

Unit 23 Working Group Meeting May 8-9, 2013 – Kotzebue, Alaska Meeting Summary

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1.0 Introduction

The Unit 23 Working Group met on May 8-9, 2013, in Kotzebue, Alaska, at the Northwest Arctic Borough (NWAB) Assembly Chambers. NWAB Mayor Reggie Joule welcomed the group and encouraged their work.

The 20-member Unit 23 Working Group was formed in 2008 to discuss fall hunting conflicts between local hunters, nonlocal hunters and big game commercial service providers (guides, transporters) in Game Management Unit (GMU) 23, in northwest Alaska.¹ The group is working together by consensus to develop and recommend solutions to fall hunting conflicts. The group's advisory recommendations are sent to regulatory boards, land and wildlife management agencies, commercial service providers (guides, transporters) and others to evaluate and consider for implementation. Working Group members are listed in Attachment 1 and others in attendance at the May 2013 meeting are listed in Attachment 2.²

The Purpose of the Unit 23 Working Group is to “find solutions to hunting conflicts that will preserve the Inupiaq values of the region, including opportunities for local hunters to take caribou as needed, while also providing reasonable opportunities for visiting hunters to hunt caribou in the unit.” This statement and additional information about the Working Group can be found in its April 2008 Charter, posted on the group's website.

The May 8-9, 2013, meeting agenda is in Attachment 3. The objectives of the meeting were to:

- Hear updates on progress being made on Working Group recommendations.
- Discuss the 2012 hunting season and preparation for the 2013 season.
- Hear updates on State and federal management, planning and enforcement related to reducing hunting conflicts in Game Management Unit 23.

¹ See Unit 23 Working Group's project web site for additional information and previous meeting summaries: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=wildlifepanning.unit23>

² Jan Caulfield facilitated the meeting. Contact information: 114 S. Franklin St., Ste. 203, Juneau, AK 99801, 907-523-4610, janc@gci.net, www.jancaulfield.com

- Hear presentation regarding proposed Roads to Resources projects (particularly to the Ambler Mining District).
- Hear public comment (in person and through toll-free call-in).
- Discuss other topics raised by Working Group members, and the future of the Working Group.

Section 2.0 lists Working Group recommendations and assignments. Section 3.0 is a general summary of information presented and the group's discussion. Section 4.0 briefly addresses future meetings. Public comments and follow-up actions to respond to comments are summarized in Section 5.0.

All Unit 23 Working Group meetings are open to the public. Most of the May 8-9, 2013, meeting was broadcast on public radio station KOTZ (including web broadcast at www.kotz.org). Public comments were welcomed in person and via teleconference on Thursday afternoon, May 9.

2.0 Recommendations & Assignments

The following tasks will be done to implement recommendations made by the Working Group at its May 2013 meeting:

- Communication with researchers re: avoiding user conflicts (Section 3.2, below) – The Working Group recommended that researchers working in Unit 23 be briefed on issues related to user conflicts and advised on how to minimize conflicts (e.g., in use of fixed-wing aircraft, helicopters). Researchers are also urged to contact villages to discuss research going on in their vicinity. Assignment – Frank Hays, NPS, will take the lead on this for the Working Group, as he is on a committee that coordinates with researchers in the region and can ensure this is included in research protocols.
- State of Alaska Guide Concession Program (Section 3.3, below) – The Working Group recommended that a letter be written in support of the Guide Concession Program going forward. The letter will be sent to Senate and House Resource and Finance Committees, the Governor, the local delegation, and to BLM (Bill Overbaugh). The letter will express support for the program, with emphasis on conservation, crowding and user conflict issues, and with support for eventually also addressing transporters. Assignment – Jan Caulfield will draft a letter for Working Group approval.
- Education – Meat Salvage Posters (Section 3.4, below) – Print and distribute more of the meat salvage posters for posting in all communities. Assignment – Meghan Nedwick, ADF&G, will do this.
- Pre-Season Communication with Communities, Tribes (Section 3.5, below) – Continue pre-season teleconference hosted by NWAB with communities, management agencies and NANA Trespass, to discuss upcoming fall hunting season and the guides and transporters permitted to operate in vicinity of each community. Assignment – Provide this same information in writing to communities, IRAs, Advisory Committees. Assignment – NWAB, state and federal management agencies.
- Letter to Guides and Transporters regarding Wulik and Kivalina Rivers (Section 5.0, below) – The Working Group identified a subgroup to draft a letter to transporters operating in the Wulik and Kivalina River areas regarding the importance of taking steps to avoid user conflicts and also educating their clients. The final letter will be sent from the full Working Group. Assignment: Subgroup members include: Enoch Mitchell, Alex Whiting, Jim Dau, Julie Owen, and Phil Driver. Shelly Jacobson and Valerie Baxter will provide a list of businesses that should receive the letter.

3.0 Summary of Working Group Presentations & Discussion

This section provides a summary of presentations and Working Group discussion at the May 2013 meeting.

3.1 2011 Hunting Season and Data

Jim Dau, ADFG Wildlife Biologist, presented the following information (the PowerPoint presentation can be viewed on the Unit 23 Working Group's project website):

- 2009 Caribou herd census: The July 2011 census count of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd (WAH) was 324,000 caribou, down from a high of 490,000 in 2003 and continuing a decline from 377,000 in 2007, and 348,000 in 2009. The herd has declined at an annual rate of approximately 4-6% each year since 2003 and ADFG expects this trend to continue. Although it has lost many caribou, it is still considered to be the largest caribou herd in North America and state and federal hunting regulations have remained liberal.
- Why a decline? So far there is no indication in herd survey data that the declining trend is about to turn around. On WAH winter range the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has documented a measurable reduction in percent lichen cover, an important food for caribou during winter, with a corresponding increase in grasses and shrubs. Even so, based on two health assessments conducted in this herd (2007 and 2010), many hours spent looking at caribou each year during surveys, and countless reports from hunters, WAH caribou have remained in good body condition throughout this current decline. The health assessments and blood samples suggest that disease is not significantly affecting the herd. Harvests have not increased during recent years. The mortality rate has been high during some years when winter thaws and rain occurred. Opportunistic observations as well as many reports from subsistence hunters and long time commercial operators indicate that numbers of wolves and brown bears are higher now within WAH range than in previously years. Although ADF&G has no survey data on losses of caribou to these predators, it appears that they may now be contributing to high adult caribou mortality and low calf survival.
- WAH Cooperative Management Plan: The Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group (WACHWG), which has been active from 2000 to the present, includes a broad spectrum of (non-agency) people who use and are interested in management of the WAH (see www.westernarcticcaribou.org). The WACHWG adopted an updated (advisory) management plan for the herd in December 2011 that will be presented to the Board of Game at its January 2014 in Kotzebue. Two sections of the management plan are particularly relevant to user conflicts in Unit 23: (1) Regulations, (2) Population Management. The Regulations section recommends that regulations be as simple as possible, be founded in the state and federal regional advisory committee processes, provide for local caribou hunting and opportunities for other users, and lead to a sustainable herd size.

The WACHWG wants people that hunt and depend on the Western Arctic herd to be familiar with the Population Management section of the plan. Table 1 (below) relates the herd's size and trend (declining, stable, increasing) with potential management actions and harvest levels. While current management of the herd is liberal, it may be necessary in the future to use the more conservative population management strategies outlined in Appendix 2 of the Cooperative Management Plan, if the herd continues to decline.

Examples of these strategies include no harvest of calves, no non-resident cow harvest, restriction of non-resident bull harvest, and voluntary reductions in resident cow harvest.

- Caribou migration routes and hunting success: In fall 2012, caribou migrated farther east primarily through Ambler, Kobuk and Shungnak areas (similar to 2009 and 2010), but different than 2011 when caribou were more widely distributed in the region. Noatak and Kivalina were eventually able to get caribou, later in the fall and early winter.
- Numbers of nonlocal hunters: Numbers of nonlocal hunters in Unit 23 increased to about 500 in 2012, due to more non-Alaskans coming to the GMU 23. While higher than 2009-2011, numbers are still down considerably from the high of nearly 800 in 2006. Caribou continue to be the species of greatest interest for visiting hunters.

