

**Unit 23 Working Group Meeting
April 23-24, 2008 – Kotzebue, Alaska
Meeting Summary**

Contents	<u>Page</u>
1.0 Introduction.....	1
2.0 Consensus Agreements, Next Steps & Assignments.....	2
3.0 Working Group Discussion.....	5
4.0 Public Comments.....	8

Attachments

1 Unit 23 Working Group Charter.....	12
2 Public & Agency Attendance List.....	17
3 April 23-24, 2008, Agenda.....	18
4 Summary of Working Group Roundtable Presentations & Discussion.....	21
5 Unit 23: Fall Hunting Conflicts Timeline.....	25

1.0 Introduction

The Unit 23 Working Group met for the first time on April 23-24, 2008, in Kotzebue, Alaska. The group was formed to discuss fall hunting conflicts between local hunters, non-local hunters and commercial operators (e.g., hunting guides, transporters) in Game Management Unit (GMU) 23, in northwest Alaska.¹ The group intends to work together to develop solutions to fall hunting conflicts that will be sent as advisory recommendations to regulatory boards, land and wildlife management agencies, and others to evaluate and consider for implementation.

The group may meet together over the next two to three years, but also feels the urgency to address conflicts as soon as possible. The group expects to meet several times between October 2008 and April 2009, with the intent of making substantial progress before the fall 2009 hunting season.

The 21-member group includes representatives from regional and tribal governments and organizations; land and wildlife management agencies; Fish and Game Advisory Committees and the Northwest Arctic Subsistence Regional Advisory Council; the Big Game Commercial Services Board and Alaska Professional Hunters Association; NANA Corporation; and the Board of Game and Federal Subsistence Board. Members are listed in the Working Group’s Charter (Attachment 1). Jan Caulfield of Sheinberg Associates facilitated the meeting,² assisted by Mark Burch and Marian Snively of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G).

¹ See ADF&G report “*Fall Hunting in Game Management Unit 23: Assessment of Issues and Proposal for a Planning Process*,” Cynthia Jacobson, ADF&G Division of Wildlife Conservation, February 2008

² Jan Caulfield, Sheinberg Associates, 204 N. Franklin St., Ste. 1, Juneau, AK 99801, 907-586-3141, janc@gci.net

The objectives of the April meeting were to:

- Share information / updates – current situation, coming opportunities
- Tasks to get done:
 - Approve draft Charter (group membership, goal, objectives, communication ground rules)
 - Approve draft public communication approaches
 - Set future meeting schedule
- Identify and order the issues the group wants to address, begin issue discussion & prepare for future work
- Provide public comment opportunities

Section 2.0 of this meeting summary presents six consensus agreements reached by the Working Group at the April 23-24 meeting, including follow-up tasks and assignments. Section 3.0 provides a general summary of topics discussed. Section 4.0 Public comments presented at the meeting are summarized in Section 4.0.

All Unit 23 Working Group meetings are open to the public. The April meeting was broadcast on public radio station KOTZ, beginning at 11:00 a.m. on April 23. Members of the public and agency staff who attended and signed-in are listed in Attachment 2.

2.0 Consensus Agreements, Next Steps and Assignments

The Unit 23 Working Group felt that it was important to take steps to improve the situation in the fall 2008 season, to the extent possible in this first meeting. It will take more time and in-depth discussion to address many issues related to fall hunting conflicts in Unit 23. However, on April 24, the Working Group reached *consensus agreement* on the following six items:

2.1 Adopted Unit 23 Working Group Charter

The Working Group adopted a Charter with the mission to “preserve the Inupiaq values of the region, their hunting, heritage and ability to take caribou needed, as unrestricted as possible, while providing a reasonable opportunity for resident personal use and non-resident harvest.” The approved Charter lists goals, objectives, group membership, decision-making process and ground rules (Attachment 1).

2.2 Petition the Board of Game with an Emergency Regulation Package

The Working Group agreed to submit a proposal to the Alaska Board of Game that would:

- Shift the dates of the closure to the use of aircraft for big game hunting in the Noatak Controlled Use Area (CUA) to September 9-30 (from the current dates of August 25-September 15); and
- Increase the non-Alaska-resident caribou bag limit to two caribou per year (up from one per year) in areas far from important subsistence hunting areas.

Shifting the dates of the Noatak CUA to the last three weeks of September responds to the general delay in the dates of the caribou migration (compared to when the current CUA dates were set in 1994-95). The proposed change in the nonresident caribou bag limit is intended to attract these hunters to areas less intensively hunted for subsistence, and avoid simply shifting nonresident hunting (and related conflicts) from the Noatak CUA into other important subsistence hunting areas.

If adopted through the Board of Game's emergency regulation procedure, the regulations could take effect in advance of the 2008-2009 hunting season. If the Board is not able to consider the petition as an emergency or declines the petition, the Unit 23 Working Group will discuss the proposed changes again at a future meeting, and submit a proposal for Board of Game consideration at the March 2009 meeting in Anchorage (through an agenda change process).

Subgroup Assignment: Jim Dau (lead), Pete Schaeffer, Enoch Mitchell and Kerry Cope will draft the emergency petition language. They will share a draft with the full Working Group for comment by mid-May.

(UPDATE in final meeting summary: The Board of Game will consider a proposal at a meeting on July 2, 2008, not through emergency regulatory procedures.)

