

From LAND WATER

THE FEDERAL SUBSISTENCE MANAGEMENT PROGRAM NEWSLETTER

Office of Subsistence Management • 1011 East Tudor Road • Anchorage, Alaska 99503

FALL 2008

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The Federal Subsistence Management Program is a multi-agency effort that emphasizes cooperation and consensus building. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and U.S. Forest Service manage the Federal public lands and waters where subsistence activities by rural Alaskans take place.

Tuning in to Fish

Radio Tags Provide Data on Kasilof River Coho, Steelhead

—By Maureen Clark

On a late-September morning, the Kasilof River is quiet under a blue sky, the gold of autumn reflected in the calm waters. But it's what's beneath the surface of the water that's the focus of biologists and fishery technicians. The subject of their attention—the late-run coho salmon making their way to the spawning grounds.

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist Doug Palmer maneuvers a boat upriver and checks in with the crew aboard another boat, using a drift gillnet to capture coho.

“Catch anything yet?” Palmer asks.

“Not yet,” replies crew chief Ken Gates.

The fishing is slow on this particular morning, but it's a brief respite from the flurry of activity that takes place when a fish is netted. Once it's hauled on board, the fish is placed in a large tote filled with river water and is quickly and carefully freed from the net. From there, it goes into a water-filled fish cradle, where a small radio transmitter is inserted into its stomach. With the radio tag in place, the fish is immediately returned to the water.

The three-person crew works swiftly to minimize stress associated with capture and handling. By late October crew members will have implanted up to 120 coho with radio tags before

[continued on page 6]



USFWS Photo

Fishing for coho to be radio tagged on the Kasilof River



Letter from the Chair

In late April and early May, I and my fellow Federal Subsistence Board members, met in a hotel conference room for three days with hundreds of pages of regulatory analyses before us.



Mike Fleagle.

Outside, the last of the late snow was melting and the sun even put in a brief appearance. But our attention

was focused indoors. And

those who serve as the chairs of our 10 Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils were a big part of the reason why.

For those of you who have never attended one of our wildlife or fisheries regulatory meetings, you may not know that the council chairs participate in these meetings. They present their councils' recommendations and the rationale behind those recommendations for each proposed regulatory change. Regional advisory council recom-

mendations are an important part of our process and are given deference by the Board when decisions are made on the taking of fish and wildlife.

But it was the discussion with the chairs that took place before we began work on the regulatory proposals that energized me and set the tone for the meeting to follow. It covered a wide range of topics and gave us a vivid picture of the daily concerns of rural Alaskans.

We heard about efforts to resolve conflicts between transporter/outfitters and local caribou hunters in the Northwest Arctic. Several of the chairs spoke of the importance of the Mulchatna caribou herd to those living in a broad swath of Western and Southwestern Alaska and the worrisome decline in the herd. They also expressed concern about the increasing bycatch of salmon, bound for Western Alaska rivers, by the Bering Sea pollock fleet. Others spoke of a sharp increase in the sea otter populations in portions of Southeast and Southcentral and of seeing the waters off Cordova teeming with

more than three thousand sea otters. It's a vivid image that raises questions about the impact this growing population has on other subsistence resources.

The chairs spoke about how high food prices are making subsistence more important than ever, even as staggering fuel prices make it more difficult to maintain this way of life. A number of our council members have also served on the State's fish and game advisory committees and they talked about how the Federal and State management systems can work together to better meet the needs of rural subsistence users.

The open, lively discussion got us off to a great start and helped keep us firmly grounded in the realities and complexities of life in rural Alaska as we took up the proposed regulatory changes before us.

*Mike Fleagle
Chairman
Federal Subsistence Board*

MEETING CALENDAR

Fall 2008 Regional Advisory Councils

AUGUST

26..... North Slope — *Barrow*

SEPTEMBER

23-25..... Southeast — *Juneau*

26..... Kodiak/Aleutians — *Kodiak*

OCTOBER

2..... Seward Peninsula — *Nome*

2-3..... Yukon/Kuskokwim Delta — *Bethel*

6-7..... Bristol Bay — *Dillingham*

7-9..... Southcentral — *Tazlina*

14-15..... Eastern Interior — *Nenana*

16..... Northwest Arctic — *Kotzebue*

28-29..... Western Interior — *McGrath*

Federal Subsistence Board Meeting:

JANUARY 13-15, 2009 — Fisheries Regulatory Meeting — *Anchorage*

Meeting dates and locations are subject to change.