TABLE 1. Western Arctic caribou herd management levels using herd size, population trend and harvest rate. (from WACH Cooperative Management Plan, 2011)

	Population Trend		
Management Level and Harvest Level	Declining Low: 6%	Stable Med: 7%	Increasing High: 8%
Liberal	Pop: 265,000+ Harvest: 18,550-24,850	Pop: 230,000+ Harvest: 16,100-21,700	Pop: 200,000+ Harvest: 16,000-21,600
Conservative	Pop: 200,000-265,000 Harvest: 14,000-18,550	Pop: 170,000-230,000 Harvest: 11,900-16,100	Pop: 150,000-200,000 Harvest: 12,000-16,000
Preservative	Pop: 130,000-200,000 Harvest: 8,000-12,000	Pop: 115,000-170,000 Harvest: 8,000-12,000	Pop: 100,000-150,000 Harvest: 8,000-12,000
Critical Keep Bull:Cow ratio ≥40 Bull:100 Cow	Pop: <130,000 Harvest: 6,000-8,000	Pop: <115,000 Harvest: 6,000-8,000	Pop: <100,000 Harvest: 6,000-8,000

- Hunting dates: The average peak time period for nonlocal hunting in Unit 23 has shifted to later dates over the years, with peak hunting now after mid-September (very little activity in August).
- Areas hunted: The Guide Use Areas (GUA) most heavily used by nonlocal hunters in 2012 were GUA 006 (Squirrel, Aggie, Eli Rivers) with an average nonlocal hunter density from 1998-2012 of 3.05 hunters/100 mi² and GUA 005 (Selawik, Lower Kobuk) with an average nonlocal hunter density of 2.03 hunters/100 mi². The average density in these GUAs is down from prior years.

- Commercial service use: There was a notable increase in 2012 in the number of nonlocal hunters using transporter services, compared with 2009-2011. The numbers that used guides or no commercial services held stable.
- Camp locations: ADFG shared a map showing fall hunting camp locations in 2012, using available data from aerial observations made by the National Park Service (NPS), ADFG and US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and the Alaska Wildlife Troopers. However, this data is not complete, as it relies on data sources that are opportunistic and observations that are not randomly stratified.

Working Group members raised the following questions / points for discussion:

- Hunting effort: Q: What would data look like in terms of hunting effort if local hunters were added in? A: Much higher; perhaps three to four times higher. However, data is not comparable because information about local hunting comes from household surveys and shows harvest areas used by communities, not from harvest reports.
- Bull:Cow Ratio: Q: The WACH Cooperative Management Plan (Table 1 and Appendix 2) focuses on a bull:cow ratio of 40 bulls:100 cows, while most other GMUs use 35:100. Why? A: It is 40:100 “by tradition”. This is more conservative than typical for other herds in North America. Noted that it is hard to accurately estimate the bull:cow ratio. If there were an indication that the herd is approaching that ratio, there would need to be more technical scrutiny.
- Increased use of transporters in 2012: Q: Why the increase in the number of clients using transporters in 2012? A: Julie Owen responded that there has not been an increase in the number of businesses, but apparently in the number of clients served.
- Trend in harvest levels: Q: What is the trend in caribou harvest levels (not just numbers of non-resident hunters)? A: Nonlocal harvest is small; 95% of the herd’s harvest is subsistence. The range of harvest by local hunters is about 9,500-16,000 caribou/year. The range for non-local hunters is 500-800/year.
- Herd size and population decline: Raymond Stoney urged that information about population size and trend be shared with all IRAs and villages, so people are prepared if the decline continues and changes in management are required. Jim Dau indicated he has presented this information to the five Advisory Committees (AC). The upcoming *Caribou Trails* newsletter will have a feature article. He encourages Working Group members to share this information with their communities. If the herd declines further, expects the WACH Working Group will make recommendations to the Board of Game, as will the ACs and possibly this group.

In discussion of possible causes for the decline (see section above), Pete Schaeffer noted that as the migration tends to be later, bulls are not as attractive to local hunters who may tend to shift to harvesting cows. This could accelerate the decline and this impact is exacerbated as the migration gets later and later.

- Spacing between camps: Q: Are there regulations regarding distances between camps and hunting activity? A: No. However, BLM is looking at this in its Squirrel River Management Plan and is trying to lay out information about typical use so people know what to expect in an area. Noted that the Big Game Commercial Services Board used to suggest to guides that they observe a spacing of 2-5 miles between camps, but geographic barriers would also affect acceptable spacing.
- Preparation for January 2014 Board of Game Meeting in Kotzebue: Q: Any proposals coming up through the AC process? A: Jim Dau replied that he hasn’t seen any draft

proposals at this time related to the declining herd trend. He is advising ACs to “stay ahead” on this and recommend hunters take voluntary measures to address declines.

- Local hunting – seasonal trends: In response to a question, Jim Dau noted that demand is always there for caribou and if there are caribou near villages, people hunt for subsistence year-round. The peak period is in the fall, looking for fat bulls. After bulls go stinky, will take cows. Pete Schaeffer noted that access has a lot to do with it, as a long rainy season in the fall will make it hard to hunt. Noted that later migration is causing a concern with traditional celebrations. Also noted that when good bulls are not available, there is a more concentrated cow hunt, which raises biological concerns.

3.2 Communication, Coordination & Enforcement

Alaska Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development (DCCED) seasonal investigator – For the third year in a row, the DCCED Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing provided a seasonal investigator to be based in Unit 23 during the fall hunting season. The investigator focused on compliance with the Big Game Commercial Services Board’s (BGCSB) regulations for the big game commercial services industry. A copy of the February 2013 report to the Legislature prepared by DCCED is attached (Attachment 4). In 2010 and 2011, the Alaska State Legislature provided funding to the DCCED to hire a contract investigator. In 2012, at the request of the Unit 23 Working Group, DCCED sent one of their permanent investigators, Lee Strout, to the region from September 3-14, 2012.

Mr. Strout made the following points in his (teleconferenced) presentation:

- Coordinated closely with Alaska Wildlife Trooper Justin McGinnis and with BLM enforcement. Focused on making contacts with transporters and guides, doing camp inspections and letting them know that the Division has a presence in the region investigating compliance with BGCSB regulations.
- Many contacts with hunter were made at the airport ramp in Kotzebue. However, Mr. Strout will have to take steps (online certification process) to ensure he has independent access to the ramp in the future.
- Hunters mentioned that they would like to have access to meat processing facilities in Kotzebue. Two businesses set up meat processing tents and he inspected those.
- A few cases were turned over to the AWT for processing, related to hunters not to transporter or guide operations.
- The Division would like to offer this service in Unit 23 again in fall 2013, but that will depend upon budget.

Enforcement coordination among agencies – Frank Hays, National Park Service (NPS), provided a summary of law enforcement efforts and coordination. The federal and state agencies have increased coordination with each other and with the NANA Trespass program and Northwest Arctic Borough in the past several years to improve enforcement in GMU 23 during the fall hunting season. During fall 2012, NPS had four enforcement officers in the field checking hunters and camps using jet boats, fixed-wing aircraft, foot patrols and helicopters. NPS also worked closely with Purcell Security to assist with trespass issues on private lands within and adjacent to National Parklands. Enforcement officers gave a copy of the ADF&G publication “Hunting Legal – Hunting Smart” to each person contacted.

Working Group members raised the following questions / points for discussion:

- Members were interested that two tents were set up in Kotzebue by commercial service providers to make it possible for their clients to process meat.
- Seems that there has been major improvements in meat care over the past few years. Transporters have “turned this around” by making their clients aware of their responsibilities for proper meat care.
- Several Working Group members thanked Lee Stout and noted that his presence in the region during the hunting season makes a difference.
- Jim Dau noted that enforcement appears to be well coordinated, in that he hasn’t received complaints of hunters being contacted multiple times in the field.
- Lee Anne Ayres thanked the NANA trespass program. It is very helpful that people in villages are able to contact a NANA representative with concerns. That line of communication is a key to success.
- Q: Have there been concerns with use of helicopter by NPS? A: Frank Hays has received no complaints; they are very careful to make sure not to disrupt hunting. Lance Stalkey, AWT from the Central Region, noted the importance of using helicopters to access remote camps and hunting areas. They are very careful not to disrupt hunting or harass game.
- In 2012, there was one complaint about a NPS research plane from Fairbanks that disrupted an ongoing subsistence hunt. Frank Hays followed up immediately and will continue to provide briefings to researchers on avoiding conflicts (see Assignment, below).
- Carmen Daggett (ADF&G Board staff for Unit 23) recommended that researchers come to Advisory Committee meetings to share information with local residents.

ACTION – The Working Group recommended that researchers who are working on projects in Unit 23 be briefed on the issues related to user conflicts and advised on how to minimize conflicts (e.g., in use of fixed-wing aircraft, helicopters), and urged to contact villages about research going on in the vicinity. Assignment – Frank Hays will take the lead on this for the Working Group, as he is on a committee that coordinates with researchers and can ensure this is included in research protocols.