2.3 Letter to Guides/Transporters – Voluntary Measures to Reduce Conflicts in 2008

The Working Group agreed to send a letter to all guides and transporters working in Unit 23, recommending voluntary measures to reduce hunting conflicts in fall 2008. The following ideas were offered by the Working Group, and will be considered (among others) by the subgroup who volunteered to draft the letter:

- Maintain distance between hunting camps (five miles recommended).
- Observe minimum flight altitudes in high use hunting areas (e.g., 500' elevation when ceiling allows).
- Avoid placing clients in important local subsistence use areas.
- Advise clients to not camp at locations where caribou cross rivers during migration.
- Place hunters on the south side of major rivers (to avoid displacing or impacting caribou river crossings).
- Provide and review "Hunting Legal-Hunting Smart" and other educational materials with clients.
- Work with clients to make a plan for their meat (e.g., meat care, shipping, donation).

Subgroup Assignment: Joe Schuster (lead), Lee Anne Ayres, George Helfrich, Enoch Mitchell, Charlie Gregg and Charlotte Westing (ADF&G Area Biologist) will draft the letter and share it with the full Working Group for comment.

2.4 Develop Survey to Use with Non-local Hunters and Villages

In fall 2008, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) will survey local and non-local hunters about fall hunting and general recreation use of BLM lands. The Working Group recommended that the survey (1) be broadened to address hunting on all public lands in the region (not just BLM lands) and (2) gather data and information useful to future management of fall hunting conflicts. The surveys will be conducted in the fall of 2008.

Subgroup Assignment: Shelly Jacobson (lead), Lee Anne Ayres, and Joe Schuster will develop draft survey questions relevant to fall hunting conflicts and share them with the full Working Group for comment. Mayor Sikauraq Whiting will also review the draft surveys.

2.5 Conduct Public Meetings in Noatak and Kiana

The Working Group requested that meetings be held soon in Noatak and Kiana, to present information about the Unit 23 Working Group and hear from the villages about specific concerns with fall hunting conflicts and possible solutions. (Note: The meetings will be held May 20-21, 2008. It is expected that meetings will be held in additional villages at a later date.)

Subgroup: Participants in the meetings in Noatak and Kiana will include Working Group members Enoch Mitchell (Noatak), Raymond Stoney (Kiana), Ted Spraker (Board of Game and Big Game Commercial Services Board), George Helfrich (NPS), Shelly Jacobson or designee (BLM); staff Mark Burch (ADF&G); and facilitator Jan Caulfield.

2.6 Between-Meeting Work

The Working Group requested that the following work / data collection be done before the next meeting in fall 2008. This between-meeting work will be done by the facilitator and ADF&G staff:

- a. Obtain 2007-08 data on harvest and hunting effort from ADF&G, Division of Wildlife Conservation. (Expected to be available July 2008).
- b. Contact Department of Commerce, Community and Economic Development – Division of Occupational Licensing, to obtain data regarding guide and transporter operations in Unit 23 (e.g., numbers of clients, numbers of trips, areas used, etc.) (ADF&G will pursue).
- c. Create a map of areas where conflicts are highest (e.g., overlay local use areas, caribou migration routes, high use camping areas). The Working Group wants to use this information to help decide where to focus its attention at future meetings. (ADF&G and facilitator will prepare)
- d. Prepare a matrix of agency authorities (including local, state and federal agencies and the Board of Game) – How they are interrelated, process for regulatory changes, planning processes, etc. (Facilitator will prepare, in consultation with agencies)

3.0 Summary of Working Group Discussion

This section provides a brief summary of Working Group discussion under each agenda item. (Agenda provided in Attachment 3).

3.1 Opening Remarks, Introductions & Background

The meeting began with opening remarks by Mayor Sikauraq Whiting of the Northwest Arctic Borough. Mayor Whiting welcomed Working Group members, emphasized the importance of subsistence to the well-being, culture and spiritual life of people in the region, and indicated her strong hopes that the collaborative efforts of this group would help resolve fall hunting conflicts.

Each working group member introduced themselves and shared their thoughts about the group process. Many group members emphasized the importance of subsistence to the people of the region; members expressed their support for working together to seek resolution to conflicts. Several members noted the value of having more certainty in future management of use and access.

Representative Reggie Joule expressed his support for the Working Group process. Rep. Joule noted that the Alaska State Legislature had just extended the Big Game Commercial Services Board (BGCSB), and suggested that the Working Group could help the Legislature by recommending what authorities the Board should have. Rep. Joule also urged that local people should have opportunities in the guide and transporter business, and in agency jobs related to land and wildlife protection and management.

Mark Burch, ADF&G, reviewed the background to the Working Group process, including the interviews/assessment report prepared by ADF&G in 2006 and a meeting of key opinion leaders in Kotzebue in May 2007 that recommended formation of this group.

3.2 Roundtable Discussion and Presentations

Working group members presented information / updates, to establish a common base of knowledge about fall hunting conflicts and agency authorities and actions in Unit 23. A summary of information presented during this roundtable session is provided in Attachments 4 and 5. Topics raised in discussion were recorded on flip charts as conflicts, issues or solutions that will be discussed in future meetings. (See Section 3.5)

3.3 Working Group Charter

The Working Group adopted a Charter, which describes the group's mission, goals, objectives, membership and member responsibilities, consensus decision-making process, staffing and support, and ground rules for communication. The approved Charter is in Attachment 1.

3.4 Public Communication Approaches

The group reviewed a list of public communication approaches that will be used during the Working Group process, including notice of meetings, public comment opportunities, project web site, newsletters, and other actions.

The group requested the following additional public communication actions:

- Broadcast meetings on public radio station KOTZ.
- Have representatives from the Working Group travel to villages to meet with local people, hear their concerns and recommended solutions to fall hunting conflicts (Note: The first trip will be to Noatak and Kiana, May 20-21, 2008).
- Schedule longer public comment opportunities in the future, offering a toll-free phone line for call-in comments.