Council Members Address North Pacific Council on Salmon Bycatch Issue

Several Federal subsistence regional advisory council members voiced concerns about salmon bycatch by the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands pollock fishery at the June meeting of the North Pacific Fishery Management Council in Kodiak. Raymond Oney of the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta council, Randy Alvarez of the Bristol Bay council, and Ray Collins of the Western Interior council called on the North Pacific council to take action to reduce bycatch, as recommended by their respective regional advisory councils. They asked the North Pacific council to implement a Chinook salmon harvest hard cap based on the average bycatch from 1990 to 2001 of approximately 38,000 fish.

Eastern Interior council member Andrew Bassich voiced similar concerns to the North Pacific council in his role as a member of the Yukon River Panel.

Fish and Wildlife Service Assistant Regional Director for Subsistence, Pete Probasco, also addressed the North Pacific council. Probasco reiterated key points in a February letter from the Federal Subsistence Board to the council and the National Marine Fisheries Service outlining the importance of Western Alaska salmon stocks to the residents of 80 villages along the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers.

In recent years, the Federal Subsistence Board and subsistence users have struggled with regulatory issues, in an effort to conserve Chinook salmon on the Yukon River and provide for subsistence needs, passage of Chinook salmon into Canada and, if possible, a commercial harvest. Some fishers are reluctant to consider in-river changes given the high level of bycatch in the pollock fishery.

The regional advisory council members testified about the importance of salmon to the people of their regions and spoke of restrictions to subsistence fisheries, of having to fish harder and longer to harvest fish, and of the high cost of fuel in rural Alaska. Of greatest concern, is that these bycatch increases have occurred while recent salmon returns to Western Alaska have been decreasing.

“The steady increase of salmon bycatch in the Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands pollock fisheries threat-

ens our way of life in Western Alaska,” Raymond Oney told the North Pacific Council. “Salmon provides a primary source of food for us and the commercial salmon harvest provides the only means of income for many who live in the remote villages of the Yukon River. Salmon is an irreplaceable resource that must be protected by all means.”

The Bering Sea/Aleutian Islands bycatch averaged 37,819 Chinook and 69,332 non-Chinook salmon annually from 1990 through 2001. From 2002 to 2007 that average jumped to 82,311 Chinook salmon and 358,278 non-Chinook salmon, peaking at more than 130,000 Chinook salmon in 2007 and nearly 712,000 non-Chinook salmon in 2005.

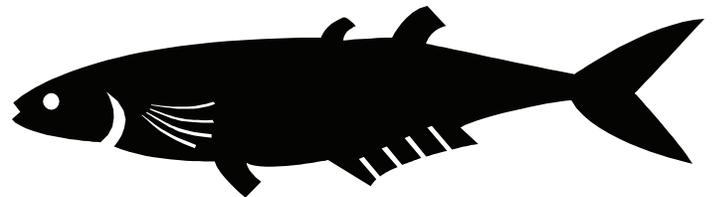
The North Pacific Council is expected to take final action on the bycatch issue in April 2009, with new regulations implemented in January 2011. ■

Federal Subsistence Board Defers Action on Yukon Fisheries Proposals

The Federal Subsistence Board has deferred consideration of two regulatory proposals seeking changes to the mesh size and depth of gillnets used for subsistence fishing on the Yukon River. Proposals FP09-12 and FP09-13 will be taken up by the Board at a special meeting next spring.

The deferral will allow the Board to consider results of an ongoing study that could aid in understanding the effects of mesh size on the harvest of Chinook salmon. The study is expected to be completed prior to the winter round of Federal subsistence regional advisory council meetings. The deferral means that the advisory councils representing regions affected by these proposals would develop recommendations at their meetings in February and March 2009.