3.3 Update on State of Alaska Guide Concession Program

Valerie Baxter, Natural Resource Specialist, provided an update on the program, which will establish guide concession areas (generally matching the boundaries of the existing Guide Use Areas) on State of Alaska land and possibly BLM land. In February 2012, DNR issued a proposed decision on how the program would be designed and implemented and received over 300 public comments. In February 2013, the agency produced a “Management Framework Document” (see project website)³, held public meetings, and received nearly 200 comments. During the 2013 Legislative session, no funding was approved to staff and implement the program. Without funding, the program is on hold. During the 2013 session, an amendment was introduced (House Bill 158) to expand the program to include transporters in the concession

³ For more information, see the program website at <http://dnr.alaska.gov/mlw/gcp/> or contact Clark Cox, DNR, Division of Mining, Land and Water, at clark.cox@alaska.gov, 907-269-8565.

program, giving DNR one year to incorporate that. There was no action on this bill, which will be continued into the 2014 session.

Working Group members raised the following questions / points for discussion:

- Ted Spraker said that the Board of Game has written three letters of support to the Governor and Legislature in support of the Guide Concession Program and has testified to the Legislature. They emphasized concerns with sheep conservation and with crowding of hunters. Supports addition of transporters to the program, but that needs to happen over time, once the guide program is working well.
- Q: Joe Schuster asked about the status of the program on BLM land, since the State is “on hold”. A: Shelly Jacobson, BLM, said that the process may be used in the Squirrel River area, where BLM is preparing a management plan. Valerie Baxter said that Bill Overbaugh from BLM is collecting information about guides on BLM land and considering whether a concession program could work in a more limited area under BLM jurisdiction. Shelly suggested that perhaps BLM and the State could work together to implement the program in a more limited geographic area, such as the Squirrel River.

ACTION – The Working Group recommended that a letter be written in support of the Guide Concession Program going forward. The letter would be sent to Senate and House Resource and Finance Committees, the Governor, the local delegation, and to BLM (Bill Overbaugh). The letter would express support for the program, with emphasis on conservation, crowding and user conflict issues, and with support for eventually also addressing transporters. Assignment – Jan Caulfield will draft a letter for Working Group approval.

(On another topic, Ron Moto raised a concern about Adreanoff mining near Deering and potential impacts on caribou grazing range. Shelly Jacobson replied that mining activity would require agency permits. BLM is making an effort to post all permits on-line so people can see what activities are approved to operate. Permits usually include stipulations that regulate activities to avoid impacts, such as timing restrictions, buffers, habitat protection, etc.)

3.4 Education Update

Meghan Nedwick, ADFG Education Associate, gave an update on the pilot education requirement, youth and hunter education, and the WACHWG publication *Caribou Trails*.

Pilot education – In 2010, a new regulation took affect (proposed by Unit 23 Working Group and approved by Board of Game) that requires a one-time online orientation session for aircraft pilots transporting big game or meat in Unit 23. A pilot may not transport parts of big game with an aircraft without having, in their possession, a certificate of successful completion of a department-approved education course. (Note: This provision does not apply to transportation between state-maintained airports.) As of May 2013, 262 pilots had taken the test. There were 47 pilots who took the test between May 2012 and May 2013.

Education to avoid user conflicts – ADF&G continues to print and widely-distribute the “Hunt Legal – Hunt Smart” pamphlet and the poster regarding proper caribou meat salvage. The department is offering more hunter education courses that address responsible hunting, firearm safety, and meat care. They have seen an increase in the number of people and families taking the courses. Meghan has designed curriculum regarding hunting, that will be included as an education unit in the Kotzebue High School Alaska History class in fall 2013. The class will encourage participating in the Board of Game meeting to be held in Kotzebue in January 2014.

Caribou Trails – Meghan is working on an edition of *Caribou Trails* to issue in summer 2013. There will be a short article with updates on the Unit 23 Working Group.

The department has noticed fewer complaints about user conflicts, and especially about wasted meat, since 2006.

Working Group members raised the following questions / points for discussion:

- In response to a question, Meghan said that she has not received complaints recently from pilots about having to take the one-time orientation (there were complaints in 2010 when the requirement was new). AWT Justin McGinnis does check in the field that pilots have taken the on-line course.
- Regarding hunter education, Meghan again emphasized that it is understood that youth in the region are in a hunting culture and learn how to hunt from their families and communities. The department is responding to requests to offer courses (e.g., from schools), and emphasize firearm safety. It is best to involve local instructors with traditional knowledge in delivering the courses along with agency staff.

ACTION – Print and distribute more of the meat salvage posters for posting in all communities.
Assignment – Meghan Nedwick will do this.

3.5 State and Federal Management, Planning and Permitting

Bureau of Land Management – BLM Field Manager Shelly Jacobson addressed the following points:

- Enforcement – BLM introduced Seth McMillan, a ranger/pilot that will increase BLM's enforcement capacity and ability to participate in coordinated enforcement actions with other agencies and NANA Trespass.
- Land status maps – BLM is keeping updated land status maps for Unit 23, which include topographic information. The maps are available on BLM and ADFG web sites and are also available on DVD for distribution to permittees. The maps are part of the curriculum for the pilot orientation and test.
- Permitting – Shelly distributed a map showing Special Recreation Permits for spike camps issued in Unit 23 for 2013, and a more detailed map for camps the Squirrel River area (subarea 23-06) (Attachment 5). In 2013, BLM will be incorporating the timing restriction in use by the NPS in the Noatak Preserve into its permits for the Squirrel River area. Commercial service providers would not be able to access the area until after September 15, unless managers make a determination to open by September 1 if the vanguard of the caribou migration has already moved through the area.
- Planning for Squirrel River Area – BLM is preparing a special management plan and Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Squirrel River area. BLM expects to distribute a draft plan in July 2013 for public comment. BLM has consulted closely with Kiana, the Northwest Arctic Borough, and DNR during planning. Four alternatives being evaluated are:
 - No Action (maintain status quo management)
 - No Commercial Services – evaluating a scenario with no commercial use allowed (alternative requested by local residents at initial scoping meetings).
 - Unlimited Commercial Services – evaluating a management scenario with 10 guides, unlimited transporters, and unlimited clients

- Adaptive Management – a scenario with managers tracking animal population and movements and visitor use trends, and adapting management. Under this proposed alternative, there would be three permitted guides with 12 clients annually in the Squirrel River area. There would be no limits on the number of transporters or transported clients under this alternative. There would be further restrictions on the number of guided clients permitted to hunt moose on BLM land. Use of four-wheelers would generally not be allowed (could request in extenuating circumstances, such as disabled access). This alternative would also use the September 15 start date in use by the NPS in the Noatak Preserve. BLM will use a User Satisfaction Survey to evaluate public response and as one source of data to determine if management should be adjusted.

Working Group members raised the following questions / points for discussion:

- Q: Is there a regulation on spacing between camps? A: Not restricted now, but could be done through the plan, such as a distance from another camp or from private property.
- Q: Can hunt from the river on BLM land? A: Yes. Noted that land in the Squirrel River area is about half BLM managed and half State managed.
- Phil Driver was concerned about a proposed limit on the number of guided clients that can hunt moose on BLM land. Shelly Jacobson said that this would be proposed, but the agency would see what comments they receive. Ted Spraker expressed concern about the legality of BLM “allocating” a species to particular hunters. Shelly indicated she would take the question to the agency’s solicitor.
- Ted Spraker was also concerned about restrictions on four-wheelers for commercial businesses, questioning whether it is fair to restrict businesses that require permits, but not other users in the area. Joe Schuster commented that if BLM places that restriction without coordination with the State, it would increase the concentration of use (and associated impacts) on State land. Also, it makes it more difficult for nonlocal hunters to access areas farther away from the river corridors, where local use is concentrated.
- Enoch Mitchell spoke in support of a five-mile spacing between base camps, since the Squirrel River has the highest density of hunters that are guided or transported. Suggested that along the Aggie River, fly in hunters be dropped off on the south side of the river to avoid disturbing caribou crossing.

US Fish and Wildlife Service – Selawik National Wildlife Refuge Manager Lee Anne Ayres presented the following information:

- Planning – The Selawik Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) was completed in 2011. The plan delineated an area of the Kobuk Delta where commercial use by transporters and guides are not authorized (Attachment 6). In this area, Refuge lands are intertwined with private land and there is no previous pattern of commercial use. Local subsistence hunters heavily use the area, accessing it by boat. Most access sites, camp locations, and desirable hunting sites are private allotments. The plan does include a provision for the Refuge Manager to approve access for commercial use to this area on a case-by-case basis.
- 2012 Commercial Use Update – The Selawik Wildlife Refuge issued special use permits in 2012 to one guide and three transporters (only two transporters operated). These businesses served 66 clients in 2012 (up from 21 in 2011 and 64 in 2010, but down from the peak of 154 hunters in 2000).

- 2012 Enforcement – One USFWS Law Enforcement Officer came to Unit 23 to patrol in fall 2012 and coordinated with other agencies. There were no violations on the Refuge and no complaints heard about user conflicts.
- 2013 Permits – In 2013, five transporters have been permitted; the three expected to be active are all based in Kotzebue and familiar with the region. The same guide will be permitted to provide services.