3.5 Identification and Early Discussion of Issues

Over the course of the two-day meeting, the Working Group identified and listed a wide-range of issues related to fall hunting conflicts, and offered ideas for solutions to those issues. Issues and possible solutions are listed below, but are not in priority order and have not been discussed in depth. Many of these issues were echoed in the public comments heard during the meeting (see Section 4.0).

The group did not prioritize the following issues or develop a firm plan for working through them at future meetings. However, the group did reach a consensus on six recommendations that could address some of these issues before the fall 2008 hunting season (see Section 2.0).

High Use and Conflict Areas – The group discussed the need to reduce hunting pressure and impacts within areas important for local subsistence use, while still providing a reasonable opportunity for resident personal use and non-resident harvest in the Unit.

Ideas for future discussion include (but are not limited to):

- Consider ways/tools to reduce the hunting pressure within these areas
- Regulate the numbers of transporters
- Regulate the numbers of nonlocal hunters
- Consider how air taxis are regulated (relative to transporters)
- Establish sub-districts within Unit 23, to allow different wildlife management in different areas
- Create additional Controlled Use Areas.
- Change the dates of the Noatak CUA (See Section 2.2).
- Use “incentives” to redistribute hunting pressure (e.g., establish different bag limits in different areas to attract non-local hunters away from areas important for local subsistence hunting) (See Section 2.2).
- Delay the start of nonresident caribou hunt to allow subsistence hunting to occur first in specific areas
- Encourage or require pre-season communication between villages and commercial businesses to reduce conflict
- Require each commercial operator make or plan for how to reduce conflicts, such as controlling size of camps, minimum separation between camps, etc. (See Section 2.3).
- Consider how regulations in a sub-area of the Unit might displace impacts to other areas

- Consider need for Big Game Commercial Services Board to have authority to regulate BLM (as well as State) land, and to regulate transporters (as well as guides)

Disruption of Caribou Migration – The concern that non-local hunting practices can disrupt the path of migrating caribou was raised in working group discussion and in public comment. Ideas for future discussion include (but are not limited to) urging or requiring that:

- Camps not be set up in migration paths.
- First caribou be allowed to pass without being hunted.
- Guides and transporters place clients on the south side of rivers to hunt.

Changing Conditions

- Climate change is a core issue; effects of that change on the regulatory regime must be considered in this and other planning processes. (Note: this was added as an objective to the Unit 23 Charter.)

Wanton Waste – While meat waste has apparently declined in the past several years (likely due to a change in bag limit and increased hunter education materials), the group noted that it is important to keep making progress on this issue. Ideas for future discussion include (but are not limited to):

- Increase uses of education materials with non-local hunters
- Update education materials as needed
- Provide meat processing/distribution locations
- Meat donation clearinghouse
- Encourage/require guides/transporters to get meat out of field ASAP

Economic Opportunities to the Region – Increasing economic benefit to the region from non-local hunters was raised in working group discussion and in public comment. Ideas for future discussion include (but are not limited to):

- Meat processing/distribution
- Meat donation clearinghouse
- Local participation in guide/transporter business
- Local participation in agency management jobs

Monitoring – The group recognized the importance of monitoring the effectiveness of any actions that are taken to address fall hunting conflicts, to be able to determine which are effective and which are not.

Management of Lands, Use and Access – Group members recognized the value of a more consistent regulatory approach, especially on US Department of Interior lands (National Park Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management). Having more consistency and certainty in regulations would benefit residents, non-local hunters, and commercial businesses.

Enforcement – Need for continued and possibly enhanced enforcement efforts.

- Would it help to have a better land status map available to guides and transporters?
- Need more collaboration between law enforcement agencies?

4.0 Public Comments

The public was invited to comment from approximately 1:00-2:00 p.m. each day. (Note that there will be longer public comment opportunities provided in the future, including telephone call-in capability.)

Working Group member Charlie Gregg, NWAB, had recently traveled to Noatak, Kiana and Buckland, and relayed the following comments about fall hunting conflicts from conversations with people in these villages:

Noatak

- Need to extend timing of Noatak CUA to later date in September.
- Non-local hunters are altering caribou migration routes. Hunters dropped-off on the north side of the Noatak and Aggie Rivers are causing disruption.
- Local hunters cannot travel longer distances to hunt caribou, since fuel prices are so high. It is burdensome and frustrating for villagers.
- Can agencies limit the number of transporters and the number of hunters?
- Can agencies require that commercial operators drop-off clients away from local use areas and caribou routes?

Kiana

- Drop-off hunter camps are diverting caribou further up the Kobuk River.
- Agencies should direct businesses and non-local hunters to locate camps farther away from migration routes.
- Can agencies limit the number of transporters and the number of hunters?

Buckland

- Local hunters found fuel tank and hose on a gravel bar; possibly for refueling of planes landing.

Charlie noted that all villages have concerns about wanton waste of meat and trash at camps. They mentioned particular issues with trash in the Aggie River area.

The following points were during the public comment period. Comments are grouped under general topic headings, and are not listed in any order of priority.

Importance of Subsistence Hunting

- Subsistence priority is very important.
- Subsistence hunting provides food for families and communities – this is a higher priority and more important need than taking an animal for recreation hunting.
- Concern that some local people did not get enough caribou in 2007 – not just in one village, but in many or all. When a family does not get enough, it affects the

entire community, as they need to share their meat with families who were less successful.

- The Working Group must be accountable to the people who need caribou for food.
- Food costs in villages are tremendously high and rising (especially due to rising cost of fuel/freight); subsistence fishing and hunting are becoming even more essential as the cost to purchase food rises. In some cases, freight costs are now higher than the food costs.
- ADF&G Subsistence Division information demonstrates the importance of subsistence foods to local families and communities.
- There has been an historic westward movement of human population growth, and pressure on wildlife and fish.
- We are caribou people, and we need to be proactive to protect our way of life.
- The increase in nonlocal hunting is affecting our ability to pass down traditional subsistence hunting practices to youth.

