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U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI)
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

Alaska Fisheries Tribal Consultation

DATE: Wednesday, October 5, 2022
TIME: 1:27 P.M. - 5:40 P.M.
PLACE: Bethel, Alaska / Zoom

1 FEDERAL OFFICIALS PARTICIPANTS:

2 Sara Boario

3 Shannon Boyle

4 Steve Cohn

5 Laura Daniel-Davis

6 Sue Detwiler

7 Ihechi Ezuruonye

8 Shannon Estenoz

9 Gretchen Harrington

10 Robert Hoffman

11 William Igkurak

12 Myron P. Naneng, Sr.

13 Bryan Newland

14 Ray Oney

15 Dr. Zach Penney

16 Rose Petoskey

17 Dr. Dwight Sanders

18 George Smith

19 Dr. Richard Spinrad

20 Raina Thiele

21

22

1 ALSO PRESENT REGISTRATION PARTICIPANTS:

2 Edward Adams, Sr.

3 Nels Alexie

4 Martin Andrew

5 Tim Andrew

6 Rita Asgeirsson

7 Joe Asuluk, Sr.

8 Nick J. Ayapan

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10 Curt Chamberlain

11 Christina Changsak

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13 Jacqueline Cleveland

14 Joshua Cleveland

15 Kristen Doughty

16 Aaron Elia

17 Chariton Epchook

18 Janessa Esquible

19 Alice Fitka

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- 1 Clay Hines
- 2 Beverly Hoffman
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- 9 Gerald Kameroff
- 10 Cordelia Kellie
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- 17 Adolph Lupie
- 18 Mary Matthias
- 19 Stephen Maxie
- 20 John McIntyre
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- 2 Aaron P. Moses
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- 6 Martin Nicolai
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- 8 James Nicori
- 9 Anthony Olick
- 10 Spencer Rearden
- 11 William Riley, Jr.
- 12 Terese Schomogyi
- 13 Natasha Seaforth
- 14 Stanislans Sheppard
- 15 Gloria Simeon
- 16 Cara Thompson
- 17 Francis Thompson
- 18 Thad Tikiun
- 19 Denise Tommy
- 20 Kevin Unidentified
- 21 Ronito Unidentified
- 22 Noah A. Wise

1 Evon Waska, Sr.

2 Kevin Whitworth

3 Michael Williams, Sr.

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(On record)

MR. NEWLAND: Good morning, everybody. My name is Bryan Newland. I serve as the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs at the Department of the Interior.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible).

MR. NEWLAND: Can you guys here me all right or (indiscernible)?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible).

MR. NEWLAND: My name is Bryan Newland. I serve as the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs at the Department of the Interior. I'm really grateful to be with you all here today, and I'm really grateful to be back here in Bethel after an earlier visit this year where we heard a lot about fisheries and issues that are important to you.

I know a lot of you and a lot of your relatives -- that communities are still dealing with the cleanup efforts after the typhoon. We're working to be as supportive and helpful as we can with that effort and happy to hear from you afterwards on how we can do better at that.

Before we go any further, I want to acknowledge NOAA Administrator, Dr. Spinrad, who's joining us virtually on the computer here.

1 Rose, do you have a microphone down there? So -- I know Dr.
2 Spinrad wanted to share a few remarks and we'll do our best with the
3 equipment.

4 DR. SPINRAD: Yeah, very good, thank you, Bryan, I appreciate
5 that. Can I just confirm, perhaps with a wave, that you all can hear
6 me adequately? I'm using a new laptop here. Am I coming through?

7 MS. PETOSKEY: Yes.

8 MR. NEWLAND: Yes, I think we're good.

9 DR. SPINRAD: Very good, okay, thank you. So I would very much
10 like to have been there with you in Bethel. I started my day today
11 at 3:00 in the morning in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and I should give
12 thanks to Air Canada for getting me back here to Washington in time
13 so I could join.

14 It was very important to me to be able to share a few
15 perspectives and provide some opening comments, and I specifically
16 want to add to Bryan's comments, recognizing the devastating impacts
17 that the Typhoon Merbok, extratropical storm had on western and
18 northwestern coastal communities of Alaska, and also recognize there
19 is another storm bearing down on your coast here shortly. So we are
20 thinking of you. We're trying to provide the weather services' best
21 weather and ocean services that we can.

22 I thought I'd take a few minutes and share a few perspectives

1 that I hope can contribute to this dialog, this consultation, and I
2 want to talk first about some of the things that we're doing,
3 especially at the National Marine Fisheries Service or NOAA
4 Fisheries, as we call it, in establishing and strengthening some of
5 our working relationships with our Alaska Tribes and Tribal
6 organization colleagues.

7 Our Alaska Fishery Science Center has hired a Tribal Research
8 Coordinator. That's a new activity for us, specifically to identify
9 areas where our scientists can collaborate, work with Alaska Native
10 groups across the state. Similarly, we've established and are in the
11 process of hiring a Tribal Liaison for the Alaska Regional Office,
12 the operational office, to help facilitate some formal consultations
13 and informal, sustained informal engagements.

14 It's very important to us that we bring indigenous knowledge
15 into resource management decision-making and so there are a few
16 things that we're trying to do to establish that capability. Our
17 Fisheries staff are collaborating with the Inuit Circumpolar Council
18 in Alaska to develop a joint program of scientific research and
19 monitoring for the Arctic, and that effort is specifically in support
20 of the agreement to prevent unregulated high seas fisheries in the
21 central Arctic Ocean.

22 It's not in our power, I think you know that, to grant Tribal

1 members a seat on regional fisheries management councils. Only
2 Congress can do that. However, we are advocating for the addition of
3 Tribal seats on the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council. We
4 believe strongly that Alaska Native representation voices and
5 knowledge are critical to fisheries management, especially when it
6 comes to subsistence fishing.

7 There are some very specific research topics that we believe are
8 common to interests of our NOAA fisheries community and indigenous
9 communities. We have a long history at NOAA of working with Alaska
10 Native communities in the Arctic through our co-management
11 partnerships established under the Marine Mammal Protection Act.

12 I had the opportunity just two months ago to spend a couple of
13 weeks traveling throughout the state, and had a chance to learn about
14 one of those products; the Sea Ice for Walrus Outlook or SIWO or
15 SIWO, which I think is a really good example of co-development of a
16 product, in this case, between the National Weather Service and the
17 Alaska region and the Alaska Native sea ice experts.

18 It's a -- it's a weekly report, I should say, specifically for
19 subsistence hunters and coastal communities, and the reports I got
20 when I was in Alaska a couple of months ago was that this particular
21 product turned out to be a very useful tool for subsistence hunters.

22 We're also conducting a number of studies on salmon growth and

1 survival to help us forecast salmon runs. I heard an awful lot about
2 the devastation, the decimation of the salmon runs when I was in
3 Alaska, information that's critical, especially given those kinds of
4 dramatic declines. So we're involved in some science to help reduce
5 bycatch in commercial fisheries. We're testing fishing gear
6 modifications and tactics to reduce the number of non-target species
7 that are caught, and we're conducting genetics assessments.

8 I happened to visit the Auke Bay Lab with Senator Sullivan and
9 see some of the work that's being done to learn about the origin of
10 salmon bycatch and get a handle on how fishers can better avoid some
11 of those consequences.

12 We've also initiated programs in the Bering Sea to learn more
13 about scientific and local observations of climate change on salmon,
14 and specifically on subsistence communities. We know that these
15 unprecedented conditions, climate conditions in Alaska go beyond many
16 of our existing western science forecast abilities and they are here
17 now, where this is not something theoretical that we're going to be
18 seeing in years to come, and that's why indigenous knowledge is a
19 vital component to our ability to predict and project changes and why
20 co-production of this knowledge should help everyone gain a better
21 understanding of not just the fisheries' issues, but the economic and
22 social effects of climate change, specifically on salmon returns and

1 on the communities that depend on them.

2 We're working also with the Department of Commerce on the very
3 important issue associated with timeliness of fishery disaster
4 determinations, allocations, and awards, perhaps particularly
5 noteworthy now, especially with the devastating storms that are
6 hitting as we speak.

7 So we have streamlined some of the internal processes to reduce
8 what we determined were redundant administrative steps and try to
9 improve communication with requesters. That has reduced the process
10 by at least eight to 12 weeks, and so I'm very curious in this
11 consultation to hear your perspective on the processes that we're
12 putting in place to try to streamline some of the fishery disaster
13 determinations, and we'll also continue to engage with external
14 groups with the Department of Commerce, with the Office of Management
15 and Budget, and of course, with Capitol Hill on additional ways to
16 improve all stages of the fishery disaster process from how requests
17 are processed to how determinations are made, and perhaps most
18 importantly, of course, how funds are allocated.

19 So that's definitely on my radar, something that I'm keen to try
20 to see us make some improvements, and with that, let me conclude my
21 opening remarks. I wanted to get some substantive issues on the
22 table. I very much look forward to receiving your comments and

1 hearing your thoughts, and with that, I'll turn the mic back over.

2 Thank you very much.

3 MS. THIELE: Hi, everybody. Can everybody hear me?

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible).

5 MS. THIELE: Hi, everybody. My name is Raina Thiele and I serve
6 as Senior Advisor for Alaska Affairs for Secretary of the Interior,
7 Deb Haaland. In this role, I advise the Secretary on a number of
8 policy issues, Tribal, as well as land management, and I'm really
9 happy to be here today. I'm just really excited that folks have been
10 able to join us.

11 I know there's been a lot happening here within the region with
12 the typhoon, and I want to acknowledge the elders and the leadership
13 who have turned out here today to talk about a subject that we all
14 know is incredibly important and especially important to our
15 Secretary Haaland, who, when she was here in April, heard from
16 (indiscernible). I guess the radio station is trying to butt into
17 the meeting.

18 So when the Secretary was here, she heard from folks like Vivian
19 and others about the fisheries crash on the Kuskokwim and the Yukon,
20 and that was really the reason that we began to think about
21 (indiscernible) these consultations and fully using
22 (indiscernible).....

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible).

2 MS. THIELE: Can I use a different -- I wonder if a different
3 mic will (indiscernible). Let's see, see if this one works better.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible).

5 MS. THIELE: I'm still getting the (indiscernible).

6 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: (Indiscernible) it's the wi-fi.

7 MS. THIELE: Yeah, it might be the wi-fi. That's okay, we'll
8 work -- we'll work through it, but I'm really excited to be here.
9 I'm from Bristol Bay, Alaska. I'm an enrolled member of Pedro Bay
10 Native Village on Lake Iliamna, and so (indiscernible) also
11 (indiscernible) people.

12 So as we're here, we're listening to your stories, I keep my own
13 experience in my mind, as well, you know, fish are not just for the
14 calories, fish are not just for, you know, putting at the dinner
15 table, but it's the foundation for our whole way of life and so we
16 really are kind of bringing that with us, too, today as we listen to
17 all of you, and again, just incredibly appreciative that you all have
18 come out, despite the typhoon and despite the distance I know you all
19 have come.

20 We are incredibly appreciative and I think with that, I will go
21 ahead and turn it over to my colleague because.....

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible).

1 MS. THIELE:we all want to hear from all of you. So I
2 think next, we will (indiscernible) Shannon Estenoz.

3 MS. ESTENOZ: Thank you, Raina, and good afternoon, everyone.
4 My name is Shannon Estenoz. I'm the Assistant Secretary under
5 Secretary Haaland for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, and so my
6 responsibility is to oversee the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and
7 the National Park Service.

8 I want to take a moment, first, to honor all of you, your
9 communities, your Tribes, your families, for the hard work and the
10 sacrifice that you've experienced in recent years due to low Chinook
11 and chum and coho salmon runs.

12 I understand that this is a particularly difficult hardship
13 because I know that replacement foods can't always come from other
14 subsistence sources, and of course, your store-bought sources are not
15 a substitute at all.

16 I also want you to know that I recognize -- to underscore
17 Raina's point that salmon are not just a source of nutrition or food,
18 they really are a cultural mainstay. They bring families together.
19 They create unity. They're a reason for celebration, and so I want
20 you to know that I know that.

21 I want to take just a minute to extend special gratitude to both
22 Tribal leaders and the staff of the Yukon Delta National Wildlife

1 Refuge for partnership and dedication, and the Kuskokwim Inter-Tribal
2 Fish Commissions. I know that this has been a successful
3 collaboration for many years now and I commend you all for your
4 persistence and -- that are based in shared values and really, that's
5 something that hopefully can be emulated elsewhere, really to help
6 the salmon.

7 Finally, I, too, want to extend my heartfelt concern for all of
8 you who have been affected in the communities by the typhoon and I
9 know -- I know -- I have a personal connection. My own home state --
10 I come from the opposite corner of the country, my own home state of
11 Florida was hit last week by Hurricane Ian, and so I really feel like
12 in my heart (indiscernible) I know what it means to go through
13 something like that.

14 So -- and then I want you to know, for you in particular, I know
15 that many foods were lost and so that this is an added burden and
16 challenge for all of you.

17 Thank you so much for welcoming me to your beautiful homelands
18 and I'm grateful for being here and I look forward to hearing what
19 you have to say today. I'm going to turn it over to my colleague
20 Laura Davis.

21 MS. DANIEL-DAVIS: Thank you so much, Shannon. My name is Laura
22 Daniel-Davis, and I am the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for

1 Land and Minerals Management working for Secretary Haaland, and in
2 that role, I work directly with the Bureau of Land Management, the
3 Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, the Bureau of Safety and
4 Environmental Enforcement, and the Office of Surface Mining
5 Reclamation and Enforcement, so some land and some ocean
6 responsibilities.

7 I also wanted to say that BLM Alaska State (indiscernible) Steve
8 Cohn is here. Many of you, I hope, know him. He's here today and I
9 just wanted to express my gratitude for (indiscernible) being with
10 us. It's an honor for me to be here with you today and I look
11 forward to listening and learning from you.

12 We also (indiscernible) your presence, given the many hardships
13 associated with the recent typhoon and of course, we're here to talk
14 about the challenging Chinook and chum salmon numbers that are so
15 (indiscernible) to all of you and I want to (indiscernible) on behalf
16 of Steve and everyone else (indiscernible) engage in full partnership
17 with federal and State agencies, Tribal and regional corporations and
18 local communities and many of them (indiscernible) subsistence
19 fisheries concerned, of course (indiscernible) decline significantly
20 and (indiscernible) about why that's important, not just as sort of a
21 subsistence and resource and food issue, but also the cultural
22 lifestyle and everything else, and of course, the (indiscernible) is

1 a voting member in the Federal Subsistence Management Board and
2 (indiscernible) to address these declines and the (indiscernible)
3 since we all know the numbers continue to decline.

4 The Bureau of Land Management is going to be (indiscernible)
5 prioritizing restoration and these rivers, active restoration will be
6 (indiscernible) bipartisan infrastructure law, which was passed last
7 year (indiscernible) and the President so strongly supported has
8 provided (indiscernible) and will provide (indiscernible) resources
9 on an ongoing basis.

10 The (indiscernible) that whole contribution will cover the
11 stocks again. It's many (indiscernible) and it's going to depend on
12 (indiscernible) holistic management, and again, I continue to look
13 forward to being an active partner in the critical contribution
14 efforts, and I believe that I'm turning it over to (indiscernible).

15 MS. PETOSKEY: Yes, and just really quickly, I forgot
16 (indiscernible) I was going to say when I did my (indiscernible),
17 just that for folks who are here today who will give verbal comments,
18 that's wonderful, we'll accept all of them.

19 If you don't want to comment today, you can (indiscernible). If
20 you don't want to give verbal comments (indiscernible).

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible).

22 MS. PETOSKEY: Anyway, October 28th is the deadline for written

1 comments, if you would like. If you would not like to give a verbal
2 comment today, that's okay, you can write us a letter or an email,
3 and we will give you all the email address, and it's also in the
4 letter that (indiscernible) is currently handing out, so over to
5 (indiscernible).

6 DR. SPINRAD: And can you like fix the (indiscernible)?

7 MS. HARRINGTON: Hello, everyone. I'm Gretchen Harrington. I'm
8 with NOAA Fisheries Alaska Region.

9 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: Closer, yeah.

10 MS. HARRINGTON: Sorry. Hello, everyone. I'm Gretchen
11 Harrington. I'm with NOAA Fisheries Alaska Region. I'm the head of
12 our Habitat Conservation Division and located in Juneau, and I
13 appreciate everyone welcoming us to your community and providing this
14 opportunity to -- and taking the time to talk with us about your
15 experiences (indiscernible).