Working Group members raised the following questions / points for discussion:

- Q: Are four-wheelers allowed on the Refuge? A: No. This was looked at during the management plan process and it was determined that the terrain doesn't lend itself to this type of access.
- Q: Since BLM and USFWS land is directly adjacent, does that raise issues/problems with management? A: The agencies coordinate. Example was an application for a guide base camp in the upper Tag drainage that would have impacted the Refuge. BLM agreed not to permit that location.

National Park Service – NPS Western Arctic National Parklands Superintendent Frank Hays addressed the following topics:

- Noatak Caribou Traditional Knowledge Project – Gabriela Halas, UAF graduate student, and Dr. Gary Kofinas from UAF presented information about research being done in Noatak to document local and traditional knowledge on caribou, caribou hunting, and hunting conflicts (Attachment 7). The project was presented to Noatak in February 2013 and a Steering Committee was formed. With the help of a local assistant, in fall 2013 Gabriela will survey 50 or more residents and conduct in-depth interviews and participatory mapping with 15-20 experts. The surveys will address: hunting experiences, threats to caribou, threats to caribou hunting success, changes people have noticed, management effectiveness, and suggested solutions. The more in-depth interviews will address: Where caribou go and why, observed changes in caribou and in caribou hunting, what makes a good hunting experience, user conflicts (when, where, why?), and how to deal with conflicts. All findings will be shared with the local community before a report is issued. The report will document caribou traditional knowledge, and help managers understand the system and inform decisions. The research was recommended by the WACHWG.

In discussion, Ron Moto indicated that he would like similar research to be done in Deering. Cyrus Harris emphasized that traditional knowledge has always been shared from the elders at camps, suppers, etc.

- Research on Non-Local Hunters in Noatak Preserve – Dr. Peter Fix from UAF is conducting surveys of non-local hunters who are hunting in the Noatak Preserve. The survey will focus on the location and timing of their hunting activity, addressing why they selected this area to hunt; what makes a successful hunt; their experiences encountering other hunters, aircraft, etc.; how those encounters compared with what they had expected and how the encounters affected their hunt; and any user conflicts they might have experienced. They will also ask hunters if they are aware of landownership, subsistence rights, minimum impact camping, ways to avoid use conflicts – to see if communication that is provided about these topics is reaching non-local hunters and influencing their behaviors. The survey will also ask hunters for their opinions on management approaches in the Noatak Preserve, such as the

delayed entry (September 15). Surveys will be mailed to hunters that were in the Preserve in 2010-2012 and then given on-site in 2013 at the Kotzebue Airport.

There is potential to also expand to NPS-managed lands in Kivalina area. Peter Fix noted that this same type of survey was given to non-local hunters using the Squirrel River area, for use in BLM's planning process. Researchers have consulted with the NWAB's subsistence mapping project staff to ensure they are not duplicating efforts and not sharing sensitive information.

In discussion, Gary Kofinas, UAF, noted that similar questions will be asked of Noatak residents and responses can be compared.

- Permitting – The NPS issues Commercial Use Authorizations (CUAs) for commercial *transporter* visitor services for the Noatak National Preserve. Beginning in 2012, CUA holders will be authorized to transport non-federally qualified caribou hunters into the area west of the Kuguruk River and Maiyumerak Mountains after September 15th, unless authorized by the Superintendent to provide services before this date. The Superintendent will consult with CUA holders, local villages and other agencies between August 15-September 15 to discuss the status of the caribou migration across the Preserve and to determine if access prior to September 15 will be allowed.

The Noatak CUA established by the Board of Game is not affected by these conditions. Pilots of private aircraft are not affected by these conditions. Commercial transporter services for Dall sheep and moose sport hunters are not affected by this provision.

ACTION – Continue pre-season teleconference hosted by NWAB with communities and management agencies and NANA Trespass, to discuss upcoming fall hunting season and the guides and transporters permitted to operate in vicinity of each community. **NEW** – Provide this same information in writing to communities, IRAs, Advisory Committees. Assignment – NWAB, state and federal management agencies.

3.6 Movement of Satellite-Collared WAH Caribou Near the Red Dog Road (Fall & Summer)

Jim Dau, ADF&G, Division of Wildlife Conservation, presented slides showing mapped movements of satellite-collared WAH caribou in proximity to the Red Dog road. Key points included:

- The slides show how collared caribou have moved when near a relatively quiet industrial road. The Red Dog mine and road have almost certainly not affected the size and general movement pattern of the WAH. The maps are relevant to discussions of potential effects of new roads on the WAH or Teshekpuk Caribou Herd (TCH).
- Methodology
 - 2011 – plotted movements of all satellite-collared WAH caribou that approached within 30 mi of the Red Dog road between 7/31/2011-12/31/2011.
 - 2011 – also plotted movements of movement patterns for 17 caribou that migrated south/southwest through the middle Noatak drainage (east of the Red Dog) for comparison.
 - 2012 – plotted movements of six collared caribou that came within 30 mi of the Red Dog road (of the 64 satellite-collared WAH caribou).
- PowerPoint presentation included slides showing three periods of movement for each of the collared caribou that came within 30 mi of the Red Dog road. The plotted line showed each caribou's movement: (1) as it approached the road (fall migration), (2) after it

changed its direction of travel but before crossing the road, and (3) after it crossed the road up to the time it stopped its fall migration. Measured nearest straight-line distance to road from point where it changed its direction of travel.

- Fall 2011 information:
 - 21 of 74 collared caribou (28%), all cows, came within ~30 mi of Red Dog road during Aug-Dec 2011
 - 18 of 21 cows (86%) noticeably changed their speed and/or direction of travel in vicinity of road
 - Four collared cows did not cross the road – all died during winter 2011-2012
 - Average distance from the road when they changed their direction was 18 miles (range 2-30 miles)
 - Average number of days from when they changed direction to when they crossed the road was 44 days (range 16-84 days)
 - The average speed of caribou was about the same as they approached the road and after they changed their direction of travel (~6 mi/day)
 - The average speed of caribou almost doubled to 11 mi/day after they crossed the road until they reached their wintering area.
 - 16 of the 19 caribou that passed within 30 mi North of the Red Dog road eventually crossed it; two caribou that approached from the East did not cross (may have reacted to hunters)
 - None of the collared caribou that moved through the middle Noatak drainage East of Red Dog reversed their movements, as did those caribou that moved by the Red Dog road during Fall 2011.
- Summary points:
 - In some years, most WAH caribou that came near Red Dog crossed the road with little difficulty; in other years, many changed their direction of travel as they approached the road during summer and during fall.
 - Most WAH caribou that migrated near Red Dog during fall eventually crossed the road or walked around it even if they had difficulty doing so.
 - Fall movements near Red Dog in 2011 suggest that the behavior of caribou at the front of a migration affects the caribou coming along behind them – This is consistent with Traditional Knowledge.
 - The behavior of ‘lead’ caribou probably affects the distance at which caribou behind them change their travel as they approach the road: the leaders may react to the road while the followers react to the leaders.
 - There can be costs to not completing a migration: all four of the caribou that did not cross the Red Dog road in fall 2011 died.
 - Just because caribou crossed the road and survived does not mean there was no consequences for them or for people. Some caribou walked hundreds of miles while trying to cross the road – we’re trying to determine whether this affected the mortality rate or subsequent calf production. Hunters from Noatak, Kotzebue and surrounding camps had almost no caribou accessible to them until late October when bulls were in rut: they harvested mainly cows (poorer quality meat & greater pop. impact). Caribou that doubled their rate of travel after crossing the road were available to hunters during only a short window of time as they sped south.
 - All roads are not the same. The Red Dog road is an industrial road with roughly 40 round trips per day. Drivers typically stop when caribou are nearing the road. There

is almost no hunting from this road. The effects of the proposed road to Ambler on caribou, other wildlife and people will be strongly affected by whether it is opened to the public, and whether it stops at Bornite or extends to a deepwater port on the Chukchi or Bering Sea.

- This presentation did not deal with the potential effects of new roads on people – user conflicts, increased harvest levels, changes in seasons & bag limits, etc.
- Alaska has decades of experience that clearly shows caribou can co-exist with roads, and roads benefit Alaskans in many ways (jobs, transportation costs, etc.). But, like anything, roads also come with costs, and it's important to understand both benefits and costs before committing to any large new development project.

The following points were made in Working Group discussion:

- Q: Is there anything that can be done to reduce impacts to caribou migration? A: The Red Dog mine activity involves approximately 40 round trips per day on the road. Uncertain whether reducing the number of trips during migration might reduce the effect. In discussions, Red Dog has given strong indications that they would want to do what is feasible to avoid impacts.
- Q: How has caribou population changed since road built? A: Red Dog went into production in 1988. The WAH increased steadily in the 1980's and 1990's, indicating that the herd was able to grow even with the mine and road operating.
- Q: Would effect be caused by the road itself or the activities on it? Is there data that would help answer this question? A: Uncertain. The activity is fairly constant at 40 trips/year; some years there is some hunting off of the road, very small number of four-wheelers going inland from the coast.