Concerns about disruption of caribou

- Caribou use the same paths each year. If they are diverted from their path, they turn and may go a great distance back toward the way they came, increasing the distance local hunters need to travel. It is important to let the first caribou go by without disturbance to avoid this.
- Fall hunting along waterways is especially important to families. There is particular concern about disruption of caribou migration routes along the river systems.
- Concern about the effect of air carrier transporters on caribou migration paths.
- Should require guides not to camp in migration routes.
- It is important to have hunting success close to home. Fuels costs are so high that people cannot afford to go farther to get caribou.
- Float plane activity / landings create noise that disturbs migration and hunting.
- Mining on State land near Deering and Buckland impacts caribou migration.

Comments on regulation of hunters and commercial businesses (guides, transporters)

- Caribou limit for non-Alaska residents should not be just one animal; a limit of two or more caribou should be allowed for these hunters, in keeping with sustained yield principle for wildlife.
- Support the low caribou bag limit for non-resident hunters.
- Consider limiting the number of transporters, as is done for guides.
- Support CUAs when needed to address conflicts. More CUAs may be needed.
- Closing areas to guide/transporter access for critical times of the year is effective. Locations that are accessible by surface transportation should be off limits to airborne camps during the fall hunting season.

- Concern that if one agency takes action to restrict guide/transporter numbers or use, it will just displace the problem to other areas.
- Guides and transporters should take clients to areas that are not used intensively by local subsistence hunters.
- Local subsistence hunters should have an early opportunity to hunt during the fall hunt, before nonlocal hunters begin hunting.
- Concern with internet advertising for commercial guide and transporter services.
- Suggest a ban on the removal of antlers to reduce trophy value of animals.
- Change Noatak Preserve to a National Park and eliminate sport hunting in this area.

Meat handling and waste

- Some guides/transporters make certain that clients' meat is picked up early in the field (e.g., contact with transporter via satellite phone to get quick pick-up, or with guide to send in packers.)
- Many comments were made about the value of having a meat cleaning house (with cold storage and/or freezer) in Kotzebue, where hunters could process their own meat, and freeze/store it while arranging for transport of meat and antlers. (Note: this would also provide a local business opportunity.)
- Nonlocal hunters need more education on meat care, so the meat they process would be acceptable for donation for local use.
- Meat waste is not an issue with local hunters.
- A trooper could check meat legality at a meat processing center.
- A meat deposit location should be established in Kotzebue for use of non-local hunters, who wish to donate usable meat. Local radio station could announce meat availability. The meat deposit center could ship antlers and hides for hunters, creating a local business opportunity.
- There has been less wanton waste of meat in the past several years.
- Wanton waste is still a concern.

Safety

- Concern about aircraft safety issues, particularly involving transporters and other planes (private and commercial).

Possible local economic and other benefits to the region

- There are local economic opportunities that could benefit the region; work with transporters and guides to determine what services are needed.
- It seems nearly impossible for a local person to become a guide. Can there be a partnership program? University course to prepare for exam? Can the Big Game Commercial Services Board assist? The qualifying exam should be weighted toward practical knowledge held by local residents.

- Criteria to become a transporter are very stringent; need \$100,000 resources to qualify. This is a barrier to local residents offering transport services.
- The influx of hunters brings social impacts to villages (Deering, Candle given as examples), without local benefits.
- Big game hunting is not a benefit to the region.

Improved communication and coordination

- On annual basis, communicate with local villages about where local camps likely to be in a season and communicate that to transporters.
- Better communication between different law enforcement entities.

Comments on Unit 23 Working Group process

- It is important to focus on finding solutions.
- Having all parties at the table on the Working Group is a big accomplishment.
- NPS and BLM need to take some actions this year, not wait 2-3 years for actions that address conflicts.
- It is the Northwest Arctic Borough's position that action is needed now. There is more and more pressure each year.
- Appreciate that the Board of Game would be willing to take regulatory proposals out of cycle to address Unit 23 issues.
- It is OK to take three years for the working group to make progress on resolving issues, if something is truly accomplished.
- It is important that solutions be equitable.
- During the working group process, it is better to go to villages to ask for their comments on possible specific solutions, not just to ask them to state the problem again. (See Section 2.5)
- Solutions must be based on analysis of data and local knowledge, to stop the "guessing" about the extent of conflicts and what will effectively address them.
- Since 1984, have not yet accomplished much for Unit 23. Need solutions.
- Support the Mission statement included in the Unit 23 Working Group Charter.
- The group should allow public comments via toll-free call-in.

Hunter education

- It is important to educate/orient all clients of guides and transporters on use conflicts, proper meat care, and the importance of subsistence to local people.

CHARTER
Unit 23 Working Group
 Approved April 24, 2008

The following Charter was approved by consensus of the Unit 23 Working Group on April 24, 2008, at its meeting in Kotzebue, Alaska.

Background

Fall hunting in Game Management Unit (GMU) 23 in northwest Alaska has been the subject of conflict between local hunters, non-local hunters and commercial operators (e.g., hunting guides, transporters) since the early 1980s. In 2006, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), Division of Wildlife Conservation, interviewed representatives of different user groups, regional organizations, landowners and land management agencies about Unit 23 user conflicts. Interview results and background information are found in the ADF&G report “*Fall Hunting in Game Management Unit 23: Assessment of Issues and Proposal for a Planning Process.*”³

In May 2007, key individuals and agency representatives met in Kotzebue to discuss fall hunting conflicts in Unit 23. Participants at that meeting recommended that a working group be formed to try to cooperatively resolve the conflicts.