The date(s) and location of the special Board meeting have not been determined, but will be posted on the Federal Subsistence Management Program Website, and announced on radio and in newspaper ads at least 30 days prior to the meeting. ■



Federal Subsistence Board Defers Action on Customary and Traditional Use Determination Policy

The Federal Subsistence Board has deferred finalization of a draft policy on implementation of customary and traditional use determinations, pending the outcome of a case currently before the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals.

The State of Alaska, in 2005, asked the Secretary of the Interior for a policy on implementation of customary and traditional use determinations. Deputy Secretary Lynn Scarlett asked the Board to review its current practices and develop a written policy. In 2006, before that policy was finalized, the State of Alaska filed a lawsuit, *State of Alaska v. Federal Subsistence Board*, challenging one of the Board's customary and traditional use determinations. The U.S. District Court ruled in the case in 2007, affirming the Board's approach to making customary and traditional use determinations. The State has appealed that decision to the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals. Given that issues regarding the implementation of customary and traditional use determinations are currently before the appeals court, further development of the policy is being deferred.

The draft policy can be found on the Federal Subsistence Management Program Website (<http://alaska.fws.gov/asm/home.html>) under "Issues in Depth." ■

Board Approves Changes to Hunting Regulations

The Federal Subsistence Board considered more than 54 proposals to change Federal subsistence hunting and trapping regulations at its April 29–May 1 meeting in Anchorage. The new regulations are effective July 1, 2008 through June 30, 2010. Among the changes approved by the Board:

- A reduction in the harvest limit for caribou on Unimak Island from four to two caribou. Surveys indicate the caribou population on Unimak Island is declining. The reduction in the harvest limit is

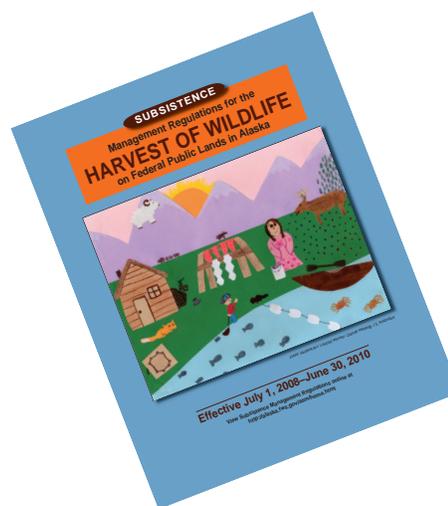
intended to help slow the population decline.

- The closure of the Federal season for caribou in Unit 9D on the Southern Alaska Peninsula, due to a continuing decline in the Southern Alaska Peninsula Caribou Herd. The closure is intended to aid the recovery of the herd.
- Recognition of the Customary and Traditional use of moose by residents of Cooper Landing in Units 7, 15A and 15B on the Kenai Peninsula. This decision allows residents of Cooper Landing to harvest moose in these units under Federal subsistence regulations.

The Board deferred action on a proposal dealing with the sale of handicrafts made from brown bear parts. The deferral will allow time to create a working group to evaluate the feasibility of marking and tracking brown bear claws harvested legally and used in handicrafts for sale by Federally qualified subsistence users.

The Board also deferred action on a proposal to recognize the customary and traditional use of moose by rural residents of Units 1C and 1D in Southeast Alaska and establish a season and harvest limit for moose in the Berners Bay drainages. The deferral would allow additional time to analyze customary and traditional use of Unit 1C moose. ■

Hold on to that book!



With the Federal Subsistence Management Program's move to a two-year regulatory cycle, the regulations in the latest edition of the Federal subsistence *Harvest of Wildlife* regulations book are valid through June 30, 2010.