3.7 Roads to Resources

Personnel from the State of Alaska provided information about the State project evaluating potential transportation corridors serving the Ambler Mining District, located in GMU 23. Presenters included Alaska Industrial Development and Economic Authority (AIDEA) personnel Mark Davis, Deputy Director of Infrastructure Development, and Mike Catsi, Business Development Officer, joined by John Moller, Governor Sean Parnell's Special Assistant for Rural Affairs, and Marie Steele, Large Project Coordinator for DNR's Office of Project Management and Permitting. The PowerPoint presentation can be viewed on the Unit 23 Working Group's project website.

John Moller noted that it is a priority of the Governor to grow Alaska's economy and strengthen its families. One approach to achieve this is through construction of infrastructure to spur economic growth, such as Roads to Resources. The State is cognizant of local concerns that new roads may increase public access and may increase pressure on resources that local people depend upon. There is, however, also support for reducing the costs of living in rural Alaska and in addressing the outmigration of the rural population from the villages.

Mark Davis and Mike Catsi provided an overview of AIDEA. Created in 1967, the agency's mission is "to promote, develop, and advance economic growth and diversification in Alaska by providing various means of financing and investment." It fulfills its mission by providing Alaska businesses, projects and infrastructure with access to long-term commercial and development financing at a reasonable cost through its strong balance sheet and credit rating. More information about AIDEA can be found at www.aidea.org or at 907-771-3000.

AIDEA has responsibility for progress on the Ambler Access Project. The project purpose is to evaluate potential transportation corridors serving the Ambler Mining District for the purpose of providing all season access for exploration and development of the mineral resources within the district. AIDEA will seek to develop the road through a Public-Private Partnership, partnering with an expert in construction and mitigation of industrial roads. Public needs that would be addressed by the project include access to remote mineral deposits, economic development and diversification, increased employment and workforce development opportunities, increased tax base and public services, and decreased cost of living.

Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Process – There is not yet a preferred route or design for the project. The EIS will evaluate several feasible alternatives, including a No Action alternative. The EIS process will be managed and a final decision made about the route by the lead federal agency working on the project, likely the US Army Corps of Engineers. There is no federal funding for the project, but the EIS is tied to the need for federal permits for its development.

Public Outreach – The State of Alaska has conducted public outreach over the past year, and outreach will continue. Community comments heard to date include the need for more opportunities for lower cost of living and jobs, concerns about potential impacts to cultural resources, the importance of maintaining subsistence lifestyle and cultural values in the future, the importance of sheefish and caribou, and concern about who will be allowed road access and what types of uses will be allowed on the road. AIDEA is now aware that the Unit 23 Working Group sent a letter to the Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities (ADOT&PF) in July 2012 regarding the Ambler Access Road, and will respond to that letter in the future.

Controlled Access is Planned – The road is planned to be an industrial road owned and operated by a private entity for the purpose of resource development in the Ambler Mining District. AIDEA understands the Unit 23 Working Group's and WACH Working Group's comments on this point. Access alternatives will be evaluated during the EIS process. Access may be controlled through an ownership agreement with parties to the project. There may be provisions in the contract to allow for additional road users on a limited use permit basis. The road, as planned, will not be permanently connected with villages. (Mark Davis noted that this road would differ from the Dalton Highway, which was eventually opened to public use because there was a public right-of-way and it was within the purview of the ADOT&PF to open or close. There would be no public right-of-way for this industrial road.)

Local Hire – One of AIDEA's directives is to alleviate unemployment. Increasing employment in the region will be a key tenet of any agreement with a partner in this project.

The following points were made during Working Group discussion and questions asked of AIDEA:

- Q: Would the road stop at the Ambler Mining District, or continue west to a deep water port? A: Under the EIS, a scope for the project would be set. If AIDEA continues to be the lead, the scope of the project will just be to the mining district, not farther west.
- Q: Concern that some gravel sources in the region have asbestos in them. Concerns about asbestos pollution in surface run-off impacting water quality and hurting fish. How will this be avoided? A: Looking at using a process that will reduce gravel use by 2/3. Also will encapsulate the roadbed to address asbestos. This issue will be addressed in the EIS process.
- Q: What is the project timeline? A: Baseline work will continue in 2013. Expect the EIS process to take 20-27 months.

- Q: Is the EIS only about the road? What about associated impacts from the mine development? A: The lead federal agency would determine the scope of the EIS evaluation, and whether associated impacts from the development served would be addressed.
- Q: Is local government concurrence required for the project to go forward? A: Yes, AIDEA would be required to obtain a Resolution in support of the project from the NWAB.

4.0 Future of Unit 23 Working Group

The Unit 23 Working Group decided it would like to meet again in the spring of 2014 in Kotzebue, if funding can be found to continue the group. The group sees value in continuing communication and updates, to support progress on the recommendations it has made to date and to be ready to respond if there is an increase in conflict in the future. In addition, the group provides an important avenue for in-region communication regarding changes in the herd's population and for proposed developments that may affect hunting or access, such as Roads to Resources projects.

It was noted that the Board of Game will be meeting in Kotzebue in January 2014.

5.0 Public / Other Agency Comments

Comments were welcomed from people attending the meeting in Kotzebue, as well as through a toll-free telephone line. The following points were made during the comment period.

Enoch Shiedt (Attamuk), Kotzebue

- Concerned that hunters being dropped off miles north of the rivers are causing change in migration.
- We are caribou people, so this is a big concern. Moose are also declining.
- After we get our caribou for the year, guides and transporters are welcome.

Marlene Moto, Deering

- Question about proposal to not be able to use lead sinkers for fishing. (Carmen Daggett, ADF&G Board staff, responded that there had been a proposal to the Board of Fisheries to ban the use of lead sinkers of less than one ounce in freshwater and saltwater, but this did was not passed.)
- On the Red Dog Road, should have someone monitor caribou movements near the road and close it to vehicle use as necessary to let the caribou cross the road. (In response, it was noted that there always has been a caribou monitoring program on the road since mine operations started and the road is closed as necessary to let the caribou pass. Jim Dau also noted that agencies are looking more intensively at the interaction of caribou and roads.)
- Question about whether people who have State or federal hunting infractions able to continue hunting?
- More education is needed regarding meat waste.
- Question about whether hunting guides are allowed in the Deering area and the Northern Seward Peninsula. Concern that guiding is going on "under the table" without proper permits. (In response, Jim Dau noted that there is just one registered guide in operating in

the N Seward Peninsula and they don't operate near Deering. Noted that guides operating without approvals seldom seen, but would be prosecuted if it happened. State Troopers would encourage people to notify them if this was observed. This would typically be a Class A misdemeanor with a maximum penalty of one year in prison and \$10,000 fine per violation.)

- Pebble Mine issues are of concern to her, because of concern with mining in her area.
- More and more boats are visible near Deering in August. Some are from Red Dog mine project. Would like to see a buffer for ships anchoring off of Deering.
- Important that people have a license for sport hunting and sport fishing.
- Important that the Borough, IRA and agencies work closely with NANA Village Trespass program.

Darlene Snyder, Kotzebue

- People in villages see sport hunters come and go. They drop off meat that they don't want to take out. The guides should be held accountable if there is wasted meat and their license should be pulled.
- Non-local hunters harass animals and disturb local hunters trying to get animals by boat.
- Guides must be responsible for behavior of the people they bring here.

Colleen Swan, Kivalina

- Concerned that during fishing season, guides have been dropping people for fishing on the Wulik River all the way up to the forks.
- Concerned that some local residents are losing their license to hunt or fish because they left their meat up there to go pick-up later.
- Concerned that "guides act like they own the lands they are working on".
- Emphasized the importance of the NANA Trespass program hiring from within the villages. (In response, Ron Moto, Sr. recommended that she call NANA Purcell Security to discuss this.)
- Mentioned that guides should also donate bones to communities to use in soup, as well as meat.

Working Group Discussion – In response to public comments, the Working Group discussed the following:

Meat Care

- Jim Dau noted that there has been much improvement in meat salvage due to education ("Hunt Legal, Hunt Smart" pamphlet, meat care poster) and the emphasis being put on this by guides and transporters. In his experience, guides are very willing to donate bones, hides, skin, organs – villages need to build relationships with local guides and transporters and let them know what they would like to receive.
- Phil Driver noted that it's good to share what meat you take. There used to be more occurrences of meat being wasted and put in the dump. Important that 100% of caribou meat be taken out by the client or shared with the village.
- Joe Schuster noted that things have gotten better in terms of meat care. Responsible guides and transporters in the unit have taken steps to donate meat that clients do not plan

to take out. Agrees that the guides and transporters need to be responsible for the meat and where it goes.