Unit 23 Working Group Process

The Unit 23 Working Group was formed in early 2008 to discuss fall hunting conflicts and to try to agree on solutions to the conflicts. The group expects to meet a number of times, for 3-4 days per meeting, over the next two years in Kotzebue in 2008-2009. A third year may be added if needed. The group’s work and advisory recommendations will be included in a final report. While the process may extend two to three years, it is recognized that there is a sense of urgency to begin addressing conflicts as soon as possible.

All Unit 23 working group meetings are open to the public. The public will receive information about the process and will be invited to suggest topics for discussion and ideas to resolve conflicts. (NOTE: A public outreach plan will be discussed and approved by the working group.)

Mission: Preserve the Inupiaq values of the region, their hunting, heritage, and ability to take caribou needed, as unrestricted as possible, while providing a reasonable opportunity for resident personal use and non-resident harvest.

Goal: The goal of the Unit 23 Working Group is to protect subsistence uses, and to identify and minimize user conflicts resulting from the influx of fall hunters to GMU23.

³ Prepared by Cynthia Jacobson, ADF&G, Division of Wildlife Conservation, February 25, 2008.
 Unit 23 Working Group – Meeting Summary
 April 23-24, 2008 – Kotzebue, Alaska

Objectives:

1. Discuss fall hunting user conflicts in Unit 23 and share and discuss the information that is important to resolving these conflicts.
2. Develop specific recommendations for resolving user conflicts, which respond to public concerns and can be feasibly and legally implemented. The recommendations *may* address such topics as:
 - numbers of users, density, distribution on the landscape, and compatibility issues;
 - future needs for data and local knowledge (to inform future management and monitor effectiveness of actions taken to address user conflicts);
 - public outreach and education to reduce conflict and impacts;
 - strategies to reduce impacts and increase benefits to Kotzebue and other communities;
 - other topics addressed through the Working Group process.
3. Recommend a monitoring approach to track future changes in GMU 23 fall hunting and determine if actions taken to address user conflicts have been effective.
4. Keep the public informed about the Unit 23 Working Group process. Allow the public to express their concerns, opinions and knowledge about fall hunting conflicts, and suggest solutions to these conflicts.
5. Take into consideration climate change; changes in big game populations, distributions and migration; and other changing conditions.
6. Improve communication between local hunters, non-local hunters, guides, transporters and management agencies. (In addition to potentially resolving user conflicts, this could also improve safety.)

General Principles: The Working Group will seek to ensure that its recommendations meet these general principles (not in priority order):

- Protect the long-term conservation and health of GMU23 caribou and moose populations.
- Minimize detrimental impacts to natural resources.
- Maximize benefits to the public, where possible.
- Protect the way of life and the cultural values of the local people, including the continued opportunity and prioritization for subsistence use.⁴
- Maximize the quality of the experience for hunters.
- Provide for equity among commercial service operators.
- Minimize disruption to caribou migration and the subsistence hunting practices and locations based on these migration patterns.

⁴ The use of the term “prioritization” references existing state and federal laws, with no further implications.

Working Group Membership: The Unit 23 Working Group will include 21 people who represent users who participate in fall hunting in GMU23, including local hunters, non-local hunters, and commercial operators (e.g., guides and transporters); local governments; wildlife managers and regulators; and land owners/managers within the region. Working Group members include:

Name	Affiliations
Hazel Apok	Maniilaq
Lee Anne Ayres	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Kerry Cope	Big Game Commercial Services Board
Jim Dau	Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Glenn Douglas	Upper Kobuk Advisory Committee Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group
Phil Driver	Alaska Professional Hunting Association Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group
Mike Fleagle	Federal Subsistence Board
Charlie Gregg	Northwest Arctic Borough
George Helfrich	National Park Service
Shelly Jacobson	Bureau of Land Management
Cliff Judkins	Board of Game
Victor Karmun	Northwest Arctic Regional Advisory Council Kotzebue Sound Advisory Committee
Enoch Mitchell	Noatak/Kivalina Advisory Committee
Ron Moto	N. Seward Peninsula Advisory Committee
Jeanne Proulx	Alaska Department of Natural Resources
Walter Sampson	NANA Regional Corporation
Pete Schaeffer	Kotzebue Sound Advisory Council
Joe Schuster	Alaska Professional Hunting Association Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group
Ted Spraker	Board of Game Big Game Commercial Services Board
Raymond Stoney	Northwest Arctic Regional Advisory Council Lower Kobuk Advisory Committee Big Game Commercial Services Board Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group
Alex Whiting	Kotzebue IRA

Staff and Resources to Support Process: Jan Caulfield, Sheinberg Associates,⁵ has been hired as a neutral contractor to serve as the Facilitator and Project Manager for the Unit 23 Working Group process, with oversight by Mark Burch with ADF&G. Mark will provide logistic and administrative support. The facilitator and ADF&G, in consultation with the Working Group, will develop and distribute material to inform the public on the project and seek input.

The process is currently supported by State capital project funds (\$50,000), US Fish and Wildlife Service (\$45,000), Bureau of Land Management (\$39,000) and National Park

⁵ Jan Caulfield, Sheinberg Associates, 204 N. Franklin St., Ste. 1, Juneau, AK 99801. Phone (907)586-3141, email janc@sci.net web site www.sheinbergassociates.com
Unit 23 Working Group – Meeting Summary
April 23-24, 2008 – Kotzebue, Alaska

Service (\$45,000). It is anticipated that local governments and/or organizations will contribute meeting space, refreshments, logistics and other support for the process. ADF&G will pay travel and lodging costs for public group members who must travel to attend the meetings.

