair.

15

16 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Questions,
17 comments.

18

19 (No comments)

20

21 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: It sounds like
22 status quo budgets for the next year. Anything else,
23 Pete?

24

25 MR. PROBASCO: I just wanted to add on
26 the grants, Donna's
27 been working with all of you and through Patty's
28 encouragement we are going to make a much more
29 assertive effort to assist in two arenas. Getting the
30 grants out earlier. If you remember last year in '14
31 we had to do it in two parts just because of the way
32 dollars are allocated to the Service. So that's one
33 objective.

34

35 The other objective is to help your
36 administrative people to understand that there is a
37 requirement, if you will, a level of responsibility for
38 these dollars that requires a reporting. I know
39 talking with some of you yesterday that you were sort
40 of surprised that was required. The key message from
41 Donna is let's not make this complicated. We can make
42 it a fairly short report and we will assist you in
43 that. The key is on your side you have to complete
44 that paperwork for additional dollars to be added to
45 your respective council. We're looking at the same
46 level.

47

48 I did make a note. Joeneal said they
49 ran in the hole a couple thousand dollars this year.
50 I'll be talking with Donna and Joeneal as well as Patty

1 on taking a look at what caused that and what we can
2 do. Mr. Chair.

3

4 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Thank you.
5 Questions and comments on the budget. Ms. Executive
6 Director.

7

8

9 MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: Just a point
10 of clarification. The \$115,000 received by the Chugach
11 Regional Resources Commission is for my salary, the
12 salary of Jay Stevens, travel to all the regional
13 management body meetings that we're able to make,
14 meeting supplies, et cetera, so that is not just
15 salary.

16

17 Thank you.

18

19 I wish it was.

20

21 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: I thought it
22 was just a bonus.

23

24 (Laughter)

25

26 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Questions,
27 comments on budget.

28

29 (No comments)

30

31 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Do we need any
32 action on this? From Fish and Game's perspective, we
33 still are contributing a significant amount of money.
34 This last year I was able to successfully go back to
35 the Legislature and obtain \$240,000 to contribute
36 towards Liliana's salary over the next three years. I
37 promised you guys I would try to bring some money to
38 the table and I think we're doing that on the State
39 side, at least on the harvest survey side. Of course
40 we still continue to contribute for the Waterfowl
41 Program, expertise and counting ducks out there as well
42 as doing some of the science surveys.

43

44 Do we need any action on this, Patty?

45

46 MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: No.

47

48 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: No. Okay.
49 Then moving on. The SEIS meeting schedule. Welcome.

50

1 DR. SANDERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
2 Members of the Council. My name is Todd Sanders. I'm
3 the Pacific Flyway representative for the U.S. Fish and
4 Wildlife Service. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
5 recently completed an environmental impact statement on
6 the issuance of annual regulations for migratory bird
7 hunting.

8
9 The focus of that effort was to, one,
10 document the process of issuing annual regulations but
11 also to identify efficiencies in that process. One of
12 the outcomes from that effort was a decision to go from
13 two regulatory meeting process to a single regulatory
14 meeting process. In so doing that, that has
15 implications for the timing of meetings for both the
16 AMBCC and also the flyway councils.

17
18 So I prepared a graphic. What I'd like
19 to do is show you the timeline and the potential
20 implications to the AMBCC regulatory process. At this
21 point I don't expect that there will be significant
22 implications, but I think it warrants looking at the
23 timeframe and identifying those potentials. So I'll
24 bring that up now.

25
26 So this graphic here shows the current
27 process. I've laid this out in a timeline so that you
28 can see. This is a 12 month period starting with
29 September going through August. I've selected
30 September as a starting period because that's when data
31 becomes available for this council. The first meeting
32 is this meeting in fall in late September and then the
33 regulatory proposals are submitted in November through
34 December and then the spring meeting occurs in late
35 March, early April. At that point recommendations are
36 drafted and they are forwarded then to the Council and
37 then eventually to the SRC meeting.

38
39 For the flyway council and the SRC, you
40 can see that they have a two meeting process. The
41 council meets here in March and then the SRC follows in
42 June. At that meeting they consider webless proposals
43 and then they meet again in late July and then the SRC
44 in early August when they consider waterfowl proposals.
45 Typically the recommendations from this body go to the
46 Council at their late meeting in late July and then
47 subsequently to the SRC meeting.