16 I will keep this short because (indiscernible) Dr. Spinrad
17 providing an overview of the (indiscernible) work being
18 (indiscernible).

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible).

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible).

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible).

22 MS. PETOSKEY: I'm sorry, I forgot to mention that we're also

1 (indiscernible) Fish and Wildlife Services Regional Director Sara
2 Boario, as well.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible).

4 DR. SPINRAD: Okay, we'll get to the consultation part of this
5 now. The way that we're going to do this, we're doing a hybrid
6 format. We don't always do this, but I know some folks couldn't make
7 it to be here in-person. So we -- we're going to monitor those of
8 you who are joining us online. Those of you who are online can use
9 the raise-my-hand feature on Zoom, and if you're joining by phone, I
10 think it's star-nine to raise your hand, and then star-six to unmute
11 yourself.

12 So we're going to alternate around. Those of you who are here
13 in the room, the way that we're going to do this are the front
14 tables, if you wish to speak, we'll ask you to come up to the front
15 of the room, if you're able to do so, and make your comments and then
16 move back to your seat when you're finished, and we'll try -- we'll
17 do our best to recognize everybody that we can.

18 We were scheduled to go from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. today. I know
19 we're off to a late start. I think we do have some cushion to hang
20 there on the back end of that after 4:00. If people still want to
21 speak, we're going to make sure we try our best to capture everything
22 that you share with us in our notes, and then after our consultation

1 process, we'll have a recording later.

2 We do have translation services here for those of you who want
3 to make your comments in your language. We have the equipment up
4 here and we'll just ask -- there's no time limit on your comments,
5 but we'll ask you to be respectful of others who do want to speak, by
6 being concise and clear, and then waiting for a chance for everybody
7 to speak before speaking.

8 So with that, we'll turn over -- yeah, (indiscernible).

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible). They want a short break
10 to fix this music.

11 DR. SPINRAD: All right, we're going to take a very short break
12 to get the sound equipment fixed and then we'll be back.

13 (Off record)

14 (On record)

15 DR. SPINRAD: Hello, everybody. I'll ask you to take your
16 seats. We're going to try this with a single microphone. So we'll
17 relinquish this to the speakers in the front and if we have any
18 federal response to any of the speakers, we'll grab the mic back, but
19 for the most part, we're here to listen.

20 I just want to take a moment to emphasize -- well, one
21 housekeeping item that I want to emphasize (indiscernible) -- so
22 again, we're going to try to make sure that we hear from as many

1 different villages as possible, as well as many folks who have taken
2 time to share their views with us, but we want to ask that,
3 especially early on, that we not have multiple speakers in a row from
4 the same village or on behalf on the same community, so we make sure
5 we're hearing from everywhere.

6 We'll try to, again, go back and forth or be equal between
7 speakers who are here and those who are joining online, and then the
8 last point, I just want to emphasize is again, you've got leadership
9 from the Administration across two different Cabinet agencies here
10 and I really hope that is a signal of our commitment to prioritizing
11 fisheries issues here in Alaska, and to taking these issues
12 seriously.

13 We are here to listen to you and hear from you and learn from
14 you to inform the policies we (indiscernible) develop. So I want to
15 thank you all for joining us today, and we'll turn it over to Vivian
16 for our first (indiscernible), Vivian.

17 MS. KORTHUIS: Thank you. Good afternoon, my name is Vivian
18 Korthuis. I serve as the Chief Executive Officer for the Association
19 of Village Council Presidents. I am Yup'ik and a member of the
20 Emmonak Tribe. I have written testimony and my written testimony
21 will be submitted (indiscernible).

22 Thank you, all, for coming to Bethel and attending the listening

1 session consultation. Thank you to all of your staff for organizing
2 this consultation and travel to Alaska and all of these important
3 consultations in-person and in our region.

4 I want to extend a special thank you to Secretary Haaland and
5 Assistant Secretary Newland for responding to a recent
6 (indiscernible) request to hold this consultation and making it
7 possible for this to happen.

8 AVCP is the largest Tribal consortium in the nation, with 56
9 federally recognized Tribes as members. Right now, we're all
10 gathered here in Bethel on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta in Western
11 Alaska. There are 48 villages spread out along the Yukon River,
12 Kuskokwim River and Bering Sea coast. This makes our region an
13 Arctic region.

14 The YK Delta has approximately 27,000 residents who are part of
15 the Yup'ik, Cup'ik and Athabascan. Subsistence is our way of life.
16 Seventy percent of households in our region harvest game and 98%
17 harvest fish. Salmon is the main fish our families rely on to feed
18 us throughout the winter.

19 Alaska Tribes are experiencing layers of disasters, one on top
20 of -- one on top of another. On top of the long-running law
21 enforcement emergency, Tribes are still dealing with the aftermath of
22 the pandemic and environmental threats, such as last month's Typhoon

1 Merbok. These disasters are compounded by the Western Alaska -- by
2 Western Alaska's unprecedented salmon crash.

3 For the last three years, Chinook salmon runs have been at their
4 lowest in more than three decades. On top of health and safety
5 concerns, our families are worried about putting away enough fish to
6 feed our families throughout the winter. Parents and grandparents
7 are worried about passing our way of life down to children and
8 grandchildren.

9 We need solutions, not more delays or temporary measures to
10 preserve these resources and protect the food security of our
11 families and tribal communities. I would like to share three
12 recommendations briefly with you today.

13 Recommendation number one; reduce bycatch and interception of
14 salmon bound for AYK systems in federally managed fisheries. We
15 cannot continue to wait for agency researchers to conduct run
16 reconstructions and complete bycatch impact analysis before the
17 National Marine Fisheries Service takes action to reduce the
18 thousands of salmon taken as bycatch each season.

19 Subsistence fishers rely on fishing the most to feed our
20 families. Our use -- our use has the least amount of impact on
21 declining stocks. It is deeply unfair to paste the harshest
22 restrictions on subsistence users in the name of conservation. This

1 isn't right. Every action at your disposal should be taken
2 immediately to reduce bycatch.

3 Recommendation number two; a comprehensive National
4 Environmental Policy Act evaluation of the impacts of our current
5 fishery management system. The National Marine Fisheries Service and
6 the North Pacific Fishery Management Council continue to rely on the
7 2004 NEPA comprehensive evaluation to make management decisions.

8 There have been significant changes in the environment since
9 2004, including dramatic declines in salmon populations, marine
10 mammals and seabirds, the impact of climate change on the ecosystem,
11 sea ice loss, the northern movement of fish species, and the unusual
12 deaths of sea seals and gray whales, to name a few, and the impacts
13 of these declines of salmon and other resources on our ability to
14 continue our subsistence way of life and provide food for our
15 families. A new comprehensive NEPA evaluation is necessary to update
16 the information used to make decisions about fisheries management
17 now.

18 Recommendation number three; develop a stronger partnership with
19 Tribes. Tribes have managed these resources successfully for
20 generations. Including Tribes at every level of the decision-making
21 process will result in better outcomes, not just for Tribes, but for
22 all those who depend on these resources.

1 A few recommendations for how to strengthen the partnership with
2 Tribes; respect the trust relationship and engage with Tribes on a
3 government-to-government basis, hold Tribal consultations on all
4 decisions and policies that will impact Tribes, remember that the
5 Council process is not a substitute for Tribal consultation,
6 incorporate indigenous knowledge in decision-making and research
7 processes.

8 There is a wealth of knowledge passed on by our elders to
9 today's subsistence fishers, over thousands of years that can be
10 shared with agencies as we look for solutions to the current salmon
11 crash, increased Tribal representation on the Council process,
12 including Tribal representation on all Council committees.

13 In conclusion, again I want to thank you for traveling to our
14 region to hear directly from our Tribes. Last month, two weeks ago,
15 AVCP held an annual convention. I asked our Tribal delegates to
16 share how the salmon crash has impacted our communities. I gave them
17 plastic bags to write these messages on, bags that would usually hold
18 salmon strips or dried salmon, but are empty now.

19 Here is one of the messages that our Tribal leaders wrote down:
20 "The salmon crash has touched all of us in our region. We are salmon
21 people. Please help us keep our way of life. Don't ignore our plea
22 for help. We matter just like you, (indiscernible - speaking Native

1 language).

2 And in closing, I want to give another plastic bag and I want to
3 read what's on it. It says, "My two-year old granddaughter asks for
4 dried salmon for breakfast instead of pancakes or eggs. Salmon are
5 our main source of food." So this again, represents all the efforts
6 to bring back our salmon to our rivers. Thank you.

7 MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you very much, Assistant Secretary Newland.
8 Welcome to Bethel, and my cousin Raina Thiele, welcome, from Pedro
9 Bay, and to all of you, congratulations for being a regional director
10 now. I welcome you, and also, our esteemed co-manager
11 (indiscernible) so it's good to be here.

12 I'll try to make my comments brief. My name is Mike Williams.
13 I am currently the Chief of the Akiak Native Community, a federally
14 recognized Tribe, and also Chairman of the Kuskokwim River Inter-
15 Tribal Fish Commission, and also Area Vice-President for National
16 Congress of American Indians representing Alaska Tribes, and I'm from
17 Alaska.

18 We appreciate this opportunity for Tribal consultation for all
19 of our Tribal leaders to communicate their concerns about the sudden
20 and devastating salmon collapses that are occurring in our waters.
21 It is our hope that this consultation will provide your agencies with
22 the sense of how serious this crash has been, and also the clear

1 understanding of our policy priorities for response and recovery.

2 We are very pleased that you are here today representing the
3 Department of Interior, NOAA, as a coordination between your agencies
4 reflects that same approach that the Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal
5 Fish Commission takes to addressing the salmon crisis, a gravel-to-
6 gravel approach that addresses issues occurring in both the marine
7 and freshwater environments.

8 Today, I will briefly, number one, introduce the Kuskokwim River
9 Inter-Tribal Fish Commission and the scope of the Kuskokwim salmon
10 collapse that is detailed in our 2022 Situation Report, which you
11 have the copies of, and present our concerns and comments on the set
12 of Tribal consultations themes with specific requests for each
13 agency, as well as identifying specific opportunities for better
14 cooperation between agencies.

15 Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission represents the
16 interest of 33 federally recognized Tribes of the Kuskokwim River in
17 salmon management, research, monitoring, to protect and sustain our
18 salmon fisheries and traditional ways of life. 2022 is the seventh
19 year in a row of successful co-management of the Kuskokwim River
20 Chinook salmon run between Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish
21 Commission and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with federal waters
22 on the Yukon Delta National Wildlife Refuge.

1 The work of our fish commissioners, executive council members,
2 and in-season managers focuses on using both our indigenous
3 knowledge, and the best available western science to conserve and
4 rebuild our salmon populations for future generations.

5 The Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission is also a
6 partner in the larger AYK Tribal Consortium, which represents 183
7 federally recognized Tribes. In addition to the Kuskokwim River
8 Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, the Consortium also includes AVCP, ECC,
9 and Kawerak and the Yukon River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission.

10 (Indiscernible) multi-species salmon collapse; the Chinook
11 salmon run remains depressed over a decade. The 2022 run is 41%
12 below the long-term total run average of -- from 1976 to 2009. The
13 majority of the harvesters only had a few opportunities for
14 subsistence harvest during their run and only about a third of the
15 long-term subsistence needs were met.

16 (Indiscernible) statement goals were met in 2022 because the
17 continued sacrifices and conservation efforts by Kuskokwim
18 subsistence communities, who only met about 1/3 of their long-term
19 Chinook salmon subsistence harvest needs. Salmon returns remain
20 unprecedently low on the Kuskokwim River.

21 Coho; 2022 is the third year of an alarmingly steep decline of
22 coho salmon, and the key message to this is, with the coho salmon now

1 decline, it becomes clear that the Kuskokwim River communities now
2 face a (indiscernible) species salmon collapse. There is no long --
3 any highly abundant back-up salmon species to fill unmet food
4 security needs. Zero.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible).

6 MR. WILLIAMS: We have -- we're up against a wall and
7 (indiscernible) the Department of Interior increase opportunities and
8 support for co-management. Developing a strong co-management
9 relationship between the Tribes and federal agencies is critical for
10 addressing the ongoing salmon crisis and recovering salmon
11 populations.

12 Co-management has proven to be the best plan for stabilizing and
13 recovering declining species, while also safeguarding the cultural
14 nourishment of Tribal and subsistence communities. Co-management of
15 Tribally significant species must be broadened to encompass species
16 that are not facing the conservation concern.

17 Currently, cooperative management on the rives is only triggered
18 when a conservation concern arises. Tribes should be able to be at
19 the table as co-managers for every species that has relevance to
20 Tribes and subsistence ways of life, regardless of conservation
21 status.

22 It is critical that the Administration follow statements in

1 support of co-management and co-stewardship with concrete resource to
2 support co-management efforts in Alaska, and a key message to this is
3 a dedicated and stable annual, non-competitive funding for each
4 regional Tribal fisheries co-management organization is needed to
5 support co-management operations.

6 Tribes are also in need of resources to participate in fishery
7 management and science process. Tribes in the Kuskokwim, Yukon and
8 Norton Sound regions must have access through non-competitive DOI
9 resources and training to support implementation of a long-term
10 community-based monitoring of salmon abundance and harvest.

11 We urge your agencies to work with us to develop the stewardship
12 agreements for federally managed lands, on which our Tribes have
13 lived and subsisted for generations. (Indiscernible) contracting is
14 very important. Indigenous and traditional knowledge must also be
15 incorporated into federal fisheries monitoring, research, management
16 and regulatory decision processes.

17 Tribal representation and the NOAA Marine Fisheries Management
18 process; we strongly support adding two voting Tribal seats appointed
19 by the Tribes through the North Pacific Management Council. We
20 (indiscernible) reauthorization. We also strongly support Tribal
21 representation on all advisory bodies, committees, and plan teams
22 that support the North Pacific Fisheries Management Council's

1 decision-making.

2 Initiate consultation; we are asking NOAA to initiate Tribal
3 consultation on all decisions regarding Bering Sea fisheries and
4 related resources. Consultation has historically been underused by
5 the Agency and the Alaska Regional Office. Going forward, NOAA
6 Fisheries and Alaska Regional Office might ensure that Tribes are
7 consulted on all decisions regarding Bering Sea fisheries and related
8 resources.

9 Until Tribal seats are added to the North Pacific Management
10 Council, as well as (indiscernible), the results of those
11 consultations must be considered by the Agency's voting
12 representative on the North Pacific Management Council and
13 incorporated into their decision-making.

14 NOAA; need for (indiscernible), need for integrated marine and
15 fish (indiscernible) management, while Chinook bycatch in the Bering
16 Sea Pollock fishery has been significantly reduced in recent years,
17 we remain concerned about the current level bycatch of Western
18 Alaska's chum stocks, which was about 50,000 chum salmon in 2022
19 Pollock this season.

20 Even if this amount is considered low by NOAA, the problem is
21 that there is currently no limitation or cap on a number of Western
22 Alaska chum salmon that are caught and discarded in the Bering Sea

1 Pollock fishery, regardless of the impacts of the spawner escapement
2 or (indiscernible) in the salmon regions of origin.

3 When Kuskokwim River communities are severely restricted and
4 Yukon communities have zero subsistence chum harvest opportunities
5 for two years in a row, a chum cap must be established to ensure that
6 escapement and subsistence remain the highest priority.

7 The Department of Interior support ANILCA to improve subsistence
8 management. Federal Subsistence Board; we need expanded Tribal
9 representation in our Federal Subsistence Board. Currently, the
10 Federal Subsistence Board membership is imbalanced, in favor of
11 federal agency representatives. We urge DOI to add additional public
12 Tribal seats on the Federal Subsistence Board through rule-making and
13 increase the number of support staff available to support Tribal
14 representatives serving on the Federal Subsistence Board.

15 During the previous Administration, the Federal Subsistence
16 Board took no action to address the direct threats to the
17 implementation of ANILCA on the Kuskokwim River. We ask Department
18 of Interior to continue your support and your important work on
19 upholding ANILCA through, 1) the current litigation against the State
20 of Alaska, and 2) encouraging Department of Interior Agency number
21 who serve on the Federal Subsistence Board.

22 Office of Subsistence Management; our experience in working the

1 Office of Subsistence Management and Fish and Wildlife Service
2 through the Federal Subsistence Management process has shown that
3 there is a pattern and practice where recent and previous U.S. Fish
4 and Wildlife Service Regional Directors have used their
5 administrative oversight to include the work of the Assistant
6 Regional Director for OSM and their staff.