Working Group Process: The Working Group will use a consensus-building process, facilitated by a neutral party. Each working group member begins the process intending to work cooperatively to reach consensus decisions, on even the most difficult issues. “Consensus” is defined as an agreement all parties can accept because it meets their most important needs. It does not mean that everyone likes the solution equally, but it is the best solution overall to address the interests involved. If the group can not reach consensus on all issues, the differing opinions will be explained in the group’s meeting summaries and final report.

Working Group Recommendations: The Working Group will develop advisory recommendations. These recommendations may be further evaluated (as required) and implemented by agencies, governments, organizations or other parties. Consensus recommendations from this diverse group of Unit 23 residents, users and agency managers would likely carry significant weight with decision makers.

Tools for implementing the group’s recommendations could include regulatory proposals to the Board of Game and/or Federal Subsistence Board, ADF&G or other agency management actions, state and/or federal management plans, projects accomplished by a government or organization, or other actions.

Responsibilities of Working Group Members:

- Working Group members will be expected to attend all meetings and participate in the discussions. Group members must stay current with the information and ideas discussed at each meeting.
- Meetings will operate under the attached Ground Rules.
- Throughout the process, each Working Group member should communicate with individuals or groups that hold similar interests to theirs, and share the comments they receive with the full group.
- Working Group members may be asked to help with public outreach efforts during the process, and/or to help present the group’s recommendations at the end of the process.
- Working Group members may agree by consensus to issue press releases or other media information, assisted by ADF&G and the Facilitator. Members of the group agree to not make statements to the media until the group agrees it is appropriate to do so.

Ground Rules for Communication – Unit 23 Working Group

1. Respect the values, interests and views of all group members.
2. Give each person an equal opportunity to speak. Please do not interrupt.
3. Seek to understand, as well as to be understood. Listen carefully to understand other points of view.
4. If you disagree with a point someone else is making, explain why in a constructive way. Do not criticize the speaker.
5. If you disagree with the group on an issue or recommendation, you have a responsibility to explain why. Try to suggest an alternative approach that might be acceptable to the whole group

Public & Agency Attendance List
Unit 23 Working Group Meeting
April 23-24, 2008 – Kotzebue, Alaska

Name	Affiliation
Ken Adkisson	National Park Service (NPS)
Jeff Brooks	US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Susan Bucknell	Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G)
John Chase	public
Helen Clough	USFWS
Roger Delaney	Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Kim Franklin	public
Bish Gallahorn	public
Willie Goodwin	NPS
Dave Howell	BLM
Representative Reggie Joule	Alaska State Legislature
Jim Kincaid	Northwestern Aviation
Dianna Leinberger	Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR)
Adrienne Lindholm	NPS
Pierre Lonewolf	KSAC (radio)
Eric Lorring	Alaska Wildlife Troopers
Marlene Moto	public
Hans Neidig	Special Assistant to the Secretary for Alaska, US Department of Interior (April 24 only)
Bill Overbaugh	BLM
Julie Owen	Northern Air Trophy
Matt Owen	Northern Air Trophy
Bob Schaeffer	Northwest Arctic Borough (NWAB)
Sky Starkey	NWAB Attorney
Mayor Sikauraq Whiting	NWAB

Unit 23 Working Group April 23-24, 2008

Northwest Arctic Borough Assembly Chambers
9:00 am – 5:00 p.m.

AGENDA

Meeting Objectives

- Get to know one another / begin working together
- Share information / updates -- current situation, coming opportunities
- Tasks to get done:
 - Review, revise & approve draft Charter (group membership, goal, objectives, communication ground rules)
 - Review, revise & approve draft public communication approaches
 - Set future meeting schedule
- Start work – identify and order the issues the group wants to address, begin issue discussion & prepare for future work
- Public comment opportunities

Many thanks to the Northwest Arctic Borough for providing meeting space, coffee, refreshments and lunch for the meeting.

Wednesday, April 23

Coffee/Refreshments

Introductions – Getting Started

9:00 a.m. Welcome, Introductions

- Members introduce themselves – opening remarks
- Review agenda, meeting objectives, communication ground rules – Jan Caulfield, Facilitator

9:45 a.m. Working Group Background

Mark Burch, ADF&G and Jan Caulfield

- ADF&G interviews and assessment report (2006)
- May 2007 meeting – recommendation to form Unit 23 working group
- Typical steps in a cooperative conflict resolution or planning process

10:15 a.m. Break

Share Information

10:30 a.m. Roundtable Discussion and Presentations –

Working Group members informally present & share information / updates to establish a common base of knowledge about fall hunting user conflicts in Unit 23. Topics could include (but are not limited to):

- Review of caribou population, migration and harvest information
- Review of other relevant data (e.g., 2006 fall hunter camp locations)
- Basic information about agency and private land management – permits, plans, ordinances and other tools that are being used, or can be used, to manage fall hunting uses
- Other tools to manage uses (e.g., update on BGCSB use areas)
- Upcoming agency planning processes or data collection (possible future tools for understanding and managing use)
- Effectiveness of past actions taken to reduce conflicts (e.g., public information about hunting practices)

12:00 p.m. Lunch In

1:00 p.m. Public Comment Opportunity

(Time per comment may be limited, depending upon the number of people who want to speak)

1:45 p.m. Continue Information Sharing

2:45 p.m. Break

Tasks – Charter & Public Communication

3:00 p.m. Unit 23 Working Group Charter – Review, revise and approve

4:00 p.m. Public Communication – Review, revise and approve

5:00 p.m. Adjourn for evening

Thursday, April 24

Coffee/Refreshments

9:00 a.m. Welcome – Announcements – Review Agenda for the Day

Identify Key Issues – Plan for Working Through Them

9:15 a.m. Working Group Discussion

- Issues / problems to address through process
- Prioritize topics – short-term / longer-term
- Plan for working through topics at future meetings
- Data / information needed
- What can we do to prepare for 2008 hunting season and next Working Group meeting?