Yukon Delta NWR Requests Lead-shot Ban for Wildlife Harvest

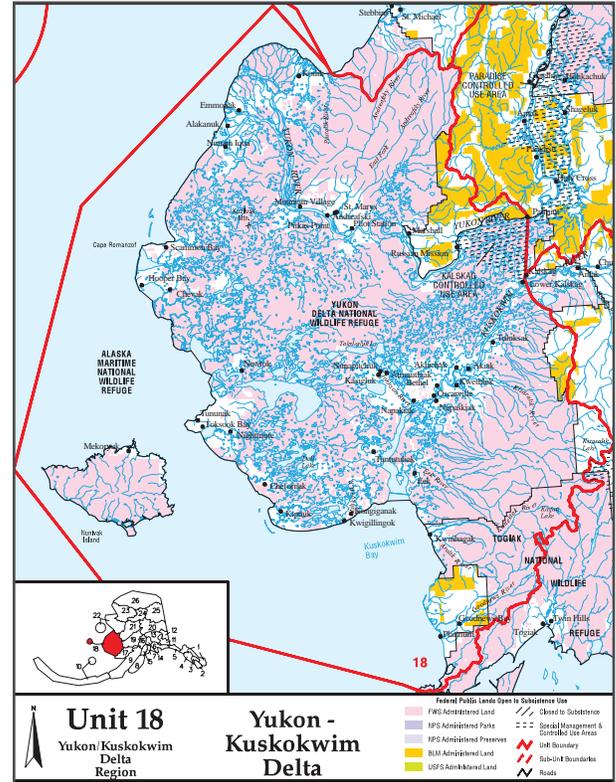
The Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge has requested that the Federal Subsistence Board approve a special action that would prohibit the possession or use of shot shells containing size “T” lead shot or smaller for the taking of wildlife in Unit 18.

The use of lead shot for waterfowl hunting has been banned since 1991, due to the high mortality of waterfowl related to ingestion of lead shot. However, there is currently no ban on the use of lead shot for the taking of other wildlife under Federal subsistence regulations. As a result, lead shot used legally to harvest upland birds or fur bearers may end up in waterfowl breeding habitat. Refuge officials say the ban would benefit waterfowl by helping to decrease the amount of lead shot in the environment.

Two species of eider that inhabit Unit 18, spectacled and Steller’s eiders, are listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act and are directly affected by lead shot in their habitat.

A public hearing on the proposed temporary special action will be held during the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta Subsistence Regional Advisory Council meeting Oct. 2-3 in Bethel. For information

on this public hearing, contact council coordinator Alex Nick at (907) 543-1037 or (800) 621-5804, ext. 257. ■



WE'VE MOVED

The Office of Subsistence Management has moved. Our new address is:

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U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
1011 East Tudor Road, Mail Stop 121
Anchorage, Alaska 99503**

Our phone, fax and e-mail address remain the same:

**phone (907) 786-3888 or (800) 478-1456
fax (907) 786-3898
e-mail subsistence@fws.gov**



Tuning in to Fish *(Continued from page 1)*

turning their attention to steelhead. Up to 80 steelhead will be tagged before freeze up.

When the fish are released back into the water they begin transmitting a signal that provides information about the areas they inhabit and where they spawn.

The information gathered in this project, funded by the Federal Subsistence Management Program, is helping fishery managers fill gaps in their knowledge of coho and steelhead in the Kasilof and its tributaries.