7 This undue influence and control by previous U.S. Fish and
8 Wildlife Service Regional Directors (indiscernible) in large part of
9 the fact that Regional Directors serve as a direct supervisor for
10 Assistant Regional Director for OSM. You effectively serve all
11 members -- member agencies at large (indiscernible) Office of
12 Subsistence Management must be able to operate as an independent
13 entity without interference or undue influence from U.S. Fish and
14 Wildlife Service.

15 The key message to this is; we support the moving of the Office
16 of Subsistence Management out of under the administrative and
17 supervision of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and to a position
18 under direct supervision of Office of the Secretary of Interior.

19 NOAA; changes to Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund are
20 urgently needed to rebuild AYK salmon populations necessary for
21 Tribal subsistence. For Western Alaska populations to have a chance
22 of recovery, NOAA and -- must reform the Pacific Coastal Salmon

1 Recovery Fund to address the critical priorities, other than the only
2 habitat restoration for ESA listed stocks on the Pacific Northwest.
3 NOAA's BTSRF Program priorities for 2022 states that the highest
4 priority for funding, including the projects that address factors
5 limiting the product that the ESA listed specific salmon populations
6 are those populations there for exercise of Tribal treaty rights or
7 Native subsistence (indiscernible).

8 These two program priorities are presented by NOAA and
9 (indiscernible) authorizing legislation to co-equal high priorities
10 for the PCSRF Program. However, without ESA listed salmon stocks
11 depend on degraded habitat in need of restoration in Western Alaska,
12 the AYK Tribal Consortium application to PCSRF have been ranked low.

13 As a result in recent years, AYK Tribal Consortium has been
14 receiving on an average less than 1% of the PCSRF funding, despite
15 the fact that our program has been working to rebuild the declined
16 salmon populations under the -- necessary for the exercise Native
17 subsistence fishing in AYK regions, which comprises over 52% of the
18 state of Alaska.

19 We are asking for your help to ensure that NOAA's administration
20 of PCSRF prioritizes addressing salmon populations necessary for
21 exercised Native subsistence fishing, as well as addressing the
22 recovery needs of ESA listed stocks.

1 There is a pressing need to update the 2004 Environmental Impact
2 Statement for groundfish fisheries. We urge NOAA to complete an
3 updated comprehensive NEPA evaluation on the impacts of our current
4 fishery management system, including cumulative impacts starting with
5 the robust public scoping process.

6 The current programmatic supplementation EIS completed in 2004
7 is outdated and does not reflect the impact of climate change or the
8 cumulative ecological impact of large-scale removals of groundfish
9 from the Bering Sea ecosystem. Significant shifts have occurred in
10 the Bering Sea coastal system since 2004, including massive multiple
11 salmon species, unusual mortality events for multiple species of
12 marine mammals, rapid -- rapid and unprecedented warming, including
13 loss of cold cool in the northern terrace Bering Sea, late and sudden
14 crash of (indiscernible) populations.

15 In renewing the programmatic supplementation supplemental EIS,
16 NOAA should put special focus on incorporating local and traditional
17 knowledge into the environmental analysis and work to bring Tribes to
18 the table as cooperating agencies.

19 NOAA changes needed to process the fisheries disaster
20 declaration to address subsistence fisheries; we do not have
21 commercial fishing in our region at this time. Therefore, we are
22 asking for your assistance to facilitate allocations of subsistence

1 fishery disaster funding to research and monitoring activities to
2 support restoration and rebuilding. This was done in previous years
3 in the Yukon and Kuskokwim Rivers.

4 In summary, need for coordination between NOAA, (indiscernible),
5 and DOI to support a gravel-to-gravel salmon stock conservation and
6 recovery. Salmon don't need jurisdiction of NOAA versus DOI. We
7 call for expanded cooperation between agencies focused on a gravel-
8 to-gravel approach.

9 The root problem is that the Council is focused on identifying
10 and managing the total allowable catch of Pollock and does not
11 consider the effect of bycatch on the escapement goals or subsistence
12 needs of Kuskokwim and Yukon River communities. We need a greater
13 cooperation between agencies.

14 Thank you for listening to me. I know it's a little long, but
15 that's the shortest I can keep it. Thank you.

16 MR. NEWLAND: We're going to turn to our next speaker from our
17 friends online. Go ahead.

18 MR. SMITH: (Indiscernible - speaking Native language). My name
19 is George Smith. My number on the screen, I think is 907-558-6001.
20 I don't have an official title, other than a subsistence fisherman
21 and resident of Scammon Bay. My title at least is the Native Village
22 of Scammon Bay.

1 You know, during the opening comments and listening to Mike
2 Williams, Mr. Williams, who I have a lot of respect for, two things
3 that were mentioned, but otherwise very, very briefly, you know, even
4 from the panelists' opening comments was, you know, the Typhoon
5 Merbok and the salmon crash, both are linked to climate change and
6 that's something that both have a common denominator on what's
7 wreaking us, you know, havoc to our subsistence way of life and our
8 weather.

9 I want to shift focus to -- you know, I support the restrictions
10 that we're going through for the last couple of years. Some
11 restrictions are not something that we are not used to. We've done
12 this before in the past where, you know, we had big chum crash and we
13 weren't allowed to fish for two or three years, and it's something
14 that we've done.

15 We've change our way of fishing to dipnets to allow king salmon
16 passage and now it's for all salmon species, but despite all the
17 restrictions, and the most recent one is (indiscernible) restricted
18 gear, which is four-inch, no longer than 60 feet to target non-salmon
19 species, and that's what I want to turn the focus on, at least for my
20 part.

21 Scammon Bay is along the coast. We have a riverhead called the
22 Kun River. It is not connected to the Yukon in any way, shape or

1 form, yet even here in our river, which is considered a non-salmon-
2 spawning river, we are forced to comply with the gear restrictions to
3 target non-salmon species.

4 I think it's great to see Mr. Edward Adams do the invocation and
5 Myron Naneng on the screen earlier. I think both can attest that our
6 river does not in any way, shape or form connect to the Black River,
7 which connects to the Yukon. Our river just goes up and ends. I
8 tried to get this river open to non-restricted fishing because
9 there's -- we're considered non-salmon, but I had fierce opposition
10 from the Federal Manager that manages the Yukon River, which brings
11 me to the next point, when we're allowed four-inch gear early in the
12 summer when salmon are swimming, we normally go to the Black River,
13 which is between here and the Yukon, and I think Mr. Adams can tell
14 everybody there that this is -- Black River becomes a village of
15 Scammon Bayers that moved there to subsist for salmon very
16 (indiscernible) here in our river.

17 But to harvest the broadhead, whitefish and sheefish, which are
18 abundant and very high fat content in the spring, early spring and
19 summer, we need more than four-inch gear. We need five, five-and-a-
20 half-inch gear, which we are not allowed to. The four-inch gear
21 will, you know, get us the Arctic Cisco and the humpback whitefish,
22 which are very, very skinny and have no fat and no taste, you know,

1 the skin is red in most cases of the humpbacks, and it's just not
2 meaningful, you know. If you're going to allow us -- put it this
3 way, their intent is to make us feel like they are doing -- allowing
4 us to do something, which is not meaningful.

5 In late August and September, early September, that's when we
6 normally use three-and-a-half and four-inch gear to harvest Arctic
7 Cisco and the humpback and also continuing with the broadhead, and
8 even for the broadhead, we still need four-and-a-half, five-inch
9 gear, and that's the unintended hardships caused by the restrictions
10 on -- to conserve salmon.

11 On the Kuskokwim River, unrestricted gear is allowed on non-
12 salmon tributaries, such as the Tunt River and the Johnson River, and
13 I think there's a couple other rivers that are also allowed
14 unrestricted gear to target non-salmon species, and that's just
15 something that I'd like to be uniform.

16 All intents and purposes, you know, the restrictions are well-
17 meaning, but they are causing unintended hardships, which is
18 something I can't hold back on anymore, because if we're going to
19 allow to fish, it's got to be meaningful for what we target, what we
20 want to target, and I hope in some way, shape or form I'm making
21 sense that it's just -- it's just not meaningful to try and allow us
22 to fish for Arctic Cisco and the humpback whitefish when it's not the

1 time or the season to try and harvest them, when the time to harvest
2 them is later on in the summer and early into the fall, and the idea
3 of timed harvest, the broadheads and the Sheefish is early in the
4 spring and into early in the summer, but we can't harvest them with
5 the restricted gear of four-inch, and then to add insult to injury,
6 you know, I just got an email from Alaska Department of Fish and Game
7 that we are allowed now to fish unrestricted gear 24/7 when there's
8 no more fish anywhere, and it's just -- it just doesn't make sense
9 here in Scammon. Our river does not connect to the Yukon, yet we are
10 allowed -- we are not allowed to fish with no other -- with no
11 restrictions. It just doesn't make sense, but I applaud, you know,
12 people here in Scammon that are complying and following the
13 restricted -- the restrictions to help conserve salmon.

14 That's what our parents have done, our ancestors have done for
15 many, many years, and it's something that I have no problem with.
16 It's just that, you know, a closer look needs to be done on, you
17 know, other tributaries that are not connected to the Yukon or the
18 Kuskokwim Rivers, where they just stand alone. They just end in a
19 lake some place upriver. Thank you.

20 MR. NEWLAND: Thank you. We'll go down this table and then I'll
21 move to the table on (indiscernible).

22 MS. SIMEON: Thank you. Welcome to my village. My name is

1 Gloria Simeon. I'm the Tribal citizen of the Orutsaramiut
2 Traditional Native Council, the nation of this village. I'm a woman
3 of the river. My blood runs from the headwaters to the mountains.
4 I'm from this river. The river's my life. I was reflecting when I
5 came to my first fighting for fish meeting this morning, I spoke to
6 Evon Waska, our respected elder. He was at that same meeting, we
7 were meeting with Governor Hickel to talk about regulations that were
8 being placed on my people for our food, and I heard Evon Waska tell
9 the Governor to put feet on his promises.

10 I never thought the day would come where my unborn grandchildren
11 would not be able to have fish camp. Through the years, that day is
12 here. I never thought it would happen in my lifetime, and I'm so
13 sorry for my people that we're being threatened in this manner.

14 My usual venue is within (indiscernible) indigenous people,
15 building resiliency in our villages against suicide and fighting to
16 protect our river from the mine. This is out of my realm, but
17 (indiscernible) is tied to everything of who we are and what we are
18 as people. This is our food. This is our life.

19 Public Law 96-487 has been violated. It's been broken. It's a
20 law of trust that we have always access to our customary and
21 traditional uses of our food. The law protects us so we can eat our
22 customary and traditional foods, and subsistence is not a practice.

1 We don't practice subsistence. We live it. It's not a way of life.
2 It is our life. It's who we are and how we are.

3 YKHC, I was on YKHC Health Board with the human studies group,
4 all the research that has been done about our health is tied to our
5 having access to our customary and traditional food sources. If we
6 can't eat our own food, we cannot be healthy. We don't thrive on
7 welfare food. I have more of a personal relationship with my first
8 piece of king salmon than I do having a Big Mac burger or a steak in
9 Anchorage or sushi, and (indiscernible) and this is the health of our
10 population that is at stake here, and these restrictions that have
11 been put upon us, those not only affect our principal well-being,
12 they affect our mental health and our spiritual well-being.

13 And subsistence is not just an activity. It's not something,
14 like I said, it's not something we practice. When we're doing fish
15 camp or berry-picking or putting that moose away, we're talking.
16 We're talking about our oral traditions, the connections of who we
17 are to everybody else, to our land, our water, our air. We're
18 talking about genealogy, history. Our children are learning geology;
19 where you go to fish. Ecology; being good to the environment.
20 Biology; you learn lots of other fish when you're cutting it up.
21 It's not just the fish, backbones, front bones, bellies, heads,
22 tails, every part we use and every part we eat. That's biology.

1 Chemistry; how long we soak it in the brine, how long we smoke it
2 until it's done. Math; how much just one fish is going to do, how
3 many strips, how many bellies. Pathology; when there's something
4 wrong with the fish, we want to know. We see it right there, because
5 we're up close and personal with every fish that we cut.

6 We know if there's something wrong with our food, and we learn
7 food preparation and preservation, all of these in that one activity.
8 That's a lifetime of knowledge that our children are learning in fish
9 camp. My grandchildren, four years with no fish camp. They feel
10 empty. My husband and I can do a little bit. We try not to take
11 more than what's going to feed our families, and it's gotten less and
12 less, less and less, and I really appreciate you coming here to hear
13 our testimony, and Vivian and Mike William's testimony, that the end-
14 users should not be burdened with the conservation of the resource.

15 I am an end-user. The women here, for the most part, are the
16 true end-users of our fish. We're the ones that cut the fish, brine,
17 and smoke it, decide how it's going to be done and taken care of.
18 It's the women that truly are the end-users of our fish, and research
19 has proven, too, not only is salmon our life, it's in our DNA. It's
20 in our blood. We can't do without that.

21 Climate change has been an ongoing threat to us. We know this.
22 We've been warned and climate change needs to be considered and

1 weighed when determining these quotas on the high seas. The big
2 picture needs to be looked at, the global picture, the entire
3 ecosystem. Our oceans are threatened. Our air is threatened. Our
4 water is threatened. Don't drink rainwater. Please don't drink
5 rainwater. There's plastic particles in it that's (indiscernible)
6 for you. It's no more from (indiscernible) heaven. It's not pure.
7 We're suffering the impacts of climate change in our (indiscernible)
8 contributions to what's degraded our earth and we must be looking at
9 cutting back in all areas, because the entire global system is
10 stressed out and food security is very real.

11 Nobody's talking about the impact of the drought and these
12 massive weather systems that are going through our country, not just
13 America, but the whole world, threatening food, food security. If
14 people down in the states are shooting each other because somebody
15 bumped them in line, what are they going to do when we have to fight
16 for food and water?

17 And we're at that point right now. We're being regulated from
18 our food and water, and I really feel for our brothers and sisters on
19 the Yukon, two years of no fish. Two years of no fish, what does
20 having an empty smokehouse do to your mind, to your spirit, when you
21 have all that time on your hands (indiscernible) college your
22 children are going to and fish camp? How do you fill that emptiness?

1 We're here to fight for our fish and we need you to help us.
2 We're in the red zone of food security and climate change and
3 numerous threats coming upon us and we barely have the time to react
4 to one, before another one comes along. Who would have expected a
5 typhoon? One crisis to another, our people are suffering and we're
6 losing ground if we don't stand up and fight for our fish today while
7 we have you here to listen to us, and it made no sense to me to hear
8 that the State Troopers and Fish and Game was going fish camp to fish
9 camp on the Yukon last year to make sure -- to make sure there was no
10 fishing in (indiscernible).

11 My cousin, Nathal (sp), she had to think about going to Cascade
12 (indiscernible). She lives in (indiscernible), no fish in her
13 smokehouse for two years, but she can go to Cascade and fish with her
14 sister, but that puts added stress on another system. So we
15 desperately need your help, and I thank you for coming here to give
16 us your time. Thank you.

17 MR. HUNTER: Good afternoon, my name is Henry Hunter, Sr. I'm
18 with Orutsararmiut Native Council. It was the speaker before me, I
19 agree very much with what they have spoken about. You know, the
20 Kuskokwim River historically supported the largest subsistence salmon
21 fishery in the state of Alaska.

22 I remember years ago when I was a kid, we had king salmon about

1 five feet long. They were huge, and the people who participated, and
2 the fishes, and the number of salmon harvest will agree to that.
3 What we are with some of the (indiscernible) we are the Kuskokwim,
4 the lower first half of the monetary income, in other words, poverty
5 is in our region.

6 This region is characterized by a high production of wild food
7 for -- for local use. In other words, we don't have the money, the
8 jobs. We depend on the salmon, the land, the moose, and the caribou
9 that come to our region. We do a lot of fishing. We depend on the
10 salmon, but that is slowly going away.

11 The Yukon River is so over-restricted that they don't even fish
12 anymore. The State of Alaska won't allow it. (Indiscernible) coming
13 on the Kuskokwim and I don't want to see that. One of the things
14 that I'd like to see the federal government is work closely with the
15 Kuskokwim Working Management to ensure that we have enough salmon
16 that come up the Kuskokwim River, but I believe that it's too little,
17 too late.

18 I wish that this group had met with us 15 to 20 years ago, when
19 our elders who used to tell us, you know, the salmon's going to
20 disappear. They can see that. Our people are the most restricted
21 people in the world and I hate to see that.