Mid-morning break

12:00 p.m. Lunch In

1:00 p.m. Public Comment Opportunity

(Time per comment may be limited, depending upon the number of people who want to speak)

1:45 p.m. Continue Working Group Discussion

Mid-afternoon break

Closing – Next Steps and Meetings

4:00 p.m. Wrap-up / Summary / Future Meeting Schedule

- Future Meeting Schedule
- Tasks, actions, schedule – to follow-up on agreements from this meeting and to prepare for next meeting(s)

5:00 p.m. Adjourn

Summary of Information Presented During Working Group Roundtable Discussion and Presentations

April 23, 2008

Jim Dau, ADF&G Wildlife Biologist presented background information regarding the history of fall hunting conflicts in the region (Attachment 5), hunter participation and harvest information, and information about caribou and moose herds. Harvest data for the 2007-08 season is expected to be available by July 2008. Jim presented the following information:

- Harvest levels by local hunters from the 1998-99 through 2005-06 seasons averaged over 10,000 caribou/year in Unit 23.
- Harvest levels by nonlocal hunters averaged 500 caribou from the 1998 through 2006-07 seasons, with participation by just over 450 nonlocal hunters.
- Nonlocal hunting effort is consolidated in the month of September. Jim noted that this is a shift of about two to four weeks later than in the 1980s.
- The trend since 1998 has been increasing numbers of nonlocal hunters coming to Unit 23 to hunt for a mix of species, including caribou, moose, brown bear and sheep. The number hunting caribou has increased (to a high of approximately 670 hunters), while hunting of moose has declined with institution of a drawing hunt in 2005. Jim noted that the decline of the Mulchatna caribou herd has caused further nonlocal hunting pressure in Unit 23.
- In most years since 1998, a greater proportion of the nonlocal hunters have been non-Alaska residents, compared to Alaskans who do not live in Unit 23.
- The areas most heavily used by nonlocal caribou hunters in Unit 23 include Guide Use Areas (GUA) 23-05 and 23-06, which includes the lower Noatak River; Eli, Aggie and Squirrel River areas; and the Selawik Refuge area.
- Adult moose densities in Unit 23 vary from 0.12 moose/sq. mi. in the northern Seward Peninsula (GUA 23-07), to 0.59 moose/sq. mi. southwest of the Noatak drainage (GUA 23-06).
- ADF&G is just completing an enumeration of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd, based on July 2007 aerial photography; a population number is not yet available, but they are projecting a lower level than the 490,000 counted in 2003.
- When the limit for nonresident hunters was five caribou per year, 98% of the nonresident hunters took 0-2 caribou.

Lee Anne Ayres, Selawik National Wildlife Refuge Manager for US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) presented a map developed during the 2006 fall season that shows the distribution of hunting camps (both locals and nonlocals) sighted by air. Camps were most concentrated along the Noatak River and its tributaries, in the Squirrel River drainages, and along the Selawik and Tagagawik Rivers. The map helps illustrate areas of greatest camp density and potential conflict. However, data was gathered during flights for enforcement and other purposes, so did not equally survey all areas in Unit 23. Length of camping at each location was not known.

The Working Group noted the value of overlaying high use areas with areas important for local subsistence hunting, to determine places that need management attention. The map

from 2006 is helpful, but more complete data on use areas is needed, such as the guide and transporter data from the Division of Occupational Licensing (see Section 2.6).

Jeannie Proulx, Natural Resources Manager for the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) presented information about DNR's permitting requirements applicable to hunting use in Unit 23. Key points included:

- Hunting and resource gathering are “generally allowed uses” on State land. No permits are needed and DNR has no data about this type of personal use.
- Commercial operator authorization / registration:
 - Commercial recreation registration is required for use of State land by commercial recreation operators who require no infrastructure; number of operators is unlimited.
 - Commercial recreation permit is required for businesses using infrastructure on State land for less than 14 days; number is unlimited.
 - Land use permit is required for businesses using infrastructure on State land more than 14 days; number is unlimited.
- DNR consults with local areas when considering permits.
- In Unit 23, DNR has issued three land use permits for guide camps, one commercial recreation permit for a portable camp, and has registered three guides and one transporter for day use.
- It is important to note that DNR is a land management agency, not a manager of people.
- DNR has completed a draft *Northwest Area Plan* (NWAP) designating land use and directing management of state land and land selections in Unit 23, and in a broader area of northwest Alaska. Public comments will be accepted until June 9. A public meeting is scheduled in Kotzebue on May 15. The plan will not affect federal, Native or other private lands.

In discussion, it was noted that the State has management authority over navigable rivers and submerged lands (including gravel bars.) This authority can be very relevant to management of access and use (e.g., airplane landings and camps on gravel bars.)

Shelly Jacobson, Manager, Central Yukon Field Office for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), addressed the following key points:

- BLM is near completion of the *Kobuk-Seward Peninsula Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement* for BLM lands in Unit 23. The agency expects to sign the final plan by September 2008. The plan identifies the Squirrel River drainage as an area where a more detailed Special Area Management Plan should be developed within three years, which could address user conflicts.
- BLM gave a presentation on “benefits-based planning,” a process that would be used to develop a Recreation Implementation Plan for the Squirrel River area.
- BLM has funding to survey local and nonlocal hunters in fall 2008 regarding their experiences with hunting, and recreation. This survey can be broadened to address additional lands in the region, to provide useful data regarding hunting experiences to the Unit 23 Working Group (see Section 2.4).