48
49 So then when we moved to a single
50 regulatory meeting process then, those meetings will be

1 combined and they will be moved back at least a month
2 or two. So here you can see the proposed process where
3 there will be a single meeting and the councils will
4 likely meet in September and then the Service
5 Regulation Committee would meet subsequent to those but
6 by at least mid December. It's not clear yet when the
7 councils will meet. As I mentioned, the data becomes
8 available in early September. The Councils have
9 indicated they would likely meet at that time. Then
10 the Service Regulation Committee would meet after that,
11 but no later than by mid December.

12
13 So the implications to this council is
14 that your recommendations from the spring meeting would
15 not be presented to the councils and SRC in July as
16 they are now, but in September to the councils and then
17 subsequently to the SRC by mid December.

18
19 So the potential complication is that
20 the Fish and Wildlife Service has to publish
21 regulations before the subsistence seasons can occur,
22 so by moving these meetings back two to five months it
23 compresses the timeline that we have to produce the
24 proposed subsistence season regulations and also the
25 final before the subsistence seasons begin.

26
27 The other potential implication here is
28 that both the councils and the AMBCC might be meeting
29 at the same time in September, so we might want to pay
30 attention to make sure we avoid any conflicts when
31 these two councils will meet.

32
33 Again, at this point, I don't
34 anticipate that this will result in a problem. We are
35 optimistic that we will be able to produce the Federal
36 Register documents for the proposed subsistence seasons
37 and also the final before the subsistence season begins
38 in early April.

39
40 I should also mention that the Fish and
41 Wildlife Service and the flyway councils anticipate
42 moving to this revised schedule starting with the 2015
43 calendar year. So, when we do that, the flyway
44 councils will be setting regulations under the current
45 process in 2015, they'll use 2015 data to set
46 regulations for that current year, but they'll also be
47 starting this new schedule, at which point they will
48 use the same data to set regulations for the 2016
49 hunting seasons.

50

1 What that means for this group is at
2 least in 2015 we'll still have the option of submitting
3 our recommendations from the spring meeting to the SRC
4 and the flyway councils in late July and August. The
5 subsequent year after that the councils and SRC will
6 only be meeting in probably September through about mid
7 December. This means that at least in 2015 there's an
8 opportunity for us to learn more about the process and
9 learn more about the timing of both the council
10 meetings and the SRC meetings and to make sure that
11 this process will work for us before we have fewer
12 options in 2016.

13

14 Questions.

15

16 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Questions
17 council members.

18

19 (No comments)

20

21 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: I know
22 yesterday when we discussed this one question I had is
23 dealing with the proposed subsistence season and
24 publication in the Federal Register and we came up with
25 a couple ideas to try to ensure that if something
26 glitched up there, we still had a subsistence season.
27 Maybe we can notice that all the regulations are the
28 same that carry forward and not have to change those by
29 publication each year. Just deal with the changes. So
30 we still have subsistence seasons for the vast majority
31 of the species that are out there rather than every
32 year approving those.

33

34 So will you be looking at that as you
35 move forward as an option?

36

37 DR. SANDERS: Yeah, I think it's
38 certainly something we should take into consideration
39 as we move forward.

40

41 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: I would hate
42 this condensed schedule to end up with one change
43 mucking up the entire subsistence season.

44

45 DR. SANDERS: Right. I agree. I think
46 that's something we should keep in mind as we move
47 forward, but also mention again that I'm optimistic
48 that the SRC meeting will likely be sooner than
49 December. Probably it would follow right after the
50 council meetings. So, potentially, the process would

1 only be delayed by two months. So that shouldn't put
2 too much pressure on our ability to produce these
3 necessary Federal Register documents, although I
4 realize that we're already pretty tight as is. But our
5 headquarters office has assured us that we should be
6 able to get this done.

7
8 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Not to be a
9 little cynical, but your headquarters office has
10 assured us of a lot of things.

11
12 DR. SANDERS: Point well taken.

13
14 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Any other
15 questions, comments.