22 As I said earlier, I'd like to see the federal government work

1 closely with the Kuskokwim Management Working Group to ensure that we
2 harvest the salmon that we -- at the head of (indiscernible). One of
3 the things I personally would like to see is the restrictions on the
4 high seas. We see too many pictures and on TV of way too much salmon
5 bycatch by the high sea fishing. Those are the salmon that are
6 coming to the Yukon and to the Kuskokwim. At one point in time, the
7 federal government had observed it on there to make sure that the
8 bycatch wouldn't do much. I don't know if they're still there, but I
9 would like to see some kind of a restriction on the high seas, and
10 also Area M, Area M fishing.

11 Why would the Yukon and the Kuskokwim people have to be the only
12 ones restricted? Why exempt Area M fishermen and the high seas
13 fishermen be restricted too? You know, when they closed this river
14 from the mouth all the way to Aniak, they restrict us. They give us
15 a window, say for example, maybe Monday or Tuesday, you can fish, and
16 I think that's wrong.

17 If you're going to close the river, close the whole river, not
18 just a small portion of it, and (indiscernible) you know, I -- we
19 heard testimony from Gloria Simeon. She's part of ONC, and I'm also
20 from ONC, so that was our testimony. So I'd like to thank you for
21 being here and hearing our testimony.

22 MR. NEWLAND: We're going to go to this gentleman, go down this

1 table, please. For those of you joining online, just remember, we
2 welcome your comments as well. You can raise your hands with the
3 virtual raise-hand function or press star-nine, if you're on the
4 phone.

5 MR. UNIDENTIFIED: (Indiscernible) my name's Kevin
6 (indiscernible). I'm from Native Village of Napaskiak, Tribal
7 Council, and I'm also with the Yukon-Kuskokwim Regional Tribal
8 Government who's working to protect the federal (indiscernible) from
9 the congressional delegation. You heard it all. Gloria Simeon
10 started off. I mean, I was going to start off, but Gloria brought it
11 up. We're fighting for the last fish; our people against NOAA
12 people, North Pacific Management Fishing Council. We're hearing
13 we're over-regulated people, and it's true.

14 We grew up fishing. That's why we live by the river. That's
15 how we were brought up. We were brought up before the freezers,
16 before the refrigerators, and there was no local stores. We depended
17 on the food provided from the river and the land. Now it has
18 changed. You (indiscernible) here and learn. We're not dumb people,
19 you know.

20 The Bering Sea and the dock of Alaska fishery started a little
21 over 50 years ago. From there on, all stocks of species were
22 noticeably going down, and today, there's zero. We hear and listen

1 to the radio and see the fishing report, bad news after bad news.
2 Yukon, zero fish returns, zero Chinook, zero chums, Kuskokwim, same
3 way. We take turns, you know, and then during one of the
4 restrictions, we said, "No more, let's go out and fish. Our elders
5 need the fish." We were criminalized. We sacrificed what we had to
6 do to feed the people in our villages.

7 The bycatch issue has echoed over and over. We hear it in the
8 wintertime and when we anticipate going (indiscernible) go get our
9 fishing in the summertime. Stop the trawlers. The trawlers are
10 killing the fish. I've been looking into this and I've been involved
11 before. I used to be one of those (indiscernible) Board members. I
12 ain't no more, and it's safe to say, you know, is it worth it?

13 I hear on the radio news that NOAA and the North Pacific are
14 saying it's a difficult decision of the bycatch to be reduced because
15 the people -- the people are going to lose benefits and income.

16 That ain't true. Only a few villages benefit from the proceeds
17 from the Bering Sea, and my village is one of them. I surveyed my
18 people and asked them, what's more important, do you want benefits
19 from our (indiscernible) that they have programs or do you want dry
20 fish or fresh fish or fish in the freezer in the winter? "Are you
21 crazy, I want the fish," is what they're saying.

22 You know, it does not -- the Bering Sea fishery is 50 years old.

1 The CDQ is 30 years old, and the idea of outside government firms on
2 this area saying that your benefit and income is going to be
3 affected. That's being, you know, that's -- that's crazy. I see
4 most of these people, they don't benefit anything from the Bering Sea
5 proceeds.

6 They say the Bering Sea is a two-billion-dollar, you know, two-
7 billion-dollar industry. All of that two billion dollars, how much
8 is going to the villages? Crumbs, nothing, zero. All that money in
9 that Bering Sea is going away. It's just (indiscernible) it's our
10 ocean. We say it's our ocean. Some of these coastal communities
11 know it. We depend on the seal, the halibut, the salmon, and
12 everything that the rivers and sea provides.

13 Well, these numbers are depleting. It's from bycatch. There
14 are two types of trawlers. One is in-shore catcher trawler. They
15 use boats to come close to the shore, and I hear from witnesses when
16 they see those boats, all those animals that they're hunting fish out
17 there, they depend on these fish for food; the seals, the whales.
18 They're coming too close to the shore, and looking at the numbers
19 from NOAA's report, the inshore (indiscernible) fisheries are the
20 dirtiest fisheries. They catch more bycatch and what they say from
21 the markets is that the -- the (indiscernible) they catch from that
22 inshore has less value than the folks in the high seas that are

1 catcher/processor, high sea boats, and those high sea boats, same
2 story. They're taking everything, and we people get -- sometimes we
3 get territorial. It's our ancestors' water, you know. We protect
4 our land. We protect everything, our species, our fish and game.

5 Over a few years, the fish will die, and we hear from the coast,
6 the birds and the seals have died. They've washed ashore. We hear
7 that you guys are studying it. What's the result of that study? And
8 it comes with a warning, it's affecting everything. The fish -- the
9 trawlers, since there's no fish where they used to fish, they're
10 moving up.

11 I implore you north people, they're going to do the same.
12 They're going to kill everything they catch and it's true, and NOAA's
13 bycatch reduction strategy, it's not working. It's just for show.
14 We hear and I hear the speaker saying, where is the partnership? We
15 want to partner with NOAA, our Native people, our Native Tribes,
16 Nations, there's nothing. We have Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish
17 Commission here on the Kuskokwim. We have Yukon River Inter-Tribal
18 Fish Commission. Nothing -- there's not partnership between our
19 groups and NOAA, and this listening session, all the consultation,
20 you know, it's just (indiscernible) to let us (indiscernible) off so
21 we'll disappear.

22 I tell, you know, we better not shut up and stay idle no more.

1 Let's keep pushing from this meeting, you know. I want to go out and
2 be satisfied just because I said and told some of the things I know.
3 We've got to keep pressing forward.

4 If we are restricted, those trawlers need to be restricted. I
5 see the annual reports from these companies that profit from the
6 Bering Sea. They're stock-piling cash. Look at them. They can
7 afford to dock their boats and stay still for a while like us.

8 During the summer, you know, it becomes a pretty stressful time
9 for us people. We -- our elders are hungry. They're not
10 (indiscernible), like I told you before, we did not grow up with
11 fried chicken, fish sticks from the store. We are -- we always pray
12 for our food, and it will never stop.

13 It is difficult? I'm asking NOAA. It's not difficult. It's
14 our Bering Sea. It's our ocean, you know. Our people, they're
15 saying, "Give us two seats, give us two seats on the North Pacific."
16 We should be on these seats, all of us, and some of us should be on
17 these seats. It's our ocean. It may be called America, you know,
18 but it's ours, too. Our people trust our own people. Our people
19 want to see our own people sitting right there, because our own
20 people take care of our own people here, and that's why we like to
21 have, you know, CEOs and things like that of our own people, because
22 they have connection to the people where they're from.

1 I'm not, you know, I could go on, but you know, I'm tired of
2 talking and I'm tired -- I hate to yell, but sometimes I end up
3 yelling. Thank you.

4 MR. NICOLAI: My name is Father Martin Nicolai. I'm a retired
5 Orthodox priest, but also a Tribal member of Kwethluk, Organized
6 Village of Kwethluk, and also a Board member for our local
7 corporation, but what I just (indiscernible) now is (indiscernible),
8 by the way, thank you, (indiscernible) stealing your words
9 (indiscernible) greatly affected me.

10 As it is now, trawling continues out in the Bering Sea, and they
11 continue to destroy the salmon, the halibut, and the crab. It's
12 approved and legal destruction. I'll say it again. It's approved
13 and legal destruction of our resources that we have depended on for
14 many generations.

15 The Alaska Department of Fish and Game cannot do anything about
16 it, and it remains silent. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service cannot
17 do anything about it. They remain silent. Our area lawmakers and
18 Representatives Hoffman and Zulkosky cannot do anything about it and
19 they remain silent.

20 The Yukon River villages (indiscernible) already have relations
21 over there. They are suffering because of this and everyone that I
22 have mentioned about remains silent.

1 The only voices that are crying out concerning this injustice
2 are all of us here, the local people, the local subsistence fishermen
3 and hunters, and other Alaskans who use these resources and depend on
4 them for their livelihood.

5 It's an injustice and it's unfair. The North Pacific Fisheries
6 Management Council, and perhaps you sitting up there, your
7 departments, are the only agencies right now that can stop this
8 unfairness. You can do it better than all of us here, sitting here,
9 with your decision-making policies and your voices that are heard
10 better than our voices here, but most of the time, you're not going
11 to do so because of money and perhaps, because of political pressure.

12 It's unfair that the trawl (indiscernible) business can destroy
13 thousands upon thousands of the Bering Sea salmon, halibut, and crab
14 without any consequences, while the local (indiscernible) here, the
15 fisheries are closed and when we get a single salmon during the
16 closed period, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife come quickly. The Alaska
17 Department of Fish and Game, they come quickly and they take our
18 fish.

19 We are fined. They take away our net, and we get a record, as
20 in (indiscernible) said. We become criminals, just because of one
21 fish, just because of one fish that we caught during the closed
22 period, one salmon.

1 You talk about saving salmon, but you only let us, Alaskans, who
2 depend on the salmon to bear the burden of saving and preserving, and
3 you don't do anything at all with the problems (indiscernible),
4 except to say, "Let's work on getting less bycatch," and by that,
5 you're saying, "Let's continue letting trawl fishing continue
6 destroying our salmon, but try not to let them destroy too much."

7 But if they destroy even a thousand king salmon out there,
8 that's too much. If they destroy the same number of chum salmon,
9 that's too much already. Who knows how many coho salmon have been
10 destroyed by them? We hardly had any coho salmon this summer.

11 (Indiscernible) my suggestion, my recommendation, we need to
12 start to talk about a moratorium. We need a moratorium on trawl
13 fishing in the Bering Sea for five years or more, if we want to
14 effectively have a chance to save and preserve the salmon and other
15 species being destroyed by trawl fishing.

16 We need to put a stop to the charade, instead of issuing more
17 studies. We know, already, who is doing the most destruction to our
18 salmon, halibut, and crab. A moratorium is needed. A ban on
19 trawling and trawling for a good number of years is needed. You
20 don't need more studies and reasons to continue with trawl fishing.

21 No more studies, ban trawl fishing, issue a moratorium of
22 trawling in the Bering Sea or at least start to talk about it as a

1 possibility then you'd be helping us (indiscernible).

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Mr. Chairman, (indiscernible).

3 MR. NEWLAND: If you want to speak, please come to the front
4 tables and we'll take you in turn.

5 MR. ROBERT HOFFMAN: Mr. Chairman.

6 MR. NEWLAND: Yes, sir.

7 MR. ROBERT HOFFMAN: Mr. Chairman, can you hear me?

8 MR. NEWLAND: Yes.

9 MR. ROBERT HOFFMAN: Yes, I'm on the phone and I don't have
10 access to the television, but I'd like to have testimony, if I may.

11 MR. NEWLAND: Yes, go ahead.

12 MR. ROBERT HOFFMAN: My name is Robert Hoffman. I am from
13 Bethel and I am also a member of ONC, Orutsararmiut Native Council.
14 I have been a commercial and a subsistence fisherman for over 61
15 years. I have watched the fishing industry from where it was to
16 collapse, and I let you know, sir, we are -- we are regulated by the
17 State and federal government.

18 One of the biggest problems that we have are being -- we are
19 told when to fish, how to fish, with what to fish, when to start, and
20 when to stop fishing. We have gone so far as the State regulating us
21 what we used to catch big king salmon with eight-inch gear, the State
22 of Alaska has regulated us down to six-inch fish. That is why we're

1 catching only small fish. That's the truth. Now we only catch small
2 fish because we're regulated by the State of Alaska to use six-inch
3 now.

4 The State of Alaska monitors what we call escapement and
5 survival of the species. I'll have you know, sir, we are the only
6 ones in the whole western hemisphere of Alaska that do not verify and
7 can't verify anything. So we, therefore, we are told by the
8 regulators, who is the State of Alaska, what to do, how to do it,
9 when to do it, and when to stop, and it saddens me that we are unable
10 to at least verify what they regulate us on is called escapement.

11 Some day, I hope we have the finances and the resources to
12 verify the State's escapement and survival count. We have never said
13 no to them, because they have been given the job by the federal
14 government, therefore, the State of Alaska and the federal fisheries
15 do all the telling us what to do and how to do it.

16 We hear of -- we hear of members co-managing by inserting a
17 couple of members down on the North Pacific Management Board. Well,
18 I'll tell you, sir, I have been in the Board, on the Native Boards
19 for over 40 years, and I'll tell you on all the Boards, they vote,
20 and the majority always wins. Therefore, two members on a Board is
21 not enough to be fair. We'll always lose. We're going to need more,
22 at least be fair and have a 50/50 count on all of the Boards on the

1 North Pacific, or we have no say so, because we'll be out-voted on
2 everything that comes about with the problems that we are having.

3 We hear about -- we hear about observers on these boats down in
4 the high seas fishing. I have testimony from individuals from down
5 there as the observers. The observers are even paid off by the
6 fishing boats. Therefore, observers on these boats is not the way to
7 go. It's dishonest and for a few members of these, you might say,
8 observers.

9 We, at least, would like to have the resources somehow to verify
10 the regulators who regulate us and tell us what to do and how to do
11 that. We've got to be involved in that and that is what I would only
12 consider co-management, if we are involved in the escapement count
13 and the Boards on the high seas fishing to be equal, fair.

14 If that's -- if that's the way it's going to go, sir, I really
15 understand, like the fish, is just like the game, the moose, the
16 caribou, we are regulated by the State of Alaska.

17 I'll have you know, sir, and the only ones that benefit from
18 this whole operation from the fish and the game are the State and
19 federal employees. They're the ones that continue to get their bi-
20 monthly and monthly finances for their work, while we, the
21 subsistence users, get nothing of that part, and I'll let you know,
22 sir, the majority of our people are on Social Security, and the only

1 ones that are surviving in our region that I see are the ones that
2 have a retirement.

3 We are the most -- highest expensive cost of living here in the
4 state of Alaska, the western hemisphere. In a few of the villages I
5 have spoken with are paying \$10 a gallon of gas, and that, I don't
6 know, we need our resources so that we may someday be able to haul
7 our own fuel up here and gas with our own barges and not be
8 restricted from obtaining that because of the lack of resources that
9 we have at this time.

10 So I'm -- I'm sorry if I'm feeling a little mad or something,
11 but I just wanted to assure you that it's got nothing to do with the
12 NOAA people. What we need, in fact, is not only a verification of
13 all of these resources that we are able to have, I wish and hope
14 someday that the NOAA administration, like the emergencies that we
15 have, they call it feet-on-the-ground, that hurricanes and
16 everything, the tidal waves come around, they always talk about feet-
17 on-the-ground, my hope someday is to have NOAA members feet-on-the-
18 ground to actually observe what the State and the federal government
19 are doing to what we call the subsistence users up here in our
20 region, and that's -- there's no other way to fix that, unless we
21 have actual NOAA people on the ground to testify and to verify what I
22 am saying, and the resources so that we can have what we call

1 verification of the State employees and the federal employees that
2 are the only ones that benefit, like I said, with the fish and the
3 game, that we, the subsistence users, utilize in our land.

4 Four thousand -- four thousand members of our region have what
5 we call land claims, 160 acres each, and I'll let them know that we
6 have their animals living and protected by us people on our property
7 so they can have an employment job. Like I stated, the employees of
8 the State and the federal government are using our people, who have
9 160 acres raise their moose and caribou and everything, I ask NOAA to
10 ask the State and federal government, like I asked the Congress, I
11 asked the Senator, where is my check for preserving their employment
12 with the animals and the fish?

13 I have not received an answer yet. I was told I was going to
14 get an answer about our protection for their employment, and it's
15 just not fair for us subsistence users to help them retain their
16 monthly employment with the resources that we protect from poachers,
17 from death.

18 I'm just concerned, sir, and like I said, we need two things; we
19 need our own resources to verify the State's count and we also need
20 NOAA members on the -- feet-on-the-ground here to observe what I have
21 -- what I am saying, to verify testimony that this is true. Thank
22 you very much.