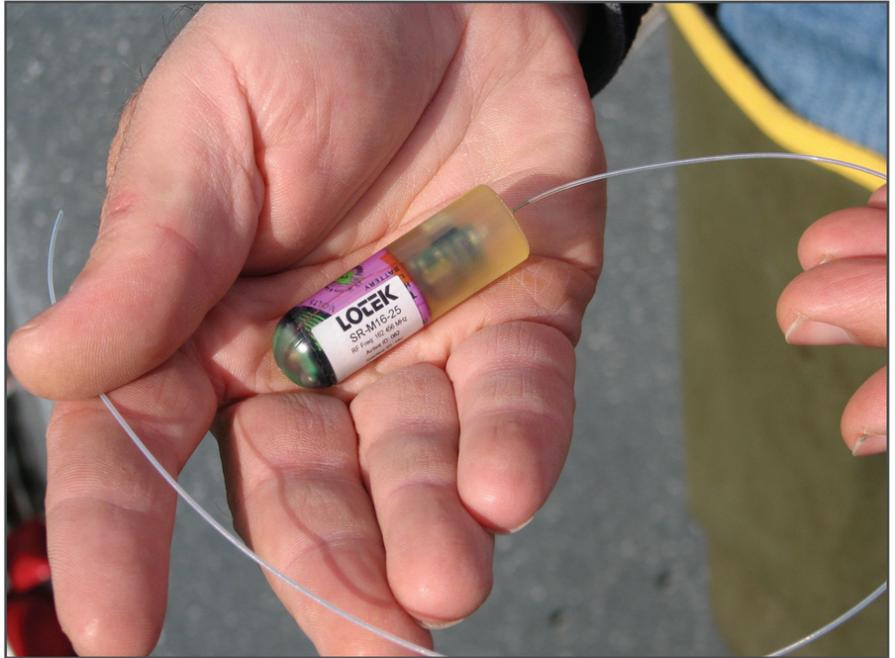
Palmer heads farther upriver, eventually anchoring the boat where an antenna and bright orange strongbox are fixed on a bank high above the river. He scrambles up the bank and opens the strongbox, where a data-logging receiver connected to the antenna collects the information transmitted by each radio tag in the area. The receiver makes a clicking noise, much like static on a radio, which indicates there are tagged fish in the area.

Palmer downloads data from the receiver to a laptop computer for later analysis back at his office. In addition to several fixed receiver stations like this one, biologists regularly track the tagged fish by boat and plane. Weirs equipped with underwater video monitoring systems on Nikolai and Shantatalik creeks also provide data on abundance and run-timing of coho in the Kasilof drainage.

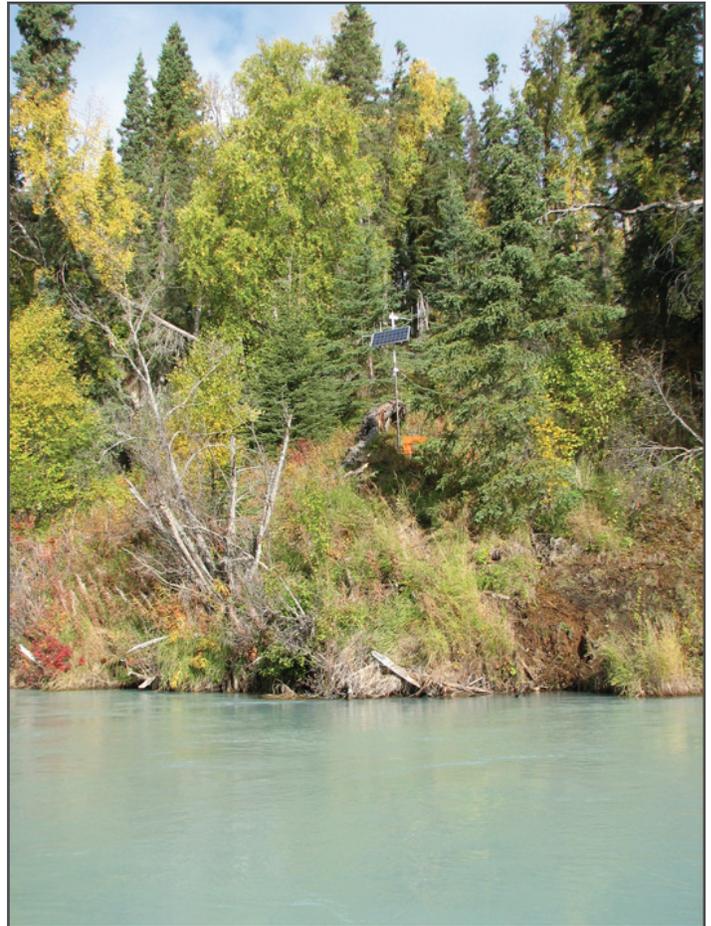
The Kasilof River watershed is the second largest within the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge, after the Kenai River watershed. While much is known about the salmon runs of the popular Kenai River, much less is known about the fish that return to the Kasilof.