- It is particularly important to educate transporters and guides that are new to the area. (Meat care is addressed in the required pilot orientation unit and test.)
- Julie Owen agreed that transporters and guides need to emphasize meat care and make sure it is handled responsibly. Her business has a list of local residents who want to receive meat when it is available.
- Joe Schuster explained that in Galena, primarily moose is taken so there is more meat to deal with. In the past, there were no facilities to take care of the meat. As a guide, he made a connection with the culinary arts program at the Galena boarding school and donates all meat there. There is a great kitchen and students learn how to care for and cook game meat. Processed meat is distributed within the community. He would encourage this approach in Unit 23.
- Pete Schaeffer indicated that he received meat from Jared Cummings at Golden Eagle and found it to be very good quality.

Wulik and Kivalina Rivers – The Working Group discussed the public comments that were made at the meeting, and to Working Group members on other occasions, about the potential for user conflicts on the Wulik and Kivalina Rivers near Kivalina. It was noted that the area was small enough and the number of guides and transporters operating in the area few enough that it should be possible to communicate with them about the concerns, urge them to be aware of ways to avoid conflicts, and ask them to educate their clients as well. This type of solution is preferred to a regulatory approach. However, it will be important to see if communication and education is sufficient to influence the behaviors of commercial service providers and visiting hunters, and to reduce the occurrence of and the risk of user conflicts.

ACTION – The Working Group identified a subgroup to draft a letter to guides and transporters operating in the Wulik River area regarding the importance of taking steps to avoid user conflicts and also educating their clients. The final letter will be sent from the full Working Group.

Assignment: Subgroup members include: Enoch Mitchell, Alex Whiting, Jim Dau, Julie Owen, and Phil Driver. Shelly Jacobson and Valerie Baxter will provide a list of businesses that should receive the letter.

**Unit 23 Working Group Membership
& Attendance
May 8-9, 2013 Meeting**

Name	Affiliations
Lee Anne Ayres	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Jim Dau	Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Phil Driver	Alaska Professional Hunting Association Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group
Cyrus Harris	Maniilaq Association Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group
Frank Hays	National Park Service
Stosh Hoffman	Board of Game
Shelly Jacobson	Bureau of Land Management
Victor Karmun	Northwest Arctic Regional Advisory Council Kotzebue Sound Advisory Committee
Melvin Lee (unable to attend)	Upper Kobuk Advisory Committee
Valerie Baxter	Alaska Department of Natural Resources
Enoch Mitchell	Noatak/Kivalina Advisory Committee
Ron Moto, Sr.	North Seward Peninsula Advisory Committee
Noah Naylor	Northwest Arctic Borough
Julie Owen	Transporter representative
Pete Schaeffer	Kotzebue Sound Advisory Council
Joe Schuster	Alaska Professional Hunting Association
Ted Spraker	Alaska Board of Game
Raymond Stoney	Northwest Arctic Regional Advisory Council Lower Kobuk Advisory Committee
Tim Towarak (unable to attend)	Federal Subsistence Board
Alex Whiting	Kotzebue IRA

Public & Agency Attendance List
 Unit 23 Working Group Meeting
 May 8-9, 2013 – Kotzebue, Alaska

Name	Affiliation
Ken Acton	Alaska Wildlife Troopers
Levi Angutiqjuaq	public
Rose Barr	NANA Corporation, Inc.
Mike Catsi	AIDEA
Carmen Daggett	Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Lantz Dahlke	Alaska Wildlife Troopers
Mark Davis	AIDEA
John Erlich, Sr.	Bureau of Land Management
Susan Georgette	US Fish and Wildlife Service
Charlie Gregg	Northwest Arctic Borough
Gabriela Halas	Univ. of Alaska Fairbanks
The Honorable Reggie Joule	Mayor, Northwest Arctic Borough
Jim Kincaid	Northwest Aviation
Gary Kofinas (teleconference)	Univ. of Alaska Fairbanks
Steve Machida	Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Justin McGinnis	Alaska Wildlife Troopers
Seth McMillan	Bureau of Land Management, Enforcement
John Moller	Alaska Governor's Office
Tina Moran	US Fish and Wildlife Service
Meghan Nedwick	Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Anne Orlando	US Fish and Wildlife Service
Walter Sampson	NANA Corporation, Inc.
Enoch Shiedt, Sr.	Maniilaq Association
Marie Steele	DNR, Office of Project Management and Permitting
Lee Strout (teleconference)	Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development
Brittany Sweeney	US Fish and Wildlife Service
Doug Vincent Lang	Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Charlotte Westing	Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Public comments presented by:

Marlene Moto, Deering
 Enoch Shiedt, Kotzebue
 Darlene Snyder, Kotzebue
 Colleen Swan, Kivalina

Unit 23 Working Group May 8-9, 2013

Northwest Arctic Borough Assembly Chambers
163 Lagoon Street, Kotzebue, Alaska

Wednesday, May 8
3:00 – 6:00 p.m.

Thursday, May 9
9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

**Public radio station KOTZ will broadcast the meeting on
Wednesday, May 8, 3:00-6:00 pm and Thursday, May 9, 9:00 am-4:00 pm
Tune to 89.9 FM or AM 720, or listen via the web at www.kotz.org**

AGENDA

Meeting Topics

- Update on Western Arctic Herd population and harvest data
- Discuss 2012 hunting season & preparation for 2013 season
- Update on State and federal management, planning and enforcement related to reducing hunting conflicts in Game Management Unit 23
- Presentation regarding proposed Roads to Resource projects
- Public comment session – By phone or at Assembly Chambers
Thursday, May 9, 1:15 – 2:00 p.m.
- Discussion of additional topics raised by Working Group members

Wednesday, May 8

Coffee/Refreshments

Note that Wednesday, 3:00-6:00 pm, the meeting will be broadcast on KOTZ and online at www.kotz.org

3:00 p.m. Welcome, Introductions – Review Agenda / Revise if necessary

- List of Unit 23 Working Group members (*Attachment 1*)
- Status of recommendations made by the Working Group at past meetings (*Attachment 2*)
- Reminder of Board of Game schedule for Arctic/Western Region
– Board meeting January 10-13, 2014 in Kotzebue

3:20 p.m. 2012 Hunting Season & Data

- Caribou population data and 2012 harvest data
Jim Dau, Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G)
- Working Group comments/discussion regarding 2012 hunting season and preparation for 2013

4:30 p.m. Break

4:45 p.m. Communication, Coordination & Enforcement

- Enforcement report to Alaska State Legislature from the Alaska Department of Commerce and Economic Development (DCCED): report prepared by investigator who gathered information about transporter conduct in Unit 23 in 2012 (*Attachment 3*)
Lee Strout, DCCED
- Enforcement coordination between National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Alaska State Troopers, NANA Village Trespass
Dan Stevenson, National Park Service
- Working group comments/discussion regarding communication and enforcement

5:30 p.m. Update on State of Alaska Guide Concession Program

Valerie Baxter, Alaska Dept. of Natural Resources (DNR)

6:00 p.m. Adjourn for the day

Thursday, May 9

Coffee/Refreshments

Note that Thursday, 9:00 am – 4:00 pm, the meeting will be broadcast on KOTZ and online at www.kotz.org

9:00 a.m. Welcome / Agenda Review / Announcements

- 9:05 a.m. Education Update** – Update on pilot education requirement (regulation in effect 2010-2012 hunting seasons), youth education, hunter education, *Caribou Trails*
Meghan Nedwick, ADF&G

9:30 a.m. Update on State & Federal Management, Planning & Permitting – Agency presentations and Working Group discussion

- Squirrel River Management Plan
Shelly Jacobson, Bureau of Land Management
- Selawik National Wildlife Refuge
Lee Anne Ayres, US Fish and Wildlife Service

10:20 a.m. Break

10:40 a.m. Continue State & Federal Agency Update

- Noatak National Preserve
Frank Hays, National Park Service
- Noatak Caribou Traditional Knowledge Project
Gabriela Halas and Gary Kofinas, University of Alaska
Fairbanks
- Working Group comments / discussion related to State and Federal management updates

12:00 p.m. Lunch

1:15 p.m. Public Comment Opportunity regarding user conflicts related to hunting in Game Management Unit 23 – Telephone Call-In & In-person Comments

Comments by phone, dial 1-800-315-6338, enter code 2323#

To participate in Kotzebue, please come to the NWAB Assembly Chambers. Time per comment may be limited, to ensure opportunity for those who want to speak.

2:00 p.m. Western Arctic Caribou Herd movements near roads

Jim Dau, ADF&G

2:45 p.m. Break

3:00 p.m. Roads to Resources

- Presentation by the Alaska Industrial Development and Energy Authority (AIDEA) regarding proposed Roads to Resources projects in the region, at the request of the Working Group.