1 MR. NEWLAND: Thank you (indiscernible). So it's 3:30. We were
2 scheduled to go until 4:00, but we got in late, and we had some
3 delays with the sound equipment getting started. So we'll stay
4 through 5:00, and then we'll start to wrap up at 5:00, make sure we
5 catch everyone's comments.

6 So with knowing that we have 90 minutes left here today, I just
7 want to reiterate that we want to hear from as many people as
8 possible. We don't want to put time limits on people, but I would
9 just ask that our speakers be aware that we have 90 minutes left and
10 a lot of folks who may want to speak yet, so we'll go with you, sir,
11 then we'll jump down this table and come back across.

12 MR. TIKIUN: My name is Thad Tikim. I'm the At-Large Chairman
13 for the Association of Village Council Presidents. So for years,
14 we've requested that fisheries be looked into with the declining
15 number of salmon returning to our rivers, especially on the Kuskokwim
16 here. It started off with the Chinook salmon, then the chum salmon,
17 that crashed a few years ago.

18 This year, for the first time, the coho salmon is -- was closed
19 for most of the fishing season and next year, I don't know what it's
20 going to bring, you know. With the numbers down as low as they are,
21 you know, and it's gotten to the point where the returns have gotten
22 just a little bit too low and everybody's gotten the attention of the

1 fisheries and it's now being discussed, but for years, we've always
2 thought, I remember a few elders back, like Carol Sparks (sp), they
3 were very vocal on some of the fisheries that were happening out in
4 Area M, and after they had passed on, things were a little fine, and
5 now, it's starting to come back again, and so a lot of our people
6 here, we rely heavily on the fish, the Native people of Alaska.
7 That's one thing that we grew up with, and you know, it's part of our
8 culture here.

9 The other thing that we also need is seats on organizations that
10 regulate the fishing industry. We are also users of the fisheries
11 and we also would like to have our voice heard in those fisheries
12 that help to regulate the return of the salmon or the catch of the
13 salmon, along the whole chain, you know, from our rivers here out to
14 the ocean and as they return.

15 If you look at the -- our area here, we are pretty much heavily
16 regulated with the amount of hours that we could fish, the type of
17 fishing gear that we can fish with. Yet, in the high seas or out in
18 the ocean, you know, there's no -- really no regulation that I could
19 see. They're still catching the fish. Yet, we, on the river here,
20 we're regulated. We can only fish at a certain time. We can only
21 fish with a certain amount of gear. Yet, the fisheries that I see
22 out in the Bering Sea, there's no changing there, at least I haven't

1 seen any, you know, I haven't heard of any.

2 The people on both sides of the river are really hurting. This
3 year, the Yukon is really hurting. They -- they're not allowed to
4 fish at all. They've only got, you know, orange gear, you know,
5 which are designed for non-salmon species that they've got to use to
6 try and catch their subsistence needs, and somewhere, a line has got
7 to be drawn, you know, you just can't have the table tilted one way.
8 Somewhere, it has to be drawn, you know, the -- cut down on the
9 fisheries, especially the bycatch of the salmon that are returned,
10 and getting back into -- I'll used Area M for an example, to me, all
11 that is just an intercept fishery. It's no different than the high
12 seas fisheries.

13 If you look at the numbers taken, I believe last year, it was
14 about 1.2 million fish that were taken, at least of chums. I know
15 this year, the numbers were down. So they were reduced a little bit
16 on -- or they said that they were going to curtail back on some of
17 their fish and their numbers are little bit lower, but the numbers
18 returning back to our river here are still low and we're still being
19 regulated on our fishing here.

20 And also, the -- in Area M, if the -- they got the numbers --
21 catch was a little bit lower this year, but also on the northern side
22 of the Aleutian Chain, you know, with the trawlers out there, the

1 numbers of fish that they catch, you know, I understand that this
2 year, that they've, you know, probably moved that (indiscernible) up
3 a little bit further north to help reduce the amount of bycatch, of
4 the chum that return to -- in Western Alaska, but still, the numbers
5 are real low, and last year, I didn't get one chum. This year, I was
6 very lucky. I only got one, and you know, the federal government
7 does really not take a look at all of the bycatch figures and the
8 amount the fish taken here on the Kuskokwim, our number is so low
9 compared to the bycatch that happens out in the high seas or out in
10 the Bering Sea.

11 You know, if some of it goes by, at least we'll have a little
12 more fish in our area here, hopefully, but then, with the numbers
13 being so low, we don't know, you know, if we have enough fish to, you
14 know, to have everybody's needs, you know.

15 You know, the fish that come out of our rivers here, they're
16 still coming out -- I mean, in high enough numbers where there's
17 catch out in the high seas area. They're still high, but the returns
18 are still very low here in my region, and we get regulated here every
19 year, because they want to try to reach their escapement goals.

20 Yet, the high seas fisheries, there's no limit, as far as I
21 know. There might be a limit. They probably exceeded that. A lot
22 of our people here are reduced to fishing with four-inch gear, you

1 know, 60-foot in length, you know, designed to catch other species of
2 fish, but like I stated earlier, as far as I know, that there's no
3 other changes to the other fishing industries and if things don't --
4 continue to go the way they are, everyone is really going to get
5 hurt, because the numbers ain't going to be coming back here.
6 There's going to be no salmon returning back out there for them to
7 catch.

8 Climate change is another role that's played into our fisheries
9 here. The warmer water's killing the salmon, more rain causing high
10 runoffs, and the spawning in the springs for periods of above normal
11 temperatures without rain produced and very low water conditions.
12 These all went back to fisheries of the spawning of the salmon.

13 As to the declaration for fishery disaster, our people who
14 depend heavily on the salmon also should be involved in the process.
15 The funding received for declared disasters should be distributed out
16 to the subsistence users. They're the ones that are the most hurt
17 and trying to supplement their nutritional needs. They receive
18 nothing, not everyone has a commercial fishing license, you know,
19 where they could get some money from the disasters.

20 On the co-management of fisheries resources, these types of
21 hearings have been lately -- been greatly helping us and we need to
22 continue to meet. Finally, it seems like somebody's listening to us,

1 you know, after all the years that we've complained and tried to get
2 the high seas fisheries down, and -- but we still need updates on the
3 numbers, on what the trend is doing on the fishery and of any further
4 studies that might be going on for our briefing for fisheries. It
5 helps a lot.

6 If you -- if you know the numbers, then it helps a lot, but what
7 we also need is cooperation between agencies where we also have a
8 seat and have our say and input into the fisheries that do affect the
9 end-users on this river, and both sides of the river, and also the
10 whole Western Alaskan region.

11 I'd like to thank everyone on the panel that came out to listen
12 to our testimonies. Thank you very much.

13 MR. NEWLAND: Yeah, you were here longest (indiscernible).

14 MR. THOMPSON: Good afternoon, excuse me, my name is Francis
15 Thompson. I'm from Algaaciq St. Mary's. I'm the (indiscernible)
16 river of (indiscernible) a tributary to the Yukon, and I'm the Vice-
17 Chairman for the Algaaciq Tribal Government. I'd like to welcome
18 Bryan, again, (indiscernible) out there at St. Mary's and
19 (indiscernible) I'm very bad at names and when she was introducing
20 herself a while ago, all I heard was "In-A-Gadda-Da-Vida."

21 Welcome. On the first note, on number one, cooperation, federal
22 agencies need to listen to those in the river fishing ground, in the

1 river system of what -- the need to protect salmon when we notice
2 annual steady decline, because we're (indiscernible).

3 (Indiscernible) a voting Tribal representative in the different
4 boards and councils that regulate our country's resources, and there
5 was a mention of a moratorium, no fishing in the high seas until the
6 salmon rebound.

7 The bycatch has impacted me negatively 100%, and I see no future
8 for my children and my grandchildren fishing for salmon if the status
9 quo continues out in the high seas.

10 Things need to change out there in order for us to see changes
11 in the river system. Those \$25,000 to \$50,000 fisheries pre-MSA, 42
12 years later, to zero. We were once proud tax payers, now we are
13 dependent on federal, state aid, food bank and other social service
14 programs to make ends meet.

15 The Magnuson and Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management
16 Act, known as Magnuson and Steven Act, is the legislation providing
17 for the management of marine fisheries in U.S. waters, originally
18 enacted in 1976 to assert control of foreign fishing that were
19 operating as close as 12 miles out.

20 The legislation has since been amended, in 1996 and 2007, to
21 better address the twin problems of overfishing and overcapacity.
22 Fourteen years later, what has been done? The ecological and

1 economic problems arose. The fisheries grossed about 25 to 35
2 million annually from the mouth to the border.

3 Pre-enactment of the MSA, for 42 years, the MSA -- our total
4 gross would have been upwards of \$1.6 billion. Ironically, that is
5 only about 1/3 of the industry's annual earnings from the Pollock
6 fishery's 42 years. Also, (indiscernible) because of the
7 (indiscernible) impacting the -- in the negative million.

8 In 1995, my son's high school teacher told the class, you will
9 have no more fish in the Pacific at Bering Sea because that is what
10 happened in the Atlantic, and it has come true. It was his
11 prediction has become a reality today.

12 Alaskan fisheries are being (indiscernible) our home
13 domestically, not from Alaska, but from (indiscernible) from the West
14 Coast. There's four to six million has (indiscernible), but like the
15 North Pacific Fishery Council scientists, that in her report to the
16 North Pacific Fisheries Management Council, the overall history in
17 the AYK region is insignificant to the overall fishery of the Pollock
18 industry. We mean nothing.

19 The Pollock industry through bycatch costed me my commercial
20 fishery earning for the Yukon salmon and Norton Sound herring
21 fishery. For my earnings today is zero. I did not fish commercially
22 for the salmon for the last two years and the Norton Sound herring

1 for the last 15 years. I have -- I cannot give no more. I am
2 reduced down to a four-inch net to catch whitefish and
3 (indiscernible) may not be able to fish with it, I cannot give no
4 more.

5 This is the failure I see in the management of the Pollock
6 industry to protect Alaska's salmon to return to the in-river system
7 of Alaska. (Indiscernible) the returns of the AYK region needs
8 protection for Chinook in the spawning grounds. It will take five to
9 seven years for Chinook -- in order for us to see if our management
10 plan has come true.

11 For protection of (indiscernible) return, that's 30 to 40 years
12 to see those returns. I may not be here or to see that fishery
13 rebound. They are fishing for Pollock for one year, if you can
14 (indiscernible) they could see how we feel on the river here. Let
15 them feel our impact. Shut them down for a year.

16 Of course, that is not possible because we are insignificant and
17 we mean nothing to the Pollock industry. Who's thinking to protect
18 our subsistence food for salmon by reducing bycatch using salmon
19 excluders, trawl net and (indiscernible) in the Pacific and Bering
20 Sea trawling district fishing grounds, cameras on all boats, and
21 observers, honest observers (indiscernible).

22 Another concern, because of the lack of king salmon returning to

1 our river systems is that -- and these two correlate, is that lamprey
2 eel is gone. In October, when we catch a lot of lamprey, the
3 forecast in our Yup'ik way is there's going to be a lot of salmon
4 coming (indiscernible). One plus one equals two. We have not caught
5 the lamprey for over about 10 years now.

6 Item three, climate change effects (indiscernible) it will not
7 change the fact that bycatch has been the main reason for our demise
8 in Alaska waters.

9 Item four, commercial fishing subsistence (indiscernible)
10 because we use revenue from commercial fishing to supplement our cost
11 to go subsistence hunting for game and the cost (indiscernible) let
12 the cost befall on the industry to pay us for the lack of revenue and
13 subsistence harvest. Maybe they will find ways to fish clean.

14 The Round 1 disaster dollars received -- I received 6,000, and
15 for many, they received three, and that was a whole year later, one
16 year later. Round 2 is going to be about 40,000,000, and it will be
17 less than Round 1, and we won't see anything until December or
18 January.

19 We are captured when we need it and it gets hard to go out
20 subsistence fishing and hunting when gas prices -- I think St. Mary's
21 was \$9 a gallon. We need a seat on federal and State council and
22 boards. I am a proud Alaska resident and was able to pay taxes from

1 salmon revenue. Now many are dependent on handouts for
2 (indiscernible) from State and federal social service programs,
3 costing (indiscernible) and the U.S. and State millions and billions
4 of dollars just to keep the Pollock (indiscernible) doing what
5 they're doing, destroying the resources for our livelihood.

6 DOI needs to protect Alaska bound salmon, to protect our salmon
7 for harvest for subsistence because they spawn in (indiscernible)
8 water, federal and State water, and we also need to -- there is an
9 agreement with U.S. and Canada, a U.S. and Canada (indiscernible).
10 We need to abide by that treaty to save our salmon. I thank you guys
11 for your time.

12 MR. GEORGE: (Indiscernible - speaking Native language). Good
13 afternoon, my name is Fritz George. I'm the Chairman of the Tribal
14 Government of Akiachak Native Community. Welcome to (indiscernible)
15 of my homeland. It seems like we're (indiscernible) through
16 (indiscernible) extended closure and whatnot (indiscernible) we need
17 to study something. I hope by the time the study's done, it's not
18 going to be too late for all the salmon, but (indiscernible).

19 North Pacific Fisheries Management Council (indiscernible)
20 sustain the (indiscernible) fishery. It needs the continuation of
21 abundant -- all kinds of fish do you see even in the river, also
22 downhill from (indiscernible) cod and Pollock. It's not the

1 (indiscernible) what's going on, they'd rather make the trawling and
2 Area M (indiscernible) fishery continue, even though they're
3 (indiscernible).

4 What can you do, and it's good to see that, you know, I and NOAA
5 (indiscernible) I look at it and (indiscernible) and (indiscernible)
6 area affected (indiscernible) every fishery where they're
7 intercepting the salmon that is supposed come into the
8 (indiscernible) river to spawn again to keep the species going.

9 (Indiscernible) I read that (indiscernible) there were Troopers
10 patrolling there where they trawl and use for fishing (indiscernible)
11 Area M and regulate the hell out of them, instead of us.
12 (Indiscernible - speaking Native language). Thank you.

13 MS. NAPOLEAN: Hi, my name is Ellen Napolean. I'm with
14 (indiscernible). I just wanted to say and there's (indiscernible)
15 trawl fishing (indiscernible) is probably one of the most disruptive
16 types fishing on the planet and some countries have banned it
17 already. It scrapes the bottom of the seabed. It uproots plants and
18 (indiscernible) animals and fish that live there.

19 That's bad enough for salmon and the other marine life and when
20 you put climate change in there, it's amazing that we still have
21 marine life. We can't do much about climate change, but we can do
22 something about trawling. If we cannot ban trawling to save the

1 Bering Sea and the fish for people who really need it, maybe we can
2 (indiscernible) designate more (indiscernible) in areas where salmon
3 swim, until they get old enough to return to the (indiscernible)
4 rivers to spawn (indiscernible) survival (indiscernible).

5 What I really worry about our food and (indiscernible) salmon.
6 With climate change and trawl fishing, it doesn't look very good. So
7 I just say, we can do something about trawls. We can't do much about
8 climate change. Thank you.

9 UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER: (Indiscernible - speaking Native
10 language). Welcome to Alaska to the (indiscernible - speaking Native
11 language). I'm happy to be here to give testimony. I'm very proud
12 of myself that I learned to speak English from the BIA in school
13 (indiscernible) and connections back. I've translated. I've
14 interpreted for my (indiscernible) and (indiscernible) management and
15 other stuff like BIA (indiscernible) and I learned more from
16 (indiscernible) when we were down there and (indiscernible) and for
17 (indiscernible) Council designated me to be the representative for
18 Kuskokwim Inter-Tribal Council Commission. There, I learned the size
19 of the fish, how many (indiscernible) and how many are going up to
20 the river through the (indiscernible) that was all I know.

21 Then, sitting there, I learned the (indiscernible) down in the
22 ocean, the total acceptable allowed catch, total catch of all and

1 escapement and these are the things I learned, and the commissioners,
2 we worked together from (indiscernible) working together and we have
3 a connection (indiscernible) from the mouth of the river
4 (indiscernible) we didn't have any connection. We have a connection
5 now (indiscernible) work together.

6 Right now, we are working together, conserving fish and sharing
7 our knowledge and our experience (indiscernible). It's what I want
8 the Department of Interior, NOAA, to exercise working together with
9 Tribal (indiscernible) the Tribal peoples and make connections with
10 them.