“A better understanding of the abundance, run timing and distribution of coho salmon and steelhead in the Kasilof River watershed will provide fishery managers with the information they need to conserve healthy fish populations, while providing rural Alaska residents with a priority for the subsistence harvest of fish in Federal public waters,” Palmer said. ■

Maureen Clark is the Public Affairs Specialist with the Office of Subsistence Management.



Each radio transmitter uniquely identifies and tracks individual coho salmon and steelhead to their respective spawning destinations.



The orange strongbox and solar panel indicate one of the eight fixed-receiver stations used to track radio-tagged coho salmon and steelhead.



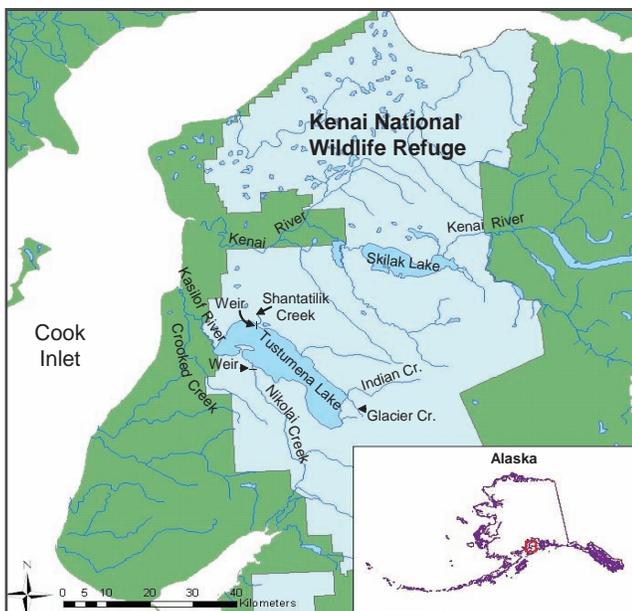
Top:
A notice posted on the top of the strong box explains the purpose of the study.

Left:
Biologist Doug Palmer downloads radio tagging data collected at a fixed tracking station.

Below:
Crew members Ken Gates, Waylon Marler, and Todd Anderson deploy a gillnet on the Kasilof River to catch coho for tagging.

Below Left:
Map of the Kasilof River watershed showing weir locations on Nikolai and Shantatalik creeks

USFWS Photos



From our Councils

Why I Serve

Twice a year, and sometimes more frequently, members of our 10 regional advisory councils take time out of their busy lives to meet. They develop proposals to change hunting and fishing regulations, make recommendations to the Federal Subsistence Board, and discuss issues of importance to subsistence users in their region. Before they meet, they spend time at home reading materials to prepare for their meetings and consulting with neighbors for their thoughts and advice. They volunteer their time so that Alaskans can have a meaningful voice in Federal subsistence management. Why do they do it? We asked our council members that very question. The responses follow:

Mickey Stickman – Western Interior Regional Advisory Council

The main reason I serve is because we have to be involved with the management of the resources that our very existence depends on. Also, our traditions and cultural practices depend on the resources available to us. Our ancestors would expect us to do all we can to make sure that our way of life as we know it be preserved for all future generations to survive and to enjoy our special relationship to the land and all it provides for us.



Floyd Kookesh – Southeast Alaska Regional Advisory Council

One of the problems that I've recognized is that there are a lot of people who live the subsistence lifestyle, but they won't come forward and speak what's on their minds. That's why they put people like us on these councils, so that we can be their voice. It's our job to hear their voice and bring it forward. That's why I serve. We need to be a strong voice for all of our Southeast communities and represent them well. We should always have our door open to all people who want to voice their concerns.



Subsistence is the highest priority and we need to keep that in mind. I really believe that we need to encourage people to come forward and be advocates for subsistence. It's not just for them, it's for their

children. We're protecting our culture. We're protecting our lifestyle. It's the whole world in itself.

Austin Swan Sr. – Northwest Arctic Regional Advisory Council

Since I have been involved with the elders council here in Kivalina, I have come to realize that our lifestyle has gone through a lot of changes, mainly because of regulations that have come with Westernization. It is a hardship for a lot of the older people to realize this because of how they were raised and grew up. Some of us that grew up with the Westernization and also learned from our elders and parents still have mixed feelings about the situation.



