

STATE OF ALASKA

FISH AND GAME ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Kotzebue Sound Advisory Committee

**Kotzebue AC Meeting Minutes
03/11/2025
Selawik National Wildlife Refuge**

- I. **Call to Order:** 6:11 pm by Chair Lance Kramer
- II. **Roll Call: Members Present:** Lance Kramer (Chair), Karmen Monigold (Vice Chair), Alex Whiting (Secretary), Cyrus Harris, , Hans Hansen, Michael Kramer
Members Absent: Eugene Smith, Adeline Aucha Kameroff, Thomas Baker

Quorum established: 6 - Number Needed for Quorum on AC: 5
- III. **ADF&G Staff Present:** Alex Hansen (Caribou Biologist-Kotzebue), Deb Lawton (Outreach Coordinator – Kotzebue), Sam Kirby (Regulatory Program Assistant – Arctic Region), Brendan Scanlon (Northwest and North Slope Area Fishery Management Biologist), Luke Henslee (Assistant Area Commercial Fisheries Management Biologist), ? Nome Biologist
- IV. **Guests Present:** Will Wiese (SNWR), Emily Creek (NPS), Tim Smith (public)
- V. **Approval of Agenda:** Motion to approve agenda – unanimous
- VI. **Elections Advisory Committee**
 - a. **6 vacant seats:** Unanimous consent to elect Timothy Smith (Kotzebue) to one of the vacant seats **(3 year term - expire June 30, 2028).**
 - b. **3 expired seats:** Lance Kramer, Alex Whiting, Karmen Monigold, were elected with unanimous consent to fill the 3 expired seats **(3 year term - expire June 30, 2028).**
 - c. **Election of Officers:** Lance Kramer (Chair), Karmen Monigold (Vice Chair), Alex Whiting (Secretary) **(2 year officer term - expire June 30, 2027).**

VII. Reports:

Chairs Report: Lance Kramer (Chair) discussed the herds of caribou that have been staying in the vicinity of Noorvik and on the Baldwin Peninsula for the last couple of months or so, and

that they have been feeding good generally according to the fat levels of some that are being harvested. Chum salmon run last summer was very poor and unlike any other run in memory. Moose somewhat scarce on Baldwin Peninsula around the end of the year. Cyrus Harris concurred with these sentiments and added that sheefish seemed abundant. Lance and Cyrus briefly discussed attending the Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group meeting in December and that they both disagreed with the BOG not closing the sport hunting (non-resident) caribou hunting. Cyrus also mentioned the Migratory Bird Co-management Meeting that was happening tomorrow at the SNWR. Hans Hansen discussed the higher pressure on fall moose on the Kobuk Delta due to the lack of caribou and that moose were harder to find. Tim Smith mentioned seeing quite a few moose on the Baldwin Peninsula in early fall. Karmen Monigold discussed the need to talk to kids in the school on the importance of pregnant cows in the spring and the need to avoid shooting or harassing them. Also, she mentioned a lot of Elders in Kotzebue are in need of caribou meat so more hunters should be hunting for them. Mike Kramer discussed the hungry bears due to loss of fall salmon and that caused some to be out in winter and likely starving - maybe population will be impacted. He also mentioned a coyote was taken on the Baldwin Peninsula, which has not happened for many years and that the caribou hunting opportunities in the region should be for locals only, at that ways of making it more difficult for non-locals to hunt should be pursued on both the federal and state sides of management. He also mentioned that the Northwest Arctic RAC meeting is happening March 27-28, 2025 in Kotzebue.

ADF&G Reports: Luke Henslee discussed the poor chum salmon showing in Kotzebue Sound in 2024. The lowest since the early 2000's and that even subsistence needs were not met. It is likely due to poor ocean survival, but other factors may also be playing a role, more research is needed, including more genetic data to understand better the interception of Kotzebue chums in other fisheries.

Brendan Scanlon discussed Dolly Varden runs in the region. The Wulik river had a fall count of 46,000 below the recent average of 64,000. However, off color waters in some areas and trout coming back under the ice or after the counts could be throwing off the numbers some. Kivalina people have generally met their trout catch needs in the Wulik River. He brought up a general concern about sheefish catch rates in the region, in particular the spring under ice hooking fishery. Not only locals catching unknown amounts but people coming up to Kotzebue to target sheefish and likely taking freezer boxes full of sheefish back with them. The last counts of sheefish were in 2016 & 2018, there is a need to understand the existing stock better and also to understand how much fish are being taken out of the fishery every year. Discussed the idea of permits tied to households and being used for reporting annual catch amounts and/or a limit on sheefish catch amounts to get ahead of any potential stock problems. (The AC is interested in conserving the sheefish stock, but it is not clear if there is a conservation issue, or what makes

sense as an approach. A variety of ideas and concerns were discussed from local take (which includes Noatak, Kotzebue, the Kobuk River Villages and Selawik), non-local take, net fishing for dog food and the existing commercial fishery. Since the current stock biomass/population, is not known, or monitored, in a regular way by the State of Alaska and the commercial catch is not monitored in any methodical, or gate-keeping way, the first step the AC decided on was to remove the commercial fishing regulation from the books. The AC will consider additional approaches in the near future, especially related to understanding the take better, but also will need better understanding of the stock itself to start considering catch limits).