11 When you have a connection with us, it's more (indiscernible)
12 and exercise our (indiscernible) to have (indiscernible) when we
13 don't have (indiscernible), we argue, we (indiscernible). We
14 (indiscernible) we do not make the (indiscernible) and there's
15 something that we want (indiscernible) and yes, we are a conservation
16 (indiscernible) and I'll ask you to verify (indiscernible) ocean down
17 there.

18 I want -- we have the knowledge and I want the, you know, you
19 guys on the panel to improve and understand our Native traditional
20 knowledge that we use as we (indiscernible). Much (indiscernible)
21 are the low level of water conditions (indiscernible). There are
22 more things that are more (indiscernible).

1 The bycatch (indiscernible - speaking Native language) migrate
2 with the fish to the (indiscernible) and (indiscernible) they go
3 upriver too, most of the (indiscernible) because of the conservation
4 and (indiscernible) salmon, king salmon, Chinook, chum salmon and
5 (indiscernible). They (indiscernible) to September 30th by
6 (indiscernible).

7 Well, we asked for (indiscernible) not taking much, but he gives
8 us a little bit. For me, it's better to stop the trawling, zero
9 tolerance, no bycatch.

10 The climate change, the effects of -- the climate change affects
11 the salmon to go upriver for our spawn (indiscernible). Climate
12 change programs, I'm not too familiar with the emergency funding and
13 none of that (indiscernible).

14 When I first (indiscernible) in 2014, I speak for a
15 (indiscernible) my role model later is William -- Michael Williams
16 (indiscernible) another (indiscernible) and civil rights mover, I
17 forget his name, but it'll come back.

18 I would like to see you guys to (indiscernible) and the method
19 used real good, but the Tribal traditions, knowledge are better for
20 me and I want the policy to be (indiscernible) towards
21 (indiscernible) because some of (indiscernible) that I do agree with
22 (indiscernible) continue polices that don't make it right

1 (indiscernible). It was right for us for over 7,000 years, we
2 (indiscernible) and that (indiscernible) policy (indiscernible) we
3 don't (indiscernible). They hurt -- they hurt us and (indiscernible)
4 our (indiscernible).

5 I'm not here because -- of my own. I'm here because we still
6 live in the village as Tribal members (indiscernible). I
7 (indiscernible) and (indiscernible) we'll have a meeting
8 (indiscernible) and when we go home, we make a report. We
9 (indiscernible) council (indiscernible) that Governor -- I think the
10 Governor (indiscernible) is not specific council as a (indiscernible)
11 member, (indiscernible) voting member or non-voting member. No
12 Tribal representation. The Governor selects members from all
13 regions, Washington and Alaska (indiscernible) I see no Tribal
14 representation (indiscernible) needs to change that (indiscernible)
15 or something to back us up.

16 The navigable and non-navigable waters (indiscernible) and there
17 needs to be more (indiscernible) to the people in Alaska. Yes, I
18 heard about the navigable and non-navigable waters (indiscernible)
19 there's about (indiscernible) for us to (indiscernible) and one of
20 the things I want to learn more, you know, the plankton
21 (indiscernible) they think the plankton's terrible.

22 The fact is putting that trawler trawling down there, the

1 ecosystem (indiscernible) black thick (indiscernible) that pulls it
2 back up. The cause and effect of those big (indiscernible) is that
3 they are not (indiscernible) the Kuskokwim River and the Yukon
4 (indiscernible) but we are not, and may God help us all.

5 MR. WASKA, SR.: Welcome, Committee, I already welcomed you, but
6 I'm Evon Waska, Sr. (indiscernible) Bethel. Today's word is
7 conservation, and I also welcome my (indiscernible) from the
8 surrounding area on the Yukon and the villages.

9 I was going to mention (indiscernible) but I'm going to
10 (indiscernible). We are the fish (indiscernible). My grandchildren
11 are going to be (indiscernible) generation, right. Right, my parents
12 and (indiscernible) there's no magic aid to -- no magic wishing and
13 they settle down close to the river, Kuskokwim, Yukon, all in rural
14 Alaska did they settle down by the river? Why? Well, to see the
15 bugs go by -- for the return of salmon.

16 Why I say that, that's our food source. That's what sustains us
17 in the long winter months, smoked salmon, strips. Now we've got
18 freezers and that's our food for the winter. (Indiscernible) we have
19 fish talk in the summer on the radio and we give comments like this,
20 and my Native brothers from Toruk have commented, "Why are you doing
21 this? Where's (indiscernible)?" And the (indiscernible) is already
22 in black and white. Well, we're fighting for our subsistence rights.

1 That's not right. It's already written down. Fish and Game are
2 voiding our fishing rights, period, our subsistence rights. That's
3 not right.

4 But our number one, about time you're here. It gives me hope.
5 Maybe my people hope behind me. This is just another meeting to go
6 in this one and not the other. I hope not. I'm glad that you're
7 here. It gives me hope (indiscernible).

8 Number two, on bycatch, we're hurting, period, because Area M,
9 False Pass, dumping of salmon, king salmon, 500,000 chums that was
10 bound for our rivers, Western Alaska, we're Western Alaska. That has
11 to be stopped. Area M, False Pass commercial fishermen before you
12 guys, we used to have advocates on the Yukon and all over rural
13 Alaska, Western Alaska. They all go to Anchorage for allocated -- to
14 fight for allocated fish escapement. That's not being done.

15 They're (indiscernible) on commercial fishing and bycatch is
16 (indiscernible). Meanwhile, people in rural Alaska, food for the
17 winter, they're taking that away. That's not right. That's what's
18 happening and (indiscernible).

19 On climate change on number three, yeah, that's happened here in
20 the Kuskokwim when the temperature was high and how many years back,
21 fish were dying upriver, and I believe also on the Yukon.

22 On number four, on declaring federal fisheries disaster

1 declarations, meanwhile people are all (indiscernible) to bring, why,
2 we're always first on restriction. Why, why, I say why, why
3 (indiscernible) not even any water, we're on restriction. In order
4 to catch fish, you've got to have a net in the water. Fish and Game
5 and State -- Fish and Game monitors, Alaska (indiscernible) my
6 people, just like that man, my Native brother said earlier, meanwhile
7 people are first to get blamed.

8 At the Yukon, we were four-inches before. You know what four-
9 inch for, that's them little whitefish. King salmon, we was eight-
10 inch and six-inch. I find that discriminatory. Letting us eat
11 whitefish while your (indiscernible) we eat all salmon species, king,
12 reds, chums, silvers, and they're being taken. They tell us to go
13 eat whitefish. That's not right.

14 And then all, we're on -- the first on restriction. No
15 restriction for bycatch. No restriction for Area M and False Pass,
16 only me on the -- me and my people on the Kuskokwim and Yukon and
17 western (indiscernible). We're the first to blame. We don't even
18 have nets in the water, but we've got (indiscernible) Fish and Game
19 and federal officials harassing us, two (indiscernible) Fish and
20 Wildlife officers, take our nets, rip our nets and just like my
21 Native sister said, they go and take the fish on the Yukon. They're
22 violating our rights here.

1 And number five, from the beginning (indiscernible) the rules
2 were you take only what you need, the town's (indiscernible). There
3 was always town management and that was always in place, and we just
4 should let (indiscernible) and take what we need (indiscernible) to
5 gain money. It's food for the winter. That's our -- salmon is our
6 food that sustain us through the long winter months, and I don't know
7 how long your going to be in Bethel, but I hope you go to the local
8 stores. That's the reason to (indiscernible) specific village and 10
9 years on the Yukon, Anchorage, all of you to accept the prices. A
10 gallon of milk (indiscernible) here is 11 bucks, same as a carton of
11 eggs.

12 It doesn't stop here and then you've got these river
13 (indiscernible) and then they've got to be shipped by barge and then
14 (indiscernible). The price is tripled, and then as far as
15 subsistence comes in, and how I speak as I speak now, my people on
16 the Yukon, there's no (indiscernible) hardly any salmon in
17 (indiscernible) and dried fish and smoked fish in their freezer or on
18 their racks.

19 You deny us of the -- they deny us of our right to subsistence
20 fish. That's not right, but I hope you take that opportunity and go
21 check at the local stores (indiscernible) on the comment and see how
22 the prices are there for and why my people turn to subsistence with

1 the high cost of living, and I hope you immediately stop the bycatch
2 and we need -- we need to have the allocated fish escapement for
3 Western Alaska, Area M and False Pass, and I hope you do that.
4 Thanks for being here and thanks for taking my comments.

5 MR. NEWLAND: We'll go to that gentleman.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible).

7 MR. NEWLAND: We've got -- we've got about 30 minutes left. So
8 we'll take the speakers who are here at the front table. I don't see
9 any hands up online, and then we'll do some wrap-up on our part.

10 MR. NANENG, SR.: Good afternoon, and welcome to Bethel
11 (indiscernible) of the Yup'ik country, Yup'ik, Cup'ik and Athabascan
12 country. My name is Myron P. Naneng, Sr. I'm originally from the
13 Village of Hooper Bay, which is on the coast. I've fished
14 commercially on the Yukon since 1985 until about 2017.

15 Over the years, I've observed the reduction in the number of
16 hours of commercial fishing on the Yukon (indiscernible) lack of
17 salmon returning to the river system as the years went by.

18 One of the things that I also have done is I attended many Board
19 of Fish meetings, as well as North Pacific Fisheries Management
20 Council meetings, and at those meetings, we've raised the issue of
21 the lowering returns of salmon. It's not a new thing that happened
22 yesterday or this year or two years ago. It's been happening for

1 quite some time.

2 One of the things that the fleet, the 12 (indiscernible) to say
3 that they've got a certain amount of metric tons of bycatch of salmon
4 or metric tons of bycatch of halibut. If we put (indiscernible) they
5 say 150 (indiscernible) metric tons. How many totes does this room
6 get filled with? We all don't know, and it's substantial we know,
7 because as fishermen, we have a tote that could probably have like
8 about 107 inside that tote and one of the other concerns that I have
9 is that, are the federal and State managers directing this toward
10 (indiscernible) endangered species status?

11 I know, we, as Native people that are subsistence users, also
12 have to be part of the equation and put in conservation. However,
13 our people have paid the highest burden of conservation over the
14 years, with restrictions and closures.

15 When the closure happens on the Yukon, the villages on the coast
16 like Hooper Bay, Chevak and Scammon Bay are included, and they're not
17 in the river system. It's because they say that the salmon return to
18 the Yukon River and (indiscernible) and they consider the villages of
19 Hooper Bay, Chevak and Scammon to be what they call intercept
20 fisheries, but they don't even do anything about the intercept
21 fisheries down in Area M, and the reason why they say they don't do
22 much is because they consider the region to be a mixed stock

1 fisheries.

2 There's been studies done, genetic studies done regarding trying
3 to identify where those salmon stocks are going to, like the State of
4 Alaska, their managers are always saying, "We don't have enough
5 information to put the restrictions."

6 So my question for the State and the federal managers and
7 regulators directing this towards an endangered species status of
8 these salmon stocks or even the halibut, and in essence, with lack of
9 subsistence fishing, empty fish racks, empty smokehouses, are they
10 cancelling our culture? And that's something that we don't want to
11 lose.

12 I've gone subsistence fishing here on the Kuskokwim, on the
13 Yukon, the coast and I've observed over the years that I've done
14 that, that at some point, there's hardly any people that are putting
15 fish away. Families are not working together like they used to.
16 Kids are not learning how to cut salmon like their parents.

17 So it's a culture that's, in essence, is being killed by the
18 fact that our people are being severely restricted and carry the
19 burden of conservation, and we've also noticed that there are other
20 fish species out on the coast that we haven't observed for a couple
21 of years, (indiscernible) cods that usually go into the schools.

22 For the last couple of years, the last two to three years

1 (indiscernible) Hooper Bay and Scammon, they hardly had gotten many.
2 They're (indiscernible). You know, these are things that we're
3 observing. They're not in the books of some biologist or a PhD
4 person observing this. It's people at the local levels, at the
5 village levels who are observing this, because it's part of their
6 subsistence food resource, and we need to find ways to address them,
7 and you know, one of the other things that really gets me irritated
8 and kind of frustrated is when we talk to talk to managers, both up
9 in State and federal levels about our concerns that we have, based on
10 our observations, they look at us and say, "You're only doing an
11 anecdotal comment."

12 They don't want to include traditional outings as known by our
13 people as being part of the equation on the management of these
14 resources. I've been told that anecdotally, but I hope to
15 (indiscernible). So with that, I thank you for the opportunity to
16 share you my comments.

17 MR. ELIA: Hello, my name is Aaron Elia from St. Mary's
18 (indiscernible) Yukon. I'm a Tribal Board member of Yupiit of
19 Andresafski, a federal recognized Tribe, and a good way to
20 communicate with a lot of these (indiscernible) corporations and
21 organizations and subsistence users, having more meetings like this,
22 and you know, send out newsletters, if you guys have any, to

1 villages, you know, we've got bulletin boards, and you know, all of
2 these people will at least see them or read them, and the thing about
3 this bycatch, I don't know, it's bad for our fish availability these
4 days.

5 We can't even fish for the salmon that we depend on
6 (indiscernible). I don't know. The Bering Sea bycatch for kings in
7 the Bering Sea is -- they limit it to 45,700, and that goes
8 overboard, you know. It goes to waste and there's a pilot station
9 sonar above St. Mary's, like 16 miles, and only 44,581 pinks passed,
10 and I don't think it'll work because if you lower the bycatch, the
11 fish are already getting low anyways. So the lower the fish go that
12 spawn, and they go out in the ocean, they'll be less fish to bycatch
13 and there not going to be any more fish, you know, through the catch,
14 and (indiscernible) it's a big fall from 124,845 kings. That's over
15 80 kings that declined, 80,000 kings have declined from the year
16 before, and these trawlers, they -- like everybody's saying, they're
17 destroying the sea floor and I heard you could look it up and see
18 what -- see what they do out there, before a trawler and after a
19 trawler, see what happens. I mean there's -- I've see pictures.
20 There's a big difference. All the vegetation is gone.

21 And I don't know what we could do about climate change. That's
22 in the mix, affecting everything in the world, you know, around -- I

1 think the federal government needs to, at least, lower the bycatch
2 dramatically or to stop them.

3 I know you guys are here to hear us out and help us. Well, I
4 hope you help, and is -- yeah, North Pacific Fishery Management
5 Council, that's the people to talk to about all of this bycatch, and
6 I don't know if you guys know about this meeting, there's a meeting
7 in Anchorage on the 18th of this month. I just heard about it and I
8 hope you guys are there, and I hope you guys help us before it's too
9 late. Thank you.

10 MR. ONEY: Thank you. First of all, I want to thank people from
11 Bethel for allowing us to come visit for my testimony to the people
12 that come from way outside, and I guess the people that are supposed
13 to be managing our resources for our people. I want to thank you for
14 taking the time to come and meet with us to hear the testimony that
15 have been provided in regards to Chinook and salmon, both for the
16 Yukon and Kuskokwim River.

17 Hello, my name is Raymond Oney. I am Yup'ik from the Village of
18 Alakanuk, situated at the mouth of the Yukon River where it spills
19 out into the Bering Sea. Alaska has only been a state for only 63
20 years. So we're still a fairly young state. Yet, since statehood,
21 things were beginning to deteriorate as far as subsistence fishing
22 for Chinook and chum salmon on the Yukon River.

1 A lot of sacrifices were made to try to increase the Chinook and
2 chum salmon by those living on the river. Despite the sacrifices
3 made by the subsistence fishermen, the population of salmon still
4 were declining.

5 We have been providing -- we have been meeting with different
6 State and federal agencies for the last 20 years, providing testimony
7 like this for the last 20 years. It seemed like your -- your agency
8 or organization (indiscernible) of what we're providing. It seems
9 like this is my last great hope for our salmon to return by you
10 people that are managing the resources, the people that are up high,
11 that are decision-makers for people like us and we are reaching
12 (indiscernible).

13 We have been providing our testimony for the last three years
14 through advisory councils with NOAA (indiscernible) and testify. Our
15 Chinook and chum salmon continue to decline.

16 So self-education on bycatch, the (indiscernible) Pollock
17 fishery, we were beginning to narrow some of the bycatch that we,
18 through our education, we found out that the (indiscernible)
19 fisheries were known to contribute to the decline of the Chinook and
20 chum salmon for both the Yukon, Kuskokwim, and Western Alaska.

21 One idea I feel that can work is to reduce the fleet of trawlers
22 until such time that our Chinook and salmon rebound. We shouldn't be

1 the only ones making sacrifices, because it's not working. In-river
2 users have tried, but haven't succeeded and we do, like I said to
3 ourselves, self-education; bycatch. We identified bycatch as the
4 contributing factor to some of the declines that we see now.