Mark Davis and Mike Catsi, AIDEA

John Moller, Office of the Governor

Marie Steele, DNR, Office of Project Management and Permitting

- Working Group questions and discussion regarding Roads to Resources.

(Attachment 4 is July 2012 letter from Unit 23 Working Group to Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities)

4:15 p.m. Final Discussion Items / Wrap-up

5:00 p.m. Adjourn

Additional information about the Unit 23 Working Group can be found at the project web site:

<http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=wildlifepanning.unit23>

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Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development

**BIG GAME COMMERCIAL SERVICES BOARD
GMU 23 Working Group**

**Investigation and Enforcement Services
Report**



February 2013

Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing
Big Game Commercial Services Board

www.commerce.alaska.gov/ooc/pgui.htm

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Wildlife Resource Management in Alaska is accomplished through the cooperative efforts of Alaska's Departments of Commerce, Community and Economic Development (DCCED), Fish and Game, and Public Safety. Collaboration between these state departments, as well as with federal wildlife management agencies and other stakeholders, is an important part of the stewardship of Alaska's wildlife.

The Big Game Commercial Services Board (Board), administered through DCCED, regulates and licenses the big game commercial service industry in Alaska. The Board also enforces its regulations through investigative and possible disciplinary action against commercial operator licensees who violate licensing laws.

The Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing (Division) monitors compliance with Board regulations through investigative and enforcement efforts conducted by an investigative unit. One permanent investigator assigned to the Board is responsible for investigation and enforcement efforts within Alaska's 26 game management units (GMUs).

In 2008, the Board was invited to participate in a 21-member¹ working group established to address hunting game management concerns in the area encompassing Kotzebue Sound and the Chukchi Sea, known as Game Management Unit 23 (GMU 23)². These concerns centered around the conduct of commercial operators such as Big Game Guides, Transporters and Air Taxis and their involvement in the wasting of game meat, unlicensed activities, and remaining in the field with their clients.

The assigned Investigator traveled into GMU 23 to conduct interviews, camp inspections, field contacts, ramp checks, and other professional licensing investigative activities on these commercial operators in 2010, 2011 and 2012. The Division also hired a seasonal Investigator to assist with investigation, enforcement, and reporting of possible violations of statutes and regulations jurisdictional to the Big Game Commercial Services Board during these same years.

¹ See Appendix A, GMU 23 Working Group

² See Appendix B, GMU 23 Map

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OBJECTIVES

1. Conduct field inspections within GMU 23 to verify licensees' compliance with statutes and regulations jurisdictional to the Big Game Commercial Services Board.
2. Interview hunters to determine if any transporter violations, game animal waste, or any other illegal activity had occurred during their hunt as well as review the quality of their hunting experience in Alaska.
3. Investigate, enforce, and report any violation of statutes and regulations jurisdictional to the Big Game Commercial Services Board.
4. Coordinate with state and federal wildlife management agencies and regional organizations to investigate possible big game hunting permit violations for commercial operations on public lands.

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RESULTS

OBJECTIVE 1: Conduct field inspections within GMU 23 to verify licensees' compliance with statutes and regulations jurisdictional to the Big Game Commercial Services Board.

- The Division investigator traveled within GMU 23 during the peak of the 2012 caribou hunting season. During that time, he met with transporters, air taxi operators, and guides to verify they were correctly licensed and in compliance with big game hunting laws. The investigative and enforcement results of his field inspections are discussed below.
 - While in the field, the investigator observed or uncovered minor violations involving both transporters and guides. These were violations that could be easily corrected on site, such as hunt records being incomplete, or a camp that was not being kept up to the Department of Natural Resources or Bureau of Land Management requirements. The violations were corrected by the licensees, and no further action was necessary.
 - The Investigator assisted several Guides/Transporters in interpreting/clarifying statute/regulation intent. To include but not limited to, *AS 08.54.720(a)(17)(B)* Guide's Harvest of Big Game with clients in the field and *AS 08.54.720(a)(15)* Waste of a Wild Food Animal.
 - It was noted that two of the larger Transporter Outfits at the Kotzebue Airport have added meat processing tents and equipment for their client's use; this was directly in response to several questions/complaints raised by clients during 2011 contacts with the Division Investigator concerning the lack of meat processing facilities in the area.

OBJECTIVE 2: Interview hunters to determine if any transporter violations, game animal waste, or any other illegal activity had occurred during their hunt as well as review the quality of their hunting experience in Alaska.

- The Division investigator interviewed approximately 24 hunters at various locations at which hunters gather. The interviews were conducted at hunters' camps, the Kotzebue airport, restaurants, hotels, and on the street.
- Hunters were asked about methods used to get to and from the field, whether they were bringing in the required harvested meat, and concerns or issues that may have arisen during the hunt. Most were pleased with the services they were receiving, except for one transported party of non-resident caribou hunters who complained of the excessive amount of brown bears in the area of their camp. This party was subsequently relocated by their Transporter.

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- Statute and Regulations interpretation and intent were discussed in these contacts.

OBJECTIVE 3: Investigate, enforce, and report any violation of statutes and regulations jurisdictional to the Big Game Commercial Service Board.

- The investigator's efforts were hampered by the inability to obtain unescorted access to the aircraft ramp where a majority of the transporter and air taxi activity takes place.
- A transporter was investigated for his involvement/knowledge in the possible harvest of a sublegal moose by his clients. The case was referred to Department of Public Safety and the transporter's culpability was ruled out.
- A transporter was investigated for his involvement/knowledge in the wanton waste of a caribou harvested by his clients. The case was referred to Department of Public Safety and the transporter's culpability was ruled out.
- An investigation was initiated into a transporter crossing the line between his transporter business and his guiding operation. The case remains open, and a license action is anticipated.

OBJECTIVE 4: Coordinate with state and federal wildlife management agencies and regional organizations to investigate possible big game hunting permit violations for commercial operations on public lands.

- The Division investigator traveled with the Alaska Wildlife Troopers to check field camps of operators within GMU 23. He spent four days on patrol with Alaska Wildlife Troopers.
- A flight patrol was coordinated with the U.S. Bureau of Land Management personnel to investigate trespass issues by operators registered with the State of Alaska verifying the proper use of eight permitted camps by licensed guides.
- The investigator assisted with enforcement efforts between Alaska Wildlife Troopers, US Fish and Wildlife and a Guide who complained of two clients that were being harassed by a local hunter.
- The investigator met with representatives from the State of Alaska Wildlife Enforcement, State of Alaska Fish and Game, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Bureau of Land Management, The Northwest Arctic Borough, and the NANA Regional Corporation on investigations and issues of concern over unlicensed guiding activities were discussed. The general consensus was the investigator's presence has decreased the concerns of wanton waste issues by licensed guides and transporters and continued presence during peak activity time is desired.

DRAFT

DRAFT**SUMMARY**

The Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing investigator traveled to the Kotzebue area to investigate concerns of wanton waste and the level of illegal and/or unlicensed activity in GMU 23 jurisdictional to The Big Game Commercial Service Board. Approximately 24 hunters were surveyed to determine what methods were being used to get to and from the field. The investigator also looked into how hunters were harvesting their game animals. Field inspections of transporters and guides were conducted to ensure compliance with hunting laws and minor violations were corrected in the field. Serious violations have been or will be brought before the Big Game Commercial Services Board.