16
17 (No comments)

18
19 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Okay. Thank
20 you.

21
22 DR. SANDERS: Thank you.

23
24 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: That brings us
25 to future potential proposals.

26
27 MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: The AMBCC
28 staff have been trying to make an effort with the
29 regional management bodies to identify any potential
30 proposals that may come to fruition in plenty of time
31 before the regulatory meeting so that we have the
32 ability to work with those proposers to try to make the
33 proposals something that can be passed by the council.
34 In the past, we've had proposals that the language
35 wasn't exactly technically correct or there was one
36 thing or another that had an issue, so we've been
37 asking the regions to work with their villages to
38 identify any issues or concerns that may become a
39 regulatory proposal.

40
41 There were two this year. The one on
42 the Cackling Canada Goose egg harvest and that
43 apparently is not going to go forward, Myron?

44
45 MR. NANENG: Once we get a bird list
46 that's listed on the Y-K Delta Goose Management off
47 that list anything is open. Do we need the regulation?
48 No, not really, but we just need to monitor if we'll
49 have a conservation concern about that bird species.
50 Right now the White-Fronts are off our list on the Y-K

1 Delta Goose Management Plan as far as we're concerned
2 from AVCP Waterfowl Conservation and we're going to try
3 to figure out a way to try and help our good friends,
4 the Oregon farmers. If they can get additional bag
5 limit on birds, why couldn't our people also take one
6 more egg to help them deal with their agriculture
7 depredation problems down in Oregon. What's good for
8 the goose is good for the gander.

9

10 (Laughter)

11

12 MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: And then the
13 second one was the Trumpeter Swan harvest in the Copper
14 River area and Joeneal had approached us with that
15 idea, so I would like to ask him to relay to the
16 council the process he went through to vet that in his
17 region.

18

19 MR. HICKS: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I
20 have my report here. I'll just read from it. I had
21 told you that about a year and a half ago I was
22 directed by my committee to do a research study on the
23 possible harvest of Trumpeter Swans in our area. Eric
24 Taylor had attended our fall 2013 meeting and he gave a
25 presentation on Trumpeter Swans. The number of swans
26 in that particular area has grown quite considerably
27 and he had hinted to us that it might be a possibility
28 that we could submit a proposal to harvest swans in our
29 area. As a result, the committee directed that I
30 research into it and see if that was a thing that they
31 wanted to pursue, so that's what I did.

32

33 Anyhow, 14 households visited. Only
34 one showed interest in the possibility of harvesting
35 Trumpeter Swans. Of approximately 20 individuals
36 contacted, 90 percent said an outright no to that
37 harvest. The remaining 10 percent indicated that they
38 would be interested if it was allowable, but in so
39 doing displayed a keen sense about its present status
40 as an endangered species. The majority questioned why
41 we want to legalize the harvest and what its purpose is
42 in so doing. 95 percent of those contacted gave their
43 reasoning to say no to the harvest.

44

45 Well, I gave their no reasoning, such
46 as one big reason is that the bird is protected by law.
47 It is outright illegal and ought to stay that way. The
48 bird is a magnificent creature and beautiful. When
49 explained that the process could be legalized by
50 methods of conservation, such as limiting the take to

1 two per household per year as an example, the answer
2 pretty much remained a no. Another reason given was
3 that even if harvest was allowed the bird is a very
4 difficult bird to pluck. The meat is tough and
5 requires a constant high cooking temperature to
6 tenderize the meat for consumption.

7
8 Additionally, everyone contacted
9 believes that if you were to shoot one swan the other
10 must be taken also. In short, they are under the
11 perception that swans, in this case Trumpeter Swans,
12 mate for life. I explained to those who would listen
13 about the rise in the annual growth rate of swans in
14 our area, that being Chistochina, Mentasta
15 specifically. I explained the 2010 North American
16 Trumpeter Swan Survey, but not all readily agreed with
17 that data. About half of those talked to blamed the
18 rise on climate change and that swans have nowhere to
19 go. Their habitat is being destroyed and that human
20 development is the major cause.