I still like to live off the land and do so. I also have to work to support that lifestyle. Needless to say we have created more problems for ourselves by adopting the new way of life and trying to live by the old lifestyle. I hope that what we do and try to do within the regional advisory council sometimes helps those in our region.

Jenny Pelkola – Western Interior Subsistence Regional Advisory Council

Every time a new government agent came to our fish camp, they had some kind of new rule. I got fed up with all the orders about not doing this or that, so I wanted to see what the heck they were talking about. I am learning a lot and thanks to everyone who explains things to me. Subsistence has been in this area for generations and it is only right that it continues. I hope to be a spokeswoman for our peoples' rights. I will continue to do my best in serving the needs of our people.



Pat Holmes – Kodiak/Aleutians Regional Advisory Council

Serving on the Kodiak/Aleutians Regional Advisory Council is a pleasure because it allows me the privilege of working with folks who really care about the entire perspective of subsistence. We have a common goal and share similar values: Protection of the resources so that folks can be assured that there will be natural, wild, and nutritious food for our families, friends and neighbors. Subsistence is much more than a harvesting opportunity. It encompasses caring



[continued on page 9]

and sharing with one's immediate and extended community. Nothing in the world is better than the first salmon of the year!

There is an immense satisfaction in helping to secure funding for research projects to study local resources, explain run collapses and supply folks with the reasons for those changes. These projects allow people to plan their harvest, assist the management agencies in developing solutions and, in time, to see the improvements.

Sharing common values and developing solutions to resource problems helps to bridge cultures by developing trust and respect through active communication and compromise. Our meetings allow warm renewal of decades of friendships and acquaintances that span the Gulf of Alaska to the Aleutians, Pribilofs and beyond. Basically, membership on a regional advisory council comes down to a lot of hard work, mutual respect, willingness to compromise, and a sense of humor. As a result, one develops the ultimate satisfaction of being able to help folks you care about.

Gloria Stickwan – Southcentral Alaska Regional Advisory Council

I got involved in subsistence issues in the early '80s when we heard that fishing in the Copper River might be closed to us under the State management system. My family and I provided written testimony on subsistence fishing and we also did a teleconference call at the Ahtna office to give testimony on fishing in the Copper River.



During the early 80s, a public hearing was held on D-2 lands across the Copper River. My parents had a trap line across the Copper River. We heard a rumor that lands across the Copper River would be closed to trapping, so we went to the hearing to learn more about D-2 lands. We later learned that trapping would still be allowed across the Copper River. To this day, I continue to have an interest in protecting subsistence hunting, fishing and trapping for Federally qualified subsistence users as well as conserving fisheries and wildlife populations.

I think the regional advisory councils are a process in place today, whereby the public can have meaningful input and have their concerns heard by people who reside within their region, so that recommendations can be taken to the Federal Subsistence Board for actions on their fisheries, wildlife, and trapping proposals, and to hear about

the public's concerns on Federal public lands regarding subsistence.

Jack Reakoff – Western Interior Regional Advisory Council

I never intended to get into the council business, but I began getting involved with wildlife management back when we were not allowed to subsistence hunt, with only trophy hunting with bow, by non-local hunters. I was asked back in 1993 by the regional director of the Fish and Wildlife Service if I would like to be on the council and I accepted. Over the years I've studied more about biology so I could speak knowledgeably about my field experience and the experience of the old timers who were here before me.



With high fuel costs and the high cost of store-bought food, people are increasingly reliant on subsistence resources. These resources are integral to people living in rural Alaska and to Alaska Natives maintaining their cultural identity. I was raised with both Athabascan and Inupiat people when I was a kid. I have a lot of friends in the Western Interior region and I hate to see people being displaced, having to leave rural Alaska when sport users over harvest local game populations.

Maintaining healthy populations of fish and wildlife is very important to Native and non-Native Alaskans. The local people and rural people who are particularly reliant on subsistence resources have a high conservation ethic and don't want to see game populations overused, as they have few alternatives.