5 Interception of salmon destined for Western Alaska is also
6 another factor that has been identified and you've heard from many of
7 the people that -- like this morning already, and they're the same
8 words that I'm using, that we know that these are contributing to
9 lost Chinook and chum salmon.

10 The last two years of not increasing for subsistence, we're
11 determined if our sacrifices that we've been promised our Chinook and
12 chum salmon upon the return to the Yukon River, and I put down the
13 dates of 2026 for Chinook and 2024 for chum, and these are dates that
14 you guys should be written down on your calendar to see if that two
15 years of sacrifice that we did in-river will be the right thing that
16 we've done to try and rebound the salmon.

17 If that's not working, then you guys need to do more in reducing
18 the trawling fishery, putting more restrictions and also the
19 interception of salmon in Area M. Those are the factors that we know
20 that are contributing to some of the declines of Chinook and chum
21 salmon.

22 I grew up living a semi-nomadic life, where I'd come fish camp

1 to summer camp to fall camp, and those were the seasons that we
2 looked forward to every year because it sustained us, and that was
3 our only way of life was through hunting, fishing, and trapping.
4 It's been recorded through time and we still, people are still doing
5 that today.

6 Those things -- things need to change, and hopefully, by you
7 listening to our people, you'll be able to take some of the comments
8 and make the reality that we do need our fish (indiscernible). We do
9 need to instill (indiscernible) in our children that we still have
10 the resources available, that we stood then, rebound and continue our
11 way of life.

12 I thank you again for taking the opportunity to come up here and
13 meet with our people. Thank you.

14 MR. NEWLAND: Rose, can you let the person with their hand up
15 know that we've got three speakers ahead of him?

16 MS. PETOSKEY: Yeah, it's 907-238 (indiscernible).

17 MR. NEWLAND: (Indiscernible) sorry.

18 MR. IGKURAK: (Indiscernible - speaking Native language), I'm
19 William Igkurak. I'm from (indiscernible) Alaska, which is 25 miles
20 (indiscernible) 25 miles west of Kuskokwim (indiscernible). My
21 village is situated on a (indiscernible) and I am one of
22 (indiscernible) two, the order of the council members, I have both

1 Tribes come up and I have relatives now, we're on (indiscernible) and
2 this (indiscernible) the weather didn't permit (indiscernible) and
3 one of the things that people from NOAA and others to come up here to
4 listen to our people, and we live, we lived it. We hear all the way
5 from up the Kuskokwim down to the mouth, we hear from the Yukon up
6 and down to the mouth. It's the same.

7 We come from people that learn that we're not -- our fathers
8 were (indiscernible) subsistence (indiscernible) subsistence and
9 (indiscernible). I've heard that, no change from what I've heard
10 from (indiscernible) and other people.

11 My (indiscernible - speaking Native language), my grandpa
12 (indiscernible) has not changed, but what came in to for us to adapt
13 to were (indiscernible) and I think (indiscernible) about this Area
14 M, False Pass, and the trawler as far as I can remember. Now I thank
15 the (indiscernible) through here and the problems that are affecting
16 people and I don't know what is going to come out of it, but I hope
17 that something good will come out, because in my village, we fish for
18 speckle fish (indiscernible).

19 They come up there to Kuskokwim when I first started fishing
20 there (indiscernible) big ones, real big ones, and once you start
21 talking regulations and drawing lines, there you start arguing. You
22 can't agree on anything because hunger knows no law. Our people live

1 (indiscernible) my family and (indiscernible) big, great big salmon
2 (indiscernible). I may be wrong, but (indiscernible) I stopped
3 counting, but (indiscernible) back to what I've heard from what was
4 passed on down to me, I was -- my only wish was that I
5 (indiscernible) our boys (indiscernible) the boys grew up in
6 (indiscernible). The girls grew up with women from (indiscernible),
7 but what was taught never changed from I hear from other villages
8 that it's the same thing (indiscernible) mention here (indiscernible)
9 something up in the sky (indiscernible).

10 But what I've seen and heard and our people were nomadic and we
11 were (indiscernible), but then in springtime, we'd go down along the
12 coastline (indiscernible) like maybe about in April, March-April, and
13 we'd start going out to (indiscernible) it's our (indiscernible) and
14 in summertime, springtime, they'd got your (indiscernible) and go up
15 the Kuskokwim River. The furthest I've been is right across from
16 Napakiak, which is about five miles down, and there (indiscernible)
17 our fishing (indiscernible) and I remember when silver were
18 (indiscernible) we used to fish the whole month through.

19 Now you look back then, back in the early '70s, there were Kings
20 there for -- that were around eight inches. Now, they're going down
21 to six inches. I think that's when the problem started, besides our
22 regulation, because we (indiscernible) Kings, we catch them

1 (indiscernible) and then they die and (indiscernible).

2 I know that. I've been fishing since the '60s (indiscernible).

3 Yesterday, I was out fishing with our (indiscernible) for smelt

4 (indiscernible) that's all my (indiscernible) and to share with my

5 people, whoever will want them, but then you go back to my father's

6 fathers, who were nomadic. They moved from my village, but by the

7 way, my village was discovered in 1912 (indiscernible), and then

8 (indiscernible) they would travel to the mouth of the Kuskokwim and

9 they'd start (indiscernible) nets (indiscernible) to wrap a type of

10 material that they used to make nets for the fish they catch.

11 They start with Kings and then they would untie (indiscernible)

12 and make their nets for the (indiscernible) which is chum salmon and

13 red salmon, and so they were real (indiscernible) about this. They

14 didn't over-take. They just took what they were eating and they

15 shared. They shared what they kept and that was all by

16 (indiscernible), but if I go to another village, and if I understand

17 they're speaking my language, those are my people.

18 That's what I was told growing up, and we fish for

19 (indiscernible) with the (indiscernible) salmon, you name it, it's

20 pretty much (indiscernible) and then for the past few years, I've

21 noticed that the (indiscernible). We didn't catch anything last

22 year, but they were catching it in (indiscernible) I used to see a

1 river where the dipnets were about six to 10 rows and back
2 (indiscernible) pull up our dipnets and there'd be a pile of
3 (indiscernible) because not only people, our dogs were eating it.

4 Right now, we're riding iron dog and those things don't really -
5 - they don't need food, just gas and oil, and probably that's
6 (indiscernible) from our dogs (indiscernible) they don't keep you
7 warm in the cold winter, but going back to (indiscernible) on the
8 trawlers too, I've been trying to move them out because one -- a
9 couple of years ago, we didn't catch no halibut. There's hardly any
10 halibut.

11 They come in real close to our community (indiscernible) go out
12 about five minutes, about five minutes out into the ocean and go out
13 to like 20-foot of water and you'll catch halibut. You don't need to
14 go down about 400 or 500 feet.

15 I want to thank (indiscernible) being here. I'm happy to be
16 here. Now I can go back and report to my (indiscernible) people that
17 I got a chance to say that (indiscernible) because we live fishing
18 and I believe that climate change has a real affect on our area
19 because our season, from the time I moved into my home
20 (indiscernible) 2020 or 2000 -- well, my numbers are getting kind of
21 messed up. I guess back in 2000, and I'm (indiscernible) our house
22 is built on pilings (indiscernible) and then (indiscernible) has gone

1 down more than two feet. We're at risk (indiscernible) because we're
2 on frost, that we call permafrost. There -- I'm hoping, that you
3 know, something good will come out of this. I don't know
4 (indiscernible) I'll be going home, weather-permitting, tomorrow.

5 If you're out in my area, it's much, much different than urban.
6 I call this Bethel urban area, because we get around with cars in the
7 road and (indiscernible) riding around. When you come through my
8 community, even if it's kind of high, high ground saturated and wet,
9 and it's (indiscernible) is supposed to mean no rivers, but
10 (indiscernible) we've got over one million (indiscernible).

11 MR. WHITWORTH: Thank you very much. You guys doing okay?

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah.

13 MR. WHITWORTH: Good. I'm Kevin Whitworth, Executive Director
14 for Kuskokwim River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission. Earlier today, you
15 hear from our Chair, Dr. Mike Williams. He testified and read our
16 comments. We will write a letter, a comment letter to you all, as
17 well, and then attached with Kuskokwim River Salmon Situation Report
18 that I shared with you guys this morning as well are clearly linked.

19 I want to say that, you know, we're -- we're right now in the
20 midst of a multi-year, multi-species salmon collapse, and food
21 security issues that you guys all heard today, this is very serious,
22 and I hope you guys heard the seriousness and the concern of the

1 people today, and you guys take this home, and hopefully, you guys
2 take this to heart because it is a very serious thing that's going
3 on.

4 Like people have said, salmon is the number one resource that
5 (indiscernible) people depend on. It's not moose. It's not caribou.
6 It's salmon, and right now, three species are in decline. They are
7 drastically -- very, very (indiscernible). We've heard it -- the
8 Situation Report that I shared was supposed to do it very brief, but
9 the Chinook salmon runs or harvest haven't met ANS, which is the
10 amount that's reasonable for subsistence needs. You haven't met
11 those needs for over 10 years.

12 People are sacrificing Chinook salmon so they can reach the
13 escapement (indiscernible) and try to rebuild these fish populations
14 and it's the people in the river that are sacrificing and trying to
15 do what's best for this run and trying to rebuild it.

16 It's not (indiscernible). I'm from the river. I'm from near
17 McGrath and the headwaters. I'm a Tribal member there, and
18 throughout the entire river, people want to catch Chinook salmon and
19 it's very, very hard, and so with the Chinook salmon crash that took
20 place in, I think it was 2007, (indiscernible) in the front of the
21 Situation Report, it's Figure No. 1. In 2007, the Chinook bycatch in
22 the Bering Sea Pollock fishery, they caught 150,000 salmon. In 2010

1 and 2013, this is when we had the lowest Chinook salmon returns for
2 this river, on average 47,000 fish. That is historically low. Never
3 have we ever had that low of Chinook salmon return (indiscernible),
4 and it went from there to the Fish and Wildlife Service, started to
5 work with the local people, and (indiscernible) management of those
6 Chinook salmon in 2016, and that has taken place for -- until now,
7 and (indiscernible) can have a cooperative management agreement with
8 Fish and Wildlife Service (indiscernible) and it's getting people to
9 the table, the Chinook salmon management. The Chinook salmon
10 decisions are being made with Tribal representation, people at the
11 table, which is a good -- it's a good direction to go in, get more
12 people at the table, get local people, traditional local people at
13 the table.

14 Now the chum salmon -- so with the Chinook crash, people had to
15 start to rely on other things. So the chum salmon, three years ago,
16 drastically crashed just like Chinook salmon did. 2020 was the
17 lowest run on record. 2021 was not any better. 2022, this year,
18 same thing, very highly restricted, very few people were able to get
19 their needs met. I think somewhere around 30% of the needs for chum
20 salmon have been met in these past three years.

21 The situation is not any better, so the 2022, this is our first
22 ever year we've had such large restrictions on coho salmon. The coho

1 salmon run has just come back at dramatically low numbers. This is
2 just a crisis all around (indiscernible).

3 We've never had restrictions so long. The new one through, I
4 think it was September 15th or 16th, there was very, very high
5 restrictions on salmon. With these restrictions, people had a hard
6 time targeting and trying to get other species that are relatively
7 healthy like sockeye salmon and whitefish, just because there's --
8 you can't a net in the water. So they can't -- they can't catch any
9 other species that are relatively healthy.

10 The way of life and well-being of these people, myself included,
11 is not good. It's just a very serious situation. I'm really happy
12 you guys are here. Happy to see DOI and NOAA at the same table. I
13 think this sort of conversation needs to continue. It's an approach
14 that the Fish Commission has been working on for a very long time.
15 It's a gravel-to-gravel approach, and so where the fish are born, and
16 they go out to the ocean, they stay out in the ocean for most of
17 their lives, and when they come back, all of those -- the old
18 migratory path that Chinook, chum, coho salmon, all of them, they
19 don't know that there's jurisdiction (indiscernible). They don't
20 know DOI, NOAA, Fish and Game, and so forth. They don't know those.
21 You know, we don't -- our people, we want to work together. We've
22 got to work together to try to rebuild these populations, and and the

1 traditional values (indiscernible).

2 We need to work together on trying to reach subsistence needs
3 first, before commercial, before industry, so that we can feed the
4 people, the local people that most depend on it. It's not the
5 industry, not the commercial fishermen that depend on this, not, you
6 know, some of those, I know family members that fish (indiscernible)
7 and sell it (indiscernible), but it's the local people that most
8 depend on the resources. They just fish right here, right here in
9 front of Bethel. They fish all the (indiscernible) and they can't.
10 It's really, really hard. This is a very serious situation that
11 these people are in. So I hope we can continue to work together to
12 try to figure out what's best.

13 Co-management, it helps to get Tribal people at the table,
14 whether it's NOAA or DOI, that is a very big improvement. I think
15 more co-management agreements, more robust co-management agreements
16 that need to be put in place. It includes traditional knowledge.
17 Now, there's been some questions on whether -- what is going on with
18 salmon? Last week, I saw on TV, Fish and Game, Fish and Wildlife
19 Service, a friend of mine at TCC, they were on this show. It was a
20 live show and they had questions of the panel, and they talked
21 extensively about climate change, climate change being one of the
22 factors, a major factor and reason why. Who knows?

1 There's others -- there's lots and lots of other factors out
2 there. The point I want to get at here is that climate change needs
3 to be taken into effect -- taken into consideration when it comes to
4 fish management, just taking a precautionary approach, especially if
5 (indiscernible), and it's important to have -- we don't know what's -
6 - how our populations are going to look like through the next five,
7 10, 20 years, and if climate change is affecting these populations,
8 it may be affecting seal. It may be affecting the crab. It may be
9 affecting the halibut, all these other species they talk about --
10 that people talk about are declining.

11 Well, if that is the case, we need to have a full NEPA process
12 for NOAA to redo their EIS so that climate change considerations can
13 be brought to the table. Tribal co-management and Tribal voices
14 could be put into that process and it's -- that's the only way
15 forward. There's got to be -- not -- I was just reading the
16 Ecosystem Committee report this morning that we were at just on
17 Monday, and there's a consensus there that I feel like they want to
18 see a full EIS NEPA process done.

19 Now this is going to be taken up by the Council, whether or not
20 they want this (indiscernible) Council, whether or not they adopt
21 this, who knows? We don't need an SIR, a Supplemental Information
22 Report. There's no NEPA. There's no Tribal consultation in this

1 process. So the people aren't being heard in this process. We need
2 a full EIS, so that we can look at all of these concerns of climate
3 change. We can look at all of the concerns about the dramatic
4 declines in salmon and all these other species that are taking place
5 in the Bering Sea, and so in closing, please take a look at this
6 report. I'm not going to go through it. If you have questions,
7 please ask.

8 I just want to close by just saying that subsistence should be
9 valued over commercial, over industry, and we've got to take a
10 precautionary (indiscernible) out in the Bering Sea. We waited until
11 right now. We waited to be managed. It's not working. We've heard
12 this from a number of people. We need a full EIS done and hopefully,
13 we can try to work together to rebuild these stocks in-river and I
14 hope that NOAA, DOI and the Tribes will all work together.

15 My friend Albert, he mentioned this earlier, he brings this up
16 at our (indiscernible) Council meetings often, working together,
17 river-wide, DOI, NOAA, everybody who's all along that entire land
18 (indiscernible) all the salmon species, all working together, and I
19 hope that you guys realize that. Let's do that. Thank you. That's
20 all.

21 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: Thank you.

22 MR. GUY: Thank you. Through blood, sweat and tears, we try and

1 feed our families. My name is George Guy. I am the General Manager
2 for Kwethluk, Incorporated. I'd like to make a disclosure that I'm a
3 Co-Chair under the State of Alaska for the Salmon Bycatch Committee
4 for Western Alaska, and I just -- I'm representing Kwethluk,
5 Incorporated for now and I just want to make that disclosure.

6 You know, we forgot, totally forgot what Katie John case, don't
7 forget about that case. It's still in history, along with our Peace
8 Treaties going back to 1800's under the Native American rights. We
9 have those rights still. We were here before Congress was here.

10 (Indiscernible) our chum salmon, Chinook salmon are going
11 through one passage. It's Area M. There's only one passage for
12 going to Kuskokwim, Yukon, and Norton Sound. It's Area M, False
13 Pass, and when those salmons are born, they're born with a little
14 rock on their heads and they return to those spawning areas to spawn
15 and die. It's their GPS right there. It's their mark. I read about
16 that, and we're kind of losing our customary and our traditional
17 rights under Title VIII of ANILCA.