- There are currently eight permitted guides in the Squirrel River area; three had no activity in fall 2007. All are up for renewal in 2008 and the plan is to renew only the existing number of operators, until the Special Area Management Plan is completed. The agency had planned to begin issuing permits to transporters, but they may only require them to report the number of clients transported rather than issuing permits.
- BLM plans to have a ranger in Unit 23 one week during the fall season, accomplishing inspections of permitted guides. They may also conduct some impact analysis on use areas, camps, trails.

George Helfrich, Superintendent, Western Arctic National Parklands of the National Park Service (NPS), offered the following information:

- The NPS manages three guides operating in the Noatak National Preserve through concession contracts, which requires an operating plan, and limits the area of use and the number of clients. Transporters are issued a Commercial Use Authorization (CUA). Currently there is no limit on the number of transporters, the number of clients, or the areas within the Preserve in which they can operate. In 2006-07, eight transporters had CUA (7 airplane, one boat), and brought 277 clients into the Preserve (tend to be concentrated on the Aggie, Kelly and Noatak Rivers).
- The NPS is looking for help from the Working Group to reduce conflict between user groups and reduce impacts that transporters and their clients have on subsistence hunters. A draft analysis of transporter activities under Section 810 of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) that concludes that “transporter operations and sport hunting have location-specific, season-specific moderate to major negative impacts on subsistence caribou hunting in the Preserve.” The NPS wants to appropriately regulate commercial uses to ensure a quality experience is offered to visits and minimize effects of commercial use on natural and cultural resources.
- In the next six months, the NPS plans to continue commercial operator and hunter education about ways to reduce conflicts (DVD, written materials, consultations), and continue law enforcement presence. NPS is also looking at additional actions it could take to limit transporters through its Commercial Use Authorizations.
- Within the next 18-24 months, the NPS intends to prepare a draft Big Game Transporter Plan and Environmental Assessment that will propose ways to reduce conflict.

In discussion, it was noted that BLM, USFWS and NPS operate under different mandates, laws and authorities – which can lead to different management on these three types of federal lands. However, all three agencies are within the US Department of the Interior, and the group supported increased coordination and consistency among the three agencies, to simplify management for residents and users.

Ted Spraker, member of the Big Game Commercial Services Board (BGCSB), offered the following information:

- At its March 2008 meeting, the BGCSB developed a recommendation for new Guide Use Area boundaries on State lands. Under the new system, a guide could

- register in up to three GUAs, but would need to write a prospectus (that addresses operations and stewardship) to obtain a ten-year lease from DNR.
- Public review of the proposed changes will occur before the BGCSB's next meeting, December 9-11, in Anchorage.
 - DNR would need to adopt any new system by regulation, which could take up to two years.
 - The Board would like to take similar measures for transporters, but do not currently have this authority from the Legislature.

In Working Group discussion, members commented about the importance of giving local residents the opportunity to qualify and work as guides and transporters.

Charlie Gregg from the Northwest Arctic Borough (NWAB) shared the proposed zoning districts for the Borough. He also described the NWAB requirement that commercial transporters receive a permit to operate from the Borough. The Borough has sent applications out to 32 guides and transporters for registration prior to the 2008 season. The NWAB Planning Commission adopted a resolution (08-08) in April, urging the NPS and BLM to take action to reduce the significant impact of commercial transporters on subsistence uses.

Unit 23: Fall Hunting Conflicts Timeline

Presented by Jim Dau, ADF&G, to Unit 23 Working Group
April 23, 2008

1984 – Noatak village requested Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) to restrict use of airplanes for hunting in the Noatak drainage.

1988 – Noatak Controlled Use Area (CUA) went into effect:

- No use of airplanes for hunting in the CUA from August 20-September 20
- CUA extends five miles on each side of river's main stem, from the mouth of Sapun Creek to the mouth of the Kugururuk River

1993 – Noatak CUA modified (1st working group for user conflicts):

- Area expanded - mouth of Sapun Creek to mouth of Noatak River
- Period shortened to August 25-September 15

1994-1998 – Conflicts reduced in Noatak drainage but increased in other portions of the unit, including some violent interactions between local and non-local hunters.

2002-2003 – NPS initiated a user conflict process for Noatak Preserve. No changes in regulations or NPS policy resulted

2003 – Northwest Arctic Borough established a permitting process for commercial operators operating within the NWAB

November 2005 – Alaska Board of Game (BOG) met in Kotzebue; held two hour informal work session devoted to user conflicts, with substantial public participation

- BOG directed ADF&G to develop hunter orientation materials
- Agreed to consider proposals addressing conflicts at spring 2006 meeting

March 2006 – BOG meeting in Fairbanks

- Meat salvage requirements increased.
- Nonresident caribou bag limit reduced to one per year in Unit 23 (but not changed in surrounding units used by Western Arctic Caribou Herd)

2006 – ADF&G assigned a planner from Anchorage office (Cindi Jacobson) to conduct interviews and prepare an “issue assessment” regarding user conflicts in Unit 23

May 2007 – ADF&G held meeting in Kotzebue with opinion leaders to:

- Share results of issue assessment
- Determine whether to move forward with interagency planning effort
- Group agreed to begin a 2-3-yr planning process – beginning in 2008 – that should then sunset

April 2008 – First meeting of Unit 23 Working Group, held April 23-24, 2008, in Kotzebue

Jim's note: Conflicts seemed to have diminished during the fall of 2006 and 2007, judged by fewer calls / complaints to his office.