DRAFT

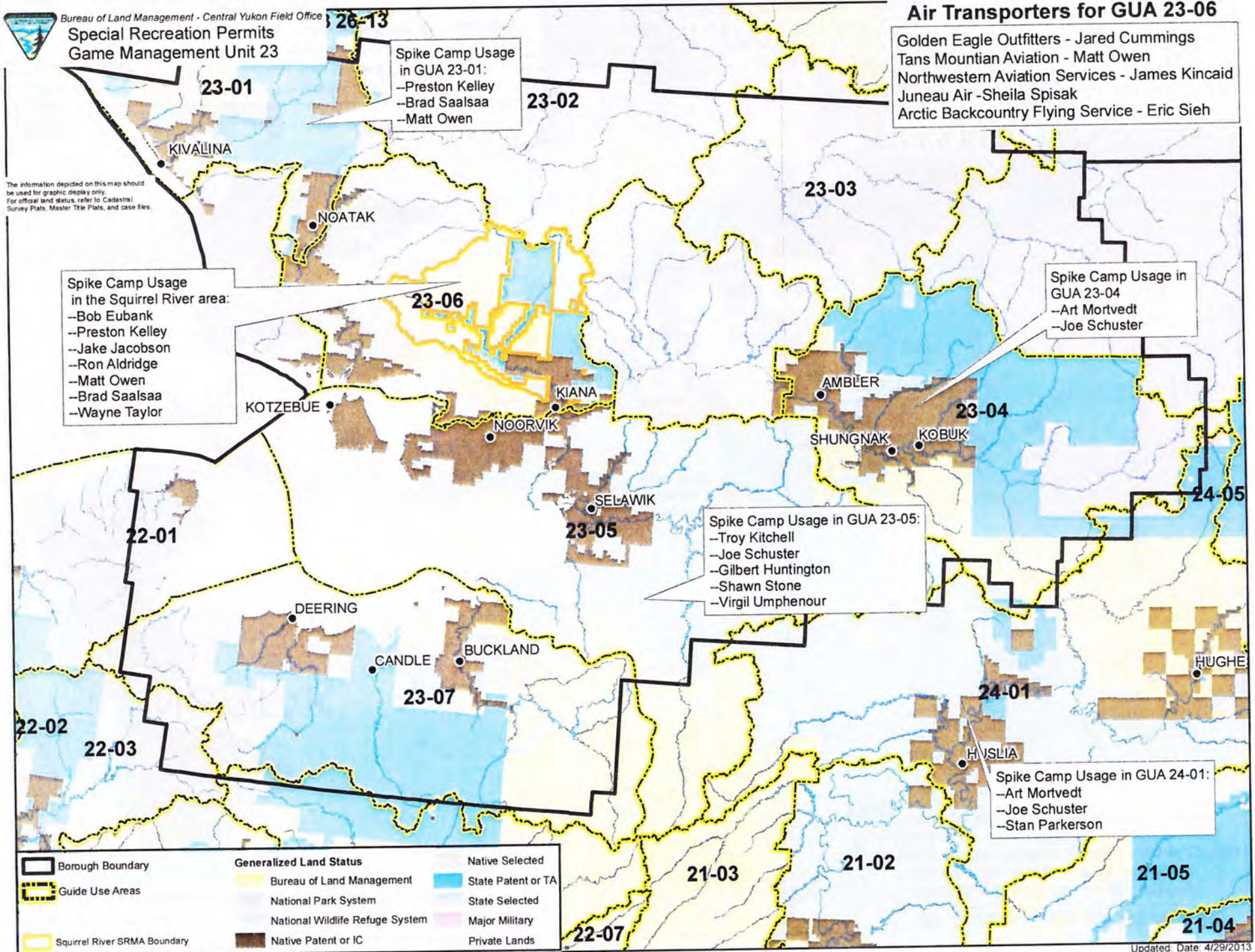


Bureau of Land Management - Central Yukon Field Office
 Special Recreation Permits
 Game Management Unit 23

Air Transporters for GUA 23-06

Golden Eagle Outfitters - Jared Cummings
 Tans Mountain Aviation - Matt Owen
 Northwestern Aviation Services - James Kincaid
 Juneau Air - Sheila Spisak
 Arctic Backcountry Flying Service - Eric Sieh

The information depicted on this map should be used for graphic display only. For official land status, refer to Cadastral Survey Plans, Master Title Plans, and case files.



	Generalized Land Status	

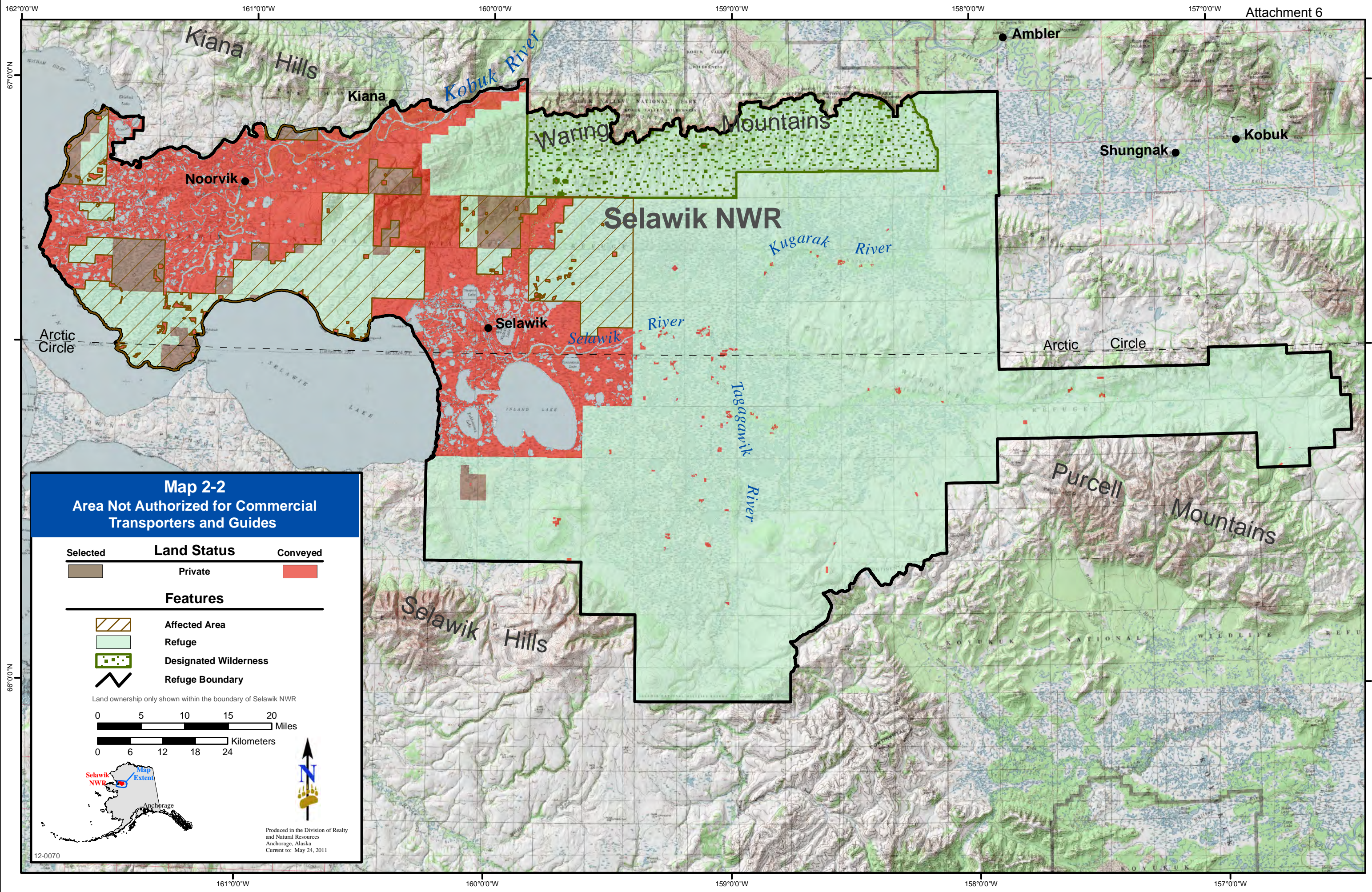
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- Golden Eagle Outfitters - Jared Cummings
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The information depicted on this map should be used for graphic display only. For official land status, refer to Cadastral Survey Plats, Master Title Plats, and case files.

Borough Boundary	Generalized Land Status	Native Selected
Guide Use Areas	Bureau of Land Management	State Patent or TA
Camp Locations within Squirrel River Area	National Park System	State Selected
Squirrel River SRMA Boundary	National Wildlife Refuge System	Major Military
	Native Patent or IC	Private Lands



Map 2-2
Area Not Authorized for Commercial Transporters and Guides

Selected	Land Status	Conveyed
	Private	

Features	
	Affected Area
	Refuge
	Designated Wilderness
	Refuge Boundary

Land ownership only shown within the boundary of Selawik NWR

0 5 10 15 20 Miles
 0 6 12 18 24 Kilometers

Produced in the Division of Realty and Natural Resources
 Anchorage, Alaska
 Current to: May 24, 2011

12-0070



The Noatak Caribou Traditional Knowledge Project UAF-NPS-Noatak Research Partnership

Study Objectives

- To document local and traditional knowledge on caribou, caribou hunting, hunting conflicts

Focus of Study

- Caribou migration and behavior
- Threats to caribou and threats to hunting
- Hunting practices
- Changes in hunting
- User conflicts
- Effectiveness of caribou management system
- Suggestions for improvement

Larger study

- Part of larger study with 3 parts
 - Sport hunters, soundscapes, caribou use of landscapes

How?

- Work with village council and local project steering committee
- Hire local assistant
- Survey interview of all caribou hunters of Noatak (this fall)
- Interview Caribou “experts” with maps (this fall)

Who?

- Gabriela Halas, UAF graduate student
 - ghalas@alaska.edu / 907-699-0612
- Gary Kofinas – UAF faculty / project leader
 - gary.kofinas@alaska.edu / 907-474-7078
- Noatak Tribal Council
- National Park Service
 - Kyle Joly and Frank Hays

Products

- Community report
- Technical report (Gabriela’s thesis)
- Published papers