Alex Hansen discussed unsuccessful attempts to get a caribou count last summer due to weather and caribou movements and a camp and count approach to increase the odds of a count this summer. He appreciated that the Kotzebue Sound AC initiated the reduction in caribou harvest last cycle, but still would like to see a reduced cow harvest and more education about limiting cow harvest in general. He discussed the bull, cow, and calf, ratios, which are in the okay range but the calf ratio would be great to be higher and the cow survival in particular is lower (i.e. 60's & 70's percentiles), than would be necessary for a growth trajectory (i.e., 85ish percentile). He discussed that the impact from closing most of the Federal lands to non-qualified subsistence users has reduced non-local take of caribou by 2/3rds. Transporters are at a low level of activity in Unit 23 for caribou hunting. He discussed roads/sport hunters and movement of caribou and is willing to have focused conversations using all available data on the topic with those interested.

Muskox counts currently ongoing. Dall Sheep still very low, collaring project not as successful to date as hoped for. Moose counts this fall on the Kobuk were hampered by lack of snow cover.

Deb Lawton discussed an interest in working with Elders and kids on hunter values and hunter education activities and partnering with federal agencies on these topics/efforts.

National Park Service Report: Emily Creek discussed the unsuccessful attempt to count bears in the park areas in 2024. She also mentioned the March 20, 2025 archaeology open house that WEAR was carrying out.

US Fish and Wildlife Service Report: Will Wiese said that the final report on the Selawik River sheefish studies that have been ongoing the past few years should be out this summer. The Refuge is going to switch to researching other whitefish species in the Refuge. Low level of transport/guide activity on the Selawik Refuge. A relatively high harvest of moose in the refuge by local hunters, in part due to the high waters which allowed for extensive access to the far reaches of the moving water bodies. The Refuge is still going to focus on the Selawik Culture camp and related community outreach efforts.

Other: None

VIII. **Public Comment:** None

IX. **Old Business:** None

X. **New Business:** Propose Repealing Commercial Fishery for Sheefish in the Kotzebue District. Unanimous vote of support 7-0. Proposal will be drafted and submitted to the BOF by Secretary Whiting.

Review select Board of Game proposals 86, 87, 123, 132, 133

Alaska Board of Game Statewide Regulations Meeting Proposals March 21 - 28, 2025 Anchorage, AK			
Proposal Number	Proposal Description		
Support, Support as Amended, Oppose, No Action	Number Support	Number Oppose	Comments, Discussion (list Pros and Cons), Amendments to Proposal, Voting Notes
<i>Note: Effective September 2019, when abstentions occur, the action or decision of a majority of the remaining members at a meeting at which a quorum is present is an act of the committee. For example, a vote tally of 7-6-2 means the motion carries. Members abstaining from voting must provide an explanation that is included in the committee record.</i>			
86	Require mandatory harvest reporting of sea ducks		
	0	7	Sea ducks make up only a small percentage of harvest in Unit 23.
87	Restrict the use of boats for hunting waterfowl		
	0	7	Liberal use of using boats for hunting waterfowl is common in Unit 23.
123	Allow remuneration to be provided to proxy hunters		
	0	7	Opposed to bringing money into hunting incentives.
132	Prohibit nonresidents from using snowmachines to approach and pursue the take of wolves and wolverine		
			No position.
133	Prohibit trappers from using snowmachines to approach and pursue the take of wolverine		
	0	7	Trapping wolverines using snowmachine is consistent with State hunting regulations in Unit 23 for using snowmachines for hunting wolverines, which the Kotzebue Sound AC advocated for and led the effort on when it was passed as a regulation in 2014.
151	Reauthorize the current resident tag fee exemptions for brown bear in Units 18, 22, 23 and 26A		

Alaska Board of Game Statewide Regulations Meeting Proposals

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	7	0	Useful to encourage bear harvest, which we are trying to accomplish in Unit 23.

XI. **Set next meeting date:** Call of the ChairXII. **Motion to adjourn:** 9:52 pm

Minutes Recorded By: _____

Alex Whiting, Secretary

Minutes Approved By: _____

Lance Kramer, Chair

Date: _____