21
22 Several individuals showed an overall
23 interest and wanted a conversation on the overall
24 process of submitting such a proposal. Not necessarily
25 about swans and rather that of creating conservation
26 districts and protecting wetlands. The discussion
27 included wanting to know about what other birds are in
28 protection status and questioned why owls, ptarmigans
29 and grouse are considered a migratory bird in a
30 subsistence regulation booklet. They questioned the
31 purpose and the meaning of the AMBCC, what we do and so
32 forth. The two individuals are quite keen to the
33 protection and conservation of birds and are against
34 any policy that allows for a subsistence take of
35 migratory birds.

36
37 I concluded through all my findings
38 that there is a real lack of knowledge and education
39 about Trumpeter Swans and other migratory birds in
40 general. I believe that this is because everyone, most
41 likely since childhood, be it in the late '60s or early
42 '50s, was coerced by authorities into believing that
43 the taking of swans was a serious offense with severe
44 penalties.

45
46 In my childhood, for instance, I recall
47 the taking of swans by certain individual family units,
48 but the said taking was never spoken of and was very
49 secretive. The preparation of swans for human
50 consumption was never openly prepared and when ready it

1 was almost all the time just for the elders. Like many
2 others, I too have never taken a swan, believing that
3 in so doing violated every principal. This is the same
4 reality that I took towards the taking of ducks in my
5 youth, but in that regards did so anyway and always was
6 sneaky about it.

7
8 During my information gathering I
9 learned that the majority are incoherent about the
10 status of migratory birds. It does not appear to be an
11 issue of concern to them just as long as they are
12 permitted to harvest during seasons and time of their
13 own choosing. They do not relate the harvest to any
14 kind of regulation and I have to agree with how they
15 feel. The structure for both Mentasta and Chistochina
16 is one that is binding. It is defined like a right and
17 not a privilege.

18
19 I conclude that both Mentasta and
20 Chistochina has no desire at this time to submit a
21 proposal to harvest Trumpeter Swans. It is possible
22 that this conclusion may change, but I find no reason
23 to continue on this quest to gather information when
24 there doesn't seem to be an interest. If anything, I
25 believe my endeavors was educational to many and I only
26 wish that the audience that I confronted was larger.

27
28 Many Ahtna community residents are mute
29 to the situation. They are without knowledge on how a
30 subsistence harvest would authorize and do not seem to
31 care much about the regulations that govern it. The
32 public education process needs to be worked on. It is
33 needed. That's what I concluded.

34
35 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Thank you,
36 Joeneal. That was an excellent report. Good working
37 with your user groups. Questions, comments.

38
39 (No comments)

40
41 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Okay. So I
42 think we are pretty much through our agenda here, what
43 we can accomplish today. There is a couple
44 housekeeping things. There is a donation bin back
45 there and I encourage everybody to put some money in
46 there that has enjoyed some of the things on the back
47 table there, from water to coffee to snacks. I think
48 Patty will certainly appreciate you putting a few
49 dollars or cents into that pot, otherwise it comes out
50 of her pocket and who knows how much she'll help you

1 through your grant processes.

2

3 (Laughter)

4

5 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Tomorrow
6 morning I will open the meeting at 9:00 o'clock and
7 we'll start with public testimony if anybody wants to
8 provide public testimony and then we'll move right into
9 the Yellow-Billed Loon listing decision and discussion
10 about Steller's Eiders. I think shortly thereafter we
11 will probably conclude well before lunch.

12

13 Pete.

14

15 MR. PROBASCO: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
16 Just to let everybody know that I'm on travel status
17 tomorrow, so Mr. Eric Taylor will be sitting in for me.

18

19 Mr. Chair.

20

21 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Thank you. Any
22 closing comments from anybody before we close for the
23 day.

24

25 MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: I do.

26

27 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Okay, Patty.

28

29 MS. BROWN-SCHWALENBERG: I would be
30 remiss in not recognizing Donna Dewhurst. She did all
31 the baking, not me, so thank you, Donna.

32

33 CHAIRMAN VINCENT-LANG: Thank you,
34 Donna, very much. With that we're going to close for
35 the day and we'll see you tomorrow morning at 9:00.

36

37 (Off record)

38

39 (PROCEEDINGS TO BE CONTINUED)