Greg Encelewski – Southcentral Alaska Regional Advisory Council

I serve because I know that if we don't represent the subsistence lifestyle we'll be totally lost and it would be an extremely sad and devastating situation. I feel very strongly about subsistence and that's why I serve.



Would you or someone you know like to serve on a Federal subsistence regional advisory council? Membership is open statewide. For an application or more information, contact Michelle Chivers at (907) 786-3877 or (800) 478-1456 or by e-mail, Michelle_Chivers@fws.gov. Deadline for completed applications: Jan 9, 2009

Out and About

Several members of the Federal Subsistence Board and staff traveled to the Copper River June 12-13 to get an up-close look at a fishery project funded through the Fisheries Resource Monitoring Program and conducted cooperatively by the Native Village of Eyak and LGL Research Associates, Inc. The fish wheels at Baird Canyon and Wood Canyon help fishery managers estimate the abundance of Copper River Chinook and sockeye salmon, important resources for subsistence, personal use, commercial and sport fishermen. ■



The Native Village of Eyak welcomed the Board members with a potluck.



Board Chairman Mike Fleagle and Bureau of Land Management State Director Tom Lonnie prepare to head up the Copper River



Fish wheel crew tagging fish



At the fish wheel.

Photos by Steve Kessler, USFS and Pete Probasco, USFWS

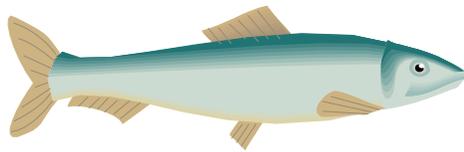


On the river.

ENTER THE 2009 SUBSISTENCE STUDENT ART CONTEST

The Federal Subsistence Management Program is sponsoring a subsistence art contest for students in grades K-12. This year, the focus will be on subsistence fishing. The grand prize winner's artwork will be published on the cover of the Federal subsistence fisheries regulations book, which is distributed statewide. Entries must be postmarked no later than December 5, 2008. For entry forms and contest guidelines, please contact the Office of Subsistence Management at (800) 478-1456 or (907) 786-3953 or e-mail Maureen_Clark@fws.gov.

THE FOCUS IS ON FISH!

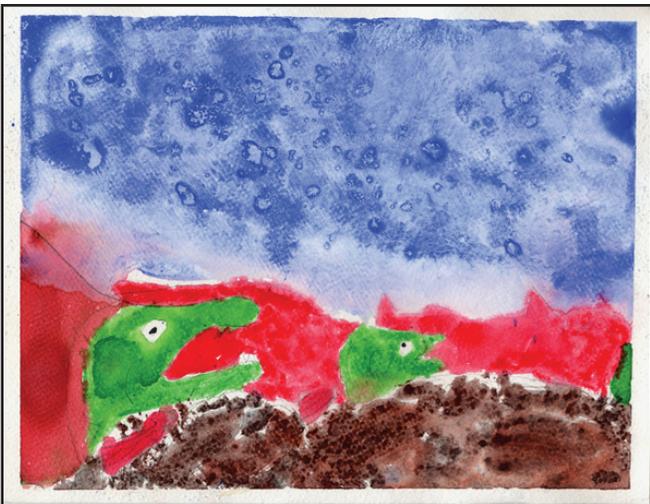


Drawing from experience

Student artists find inspiration all around them

Congratulations to the winners of the 2008 Subsistence Student Art contest. The grand prize winners are Jack Weaver, 8, of Sitka and Denali Whiting, 15, of Kotzebue. Mr. Weaver's entry serves as the cover art for the 2008-2009 subsistence fishing regulations book, while Miss Whiting's entry serves as the cover art for the 2008-2010 subsistence wildlife harvest regulations book.

More than 350 students from throughout Alaska entered the contest, which is intended to encourage young people to share their subsistence way of life with others. The student art is used in regulation books, brochures and other publications produced by the Office of Subsistence Management. In addition to the two grand prize winners, 39 students received honorable mention certificates for their work.



Jack Weaver, 8, Sitka



Denali Whiting, 15, Kotzebue

From LAND WATER

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