18 Don't forget about that. It's under Title VIII. We have a
19 right to subsist, hunt, fish, whatnot under that right, and we need
20 to lower the bycatch on the Bering Sea. My brother Steven said that
21 it's a \$2 million industry tax rate or a billion-dollar industry, the
22 Bering Sea. These are the 2015 numbers. We're talking billions,

1 here, we're talking about cents. We try and feed our families off of
2 our waters and our lands.

3 The (indiscernible) fleets, they are catching 500,000, 600,000
4 chum salmon, while we're trying to feed our families with only 30,000
5 salmon for the Kuskokwim area and nothing for the Yukon. Where is
6 the justice for all? It's inequitable, justice for all, from one end
7 of the user to the other end, commercial, subsistence, not just
8 justice for -- justice for the Kuskokwim area (indiscernible) justice
9 for all.

10 There's too much discrimination amongst our people. While we're
11 trying to feed our people, they're making billions of dollars out in
12 the Pollock industry, whatnot, while our people are suffering.

13 We have two regimes, the federal and State regimes under
14 control, command and control. When it comes to subsistence, we're
15 like communists. The regimes tell us when to fish, when to stop,
16 what kind of gear to use, and if we don't, we're turned into
17 criminals in our own land, in our own water.

18 The same thing with hunting and fishing, hunting. We catch any
19 wild game during closed season, the Troopers will come to our Village
20 in a matter of hours, matter of minutes. When there is criminal
21 things happens, days.

22 The Fukushima in Japan, don't forget about that, the radioactive

1 materials going out to the ocean. Please take a look at that. We
2 might be eating contaminated salmon. We don't know that. We have to
3 plan, rehearse, and execute what we're doing throughout history, and
4 nothing against NOAA, but for all the people that rely on salmon and
5 other species, we're overregulated people.

6 I do thank you for coming out here and hopefully, we'll come out
7 with a best solution with all the components into one (indiscernible)
8 and this is a hot topic for all people in the whole state of Alaska,
9 and I do thank you for listening and coming out to our region, called
10 "The Last Frontier," that's why we're called "The Last Frontier."
11 Thank you.

12 MR. NEWLAND: Thank you for your comments. I want to thank
13 everybody who took your time to be with us today. Those of you who
14 shared comments, those of you who were listening in, thank you for
15 your patience with us and the late start and of the sound equipment.

16 It was important to us that we show up and hear, and I know that
17 it's obvious to all of us how important this is to each of you, and I
18 just want to briefly recite back some of the themes that I heard and
19 pass it along to my colleagues for their thoughts before we wrap up.

20 You know, I did hear -- I want to acknowledge I heard many of
21 you express gratitude just for having this meeting. I want to echo
22 that gratitude back. It's important for me and it's important for

1 the Secretary and her team to have us here in-person. So we share
2 that gratitude and appreciate all of you for expressing that.

3 We heard a lot today about bycatch and the impacts of bycatch on
4 your subsistence fisheries in the YK Delta. We heard a lot about the
5 burdens of sacrifice and the cost for conservation and
6 (indiscernible) that cost is being paid by subsistence users
7 primarily.

8 We heard from others about the importance of incorporating
9 Tribal knowledge into federal decision-making processes. I do want
10 to note, I think Myron mentioned that a lot of times, folks come
11 forward and they share their experiences and knowledge, and it gets
12 dismissed as just anecdotal evidence. I hear you loud and clear,
13 that's frustrating.

14 Data -- the word data is just a fancy word for information, and
15 those of you who are -- those of you who are out on the land and out
16 on the rivers, you know, you're getting the information first-hand
17 and you have that knowledge through your families and your
18 communities that's been passed down for generations and we heard
19 today about the importance of making sure we pay that respect and
20 build it into our decision-making processes, and we heard a lot about
21 -- a lot of comments about various studies and needing to feel a
22 sense of urgency for action to address the challenges that a lot of

1 you are facing.

2 So those are just some of the main themes. I've got about eight
3 pages of notes. My hand is really sore from all the note-taking, but
4 I wanted to make sure we were capturing everything. Again, I want to
5 say (indiscernible - speaking Native language), thank you for -- all
6 of you for doing this today, and I'll pass it on to my colleague,
7 Assistant Secretary Estenoz.

8 MS. ESTENOZ: Thank you, Bryan, and I, too, want to echo my
9 gratitude to all of you and everyone who dialed in online for sharing
10 your time with us today. For those of you who provided comments,
11 thank you for sharing your anxiety, your concern, your frustration,
12 your wisdom, your knowledge. I've learned a tremendous amount today.
13 I feel like I came in -- I thought I was prepared, because, of
14 course, I read a lot before I got here, but there's really no
15 substitute for being in the room and hearing how this is affecting
16 your families and you individually, so I'm very grateful for that.

17 I endorse the themes that Bryan just laid out, track very
18 closely. I, too, have a lot of notes. The one that I'll add that I
19 heard was the cultural endangerment that this is -- that this is
20 causing and that the cultural loss that you are experiencing multi-
21 generationally. So your children are paying a cost because they are
22 not learning from the salmon. They're not -- your ability to pass on

1 your culture is being interrupted, and I think that's a really
2 important theme. I wrote it down a dozen times, and it's one that's
3 going to stay very close in my mind.

4 So with that, just again, gratitude and just letting me know how
5 much -- how -- what an honor it is to be with you here in your
6 homeland and thank you for teaching me as much as you did today. So
7 I'll pass this to (indiscernible).

8 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: Thank you so much, Shannon, and I,
9 too, want to say thank you. I hope our thank yous don't feel tired
10 or get tired to you. It really means a lot to us that you came and
11 shared so personally and so deeply with us, and that includes folks
12 on the phone, many of whom listened, but a couple of whom we were
13 able to hear from directly, and I, too, learned a lot.

14 The one thing I wanted to add that I heard was your thanking us
15 for showing up, and also for showing up together and the emphasis on
16 cooperation, and I just want you to know that we heard that. We took
17 it to heart. That's why we did want to come together.

18 We also know that it goes beyond those of us at this table and
19 (indiscernible) represented at this table and I know that we will be
20 carrying that back to our Secretary. That's a charge you've given us
21 to be cooperative and (indiscernible) shows leadership that helps you
22 with the problem solving (indiscernible).

1 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: Thank you so much. So first, I
2 just want to say thank you to all. I know you've heard thank you
3 several times this evening, but the fact that folks are here to give
4 testimony, folks traveled in, and I know it's a really difficult
5 time. I know it's the end of the subsistence season for many folks
6 and it's also a time to deal with the impacts of Typhoon Murdock, as
7 well, so we know it wasn't easy for most folks to be here, and we are
8 incredibly grateful, especially to the elders, to the Tribal leaders,
9 and other leaders who made the time and made the space to be here,
10 because you know, for us, and for me, personally, just listening to,
11 especially our elders and our leaders talk about the impacts of the
12 salmon crash, not just on individuals, but on entire communities, and
13 it's the thread that runs through communities, and hearing those
14 things first-hand is just -- we know it's a reminder and it's
15 something that hits me very deeply.

16 So I really appreciated that you all shared that with us here
17 today, and I'm just really grateful that you all welcomed us to be
18 here in (indiscernible) during what is, I know, a difficult time, so
19 incredibly grateful and I do have a couple of just housekeeping
20 things that I mentioned before, but there's a written comment period.

21 So if you didn't give testimony today or even if you did, and if
22 you want to submit a written comment, you can do that by October 28th

1 , at 11:59 p.m. So October 28th, 11:59 p.m., and you can send those
2 to consultation@bia.gov, and I think it's on the letter. Is it on
3 the letter? It's on the letter, your Tribal Leader letter that I
4 think most of you all received, but again, if you would like to
5 submit a written comment; consultation@bia.gov. Thank you all so
6 much.

7 MS. PETOSKEY: Thank you. Before (indiscernible) closing the
8 mics, I'd like to provide opportunity for Zach Penney, who's online.
9 He's the Senior Advisor under Secretary Spinrad on Fisheries and
10 Tribal Engagement.

11 DR. PENNEY: Good evening, everybody. I'm not sure how well you
12 can hear me, but so yeah, I'm Zach Penney, and I'm the Senior Advisor
13 to -- under Secretary Spinrad on Fisheries and Tribal Engagement, and
14 you know, like a lot of folks have said, you know, at NOAA, you know,
15 we learned a lot from you today, and I do really appreciate you
16 taking the time to talk with us, even though I'm not there, but I can
17 say, you know, with humility that, you know, you're not the first
18 ones you've ever told these things to, and I used to work for a
19 commission and I remember the frustration among our commissioners of
20 having to retell public and government officials, you know, their
21 story time and time again.

22 It gets tiring and you kind of ask your question, "Are you guys

1 talking to one another?" and a lot of the themes that you're talking
2 about, it's hard to see it. It's close to home. This isn't -- the
3 themes that are happening in your country have happened elsewhere.
4 They've happened in Puget Sound. They've happened in the Columbia
5 River. They've happened in the Klamath River. They're still
6 happening, but as I said, you know, even though, you know, we're
7 probably not the first officials you've ever told this to, I'm hoping
8 this time, the fact that both Interior and Commerce are in the same
9 room together, same time, hearing the same words, that it will be
10 different.

11 I don't think you're wrong to ask the federal government to do
12 what we can on the things that we can control. So I'm hoping, you
13 know, that we can move forward in unison. One of the themes that
14 stuck out to me today, someone, I can't remember what speaker said
15 it, but you know, every time you might turn to somebody, said, "Well,
16 we can't do anything about that. We can't do anything about that."
17 Well, then who can do anything about that, and I'm hoping that
18 working with our partners in Interior, we can figure out what that
19 is.

20 So for NOAA's part, I know Gretchen will take your words back to
21 the Alaska Regional Office for NOAA. I'll take your words back to
22 the folks in D.C. I know we still have two more consultations to go,

1 but I do look forward to working with our DOI partners on this and
2 balancing subsistence needs with, you know, the authorities of these
3 respective agencies. So thank you and (indiscernible - speaking
4 Native language).

5 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: Thank you, and (indiscernible)
6 everyone (indiscernible) talked today and I really appreciate the
7 time everyone took to be here with us. It's been a long afternoon
8 and (indiscernible) very thoughtful testimony and taking the time to
9 share your knowledge and information (indiscernible) huge and I
10 really, really appreciate it.

11 We are going to take this information back and talk about it, a
12 lot of the -- some of the -- well, not a lot. Some of the issues
13 that were brought up involve the North Pacific Fishery Management
14 Council, and that Council is meeting this week, and some of the
15 issues that people are interested in are on their agenda, and so I
16 encourage folks to listen online if you're able to, when they talk
17 about these issues at the Council, and I know we've been here for a
18 while, so I don't want to keep anyone any longer, but thank you very
19 much.

20 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: Thank you, (indiscernible -
21 speaking Native language) for (indiscernible) here today and for the
22 opportunity to sit and listen and learn. I'm really grateful for all

1 the days beyond just today that you also shared your knowledge and
2 worked so closely together with (indiscernible) and his term here on
3 the Yukon-Delta National Wildlife Refuge and (indiscernible) other
4 folks back there as well.

5 I think that, you know, Gloria, her words stick with me that you
6 are up close and personal with every fish we cut and to be in this
7 room with all of you who are those people, up close and personal with
8 every fish you cut, has a tremendous impact on (indiscernible). I
9 know (indiscernible) you know, for me, everything we can do in our
10 control to address some of these things that (indiscernible) doing
11 so, and working with our leadership to do more as well. So thank you
12 (indiscernible - speaking Native language).

13 MR. COHN: Thank you again for having us here and for sharing
14 really, really just so much of -- just how critical this issue is,
15 and you know, as I've been sitting here today listening and thinking
16 about, you know, what is my part in this, as the State Director of
17 the Bureau of Land Management. We manage all lands upriver, about 70
18 million acres in the state, and about 50 million of that is in the
19 Interior, so from the Bering Sea all the way to the Canadian border,
20 and so it's given me a lot to think about.

21 You know, there's a lot of challenging issues that you've raised
22 offshore that I think are going to take a lot of the folks here to

1 think about how to address those issues, and thinking about my part
2 and what I'm going to communicate with my team when I go back to the
3 office, you know, the 50 million acres of lands south of the Brooks
4 Range that my agency has management responsibility for, a lot of
5 those lands are critical for the salmon that you get upstream, and so
6 that's something I want to really challenge my team to think about.
7 Are we doing enough? You know, what are we doing, and are we doing
8 enough to ensure that the salmon that you do get upstream have a
9 place to spawn that's in good condition and will be there for those
10 fish when they arrive.

11 So that's part of what I've been thinking about as I've been
12 listening today, you know, what is my part and what is the part of my
13 agency, and you know, Sara and I both sit on the Federal Subsistence
14 Board for the State. In a way, the Office of Subsistence Management
15 is the staff arm that works for us in those roles and so -- and works
16 for you on your behalf. So that's also something I want to think
17 about more, how to engage fully in that Board in the role that we
18 have and the responsibility we have for subsistence here in the state
19 and (indiscernible), lots to think about, but thank you again for
20 sharing and really, really relaying just the absolute significance
21 and importance of everything that you raised today, so thank you.

22 MS. KORTHUIS: Hello, my name is Vivian Korthuis. I serve as

1 the CEO for AVCP. I just wanted to make some closing comments and
2 observations. First is thank you all for coming. I think you --
3 your comments point to the gratitude that we have in our
4 (indiscernible) for you coming here and listening. That, in itself,
5 is a very big statement.

6 The unusual circumstances that we have to talk about today, one
7 of my observations is if you go to a meeting and there is a conflict,
8 you can tell by the atmosphere in the room whether it's negative or
9 positive. I didn't really -- I don't feel any negative in this room.
10 So even if we have conflict or disagreement on what path to go down,
11 we realize, as a region, we have to keep moving to try to save the
12 fish, the salmon, even beyond that, to save our region, to save our
13 communities, our families, and our whole culture.

14 So my first observation is that I hope you feel the sense of the
15 space, the space that was here today, and I hope the people online
16 got (indiscernible) that sense too, because I think none of us have
17 ill-intent. We want to contribute to the process. We want to vote
18 on a path to where we find some kind of solutions to these issues
19 that we're bringing up.

20 The other comment I want to make is -- I counted about 50 people
21 in here and there's about 60 people online, and we had very limited
22 time. There's a lot of listeners online and in the audience and the

1 comment, the observation that I want to make is that we gave you our
2 best story today, the story of all of our villages, what's happening
3 in our region.

4 As a result of that, you're going to carry that and it's going
5 to impact everything else that you do from here on. The question
6 that we have in front of us is, how will the federal government put
7 together a strategy to help protect that trust responsibility it has
8 with our Tribes? That's the heart of this discussion. What is it
9 that the federal government is going to do to help protect that trust
10 responsibility, not only to the Tribes that exist now, but those
11 grandkids and great-grandkids that we still don't -- that are coming.

12 So in that context, one of the things -- the third observation
13 that I'm making is when we talk about fisheries, we cannot talk about
14 fisheries or subsistence without talking about everything else. So
15 please don't take the context of fisheries in isolation.

16 There's a salmon crash. There's a pandemic. There's the stress
17 of public safety. There's the stress of typhoon, and the forecast is
18 that climate change is going to continue to have devastating -- have
19 crazy things happen in our villages, in our rivers.

20 So that's how we come to you (indiscernible) in that mindset of
21 not just salmon, but everything we touch every day when we get up in
22 the morning and go to sleep at night, during that time period. So

1 when we leave here, the stories that were shared in this consultation
2 are yours to take and use, and those of us that listened, we're going
3 to take those things that we learned and we're going to use those
4 also.

5 We know that you're going to Fairbanks. We support the people
6 in Fairbanks. Whatever they tell you, we know that it's going to be
7 their truth. I know you're going -- I don't know if you're going to
8 Nome soon or not.

9 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: We had to reschedule that.

10 MS. KORTHUIS: Rescheduled, and that's the same thing with the
11 people in Nome. Our region supports them, and whatever they tell
12 you, we know that they're giving you their story and that's the
13 truth.

14 So with that, I'm going to ask our Traditional Chief to close
15 the meeting, if you don't have anything else to share.

16 UNIDENTIFIED MALE SPEAKER: (Indiscernible - speaking Native
17 language). Our father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy
18 kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us
19 this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive
20 those who have trespassed against us, and lead us not into
21 temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, the
22 power, and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

1 MS. KORTHUIS: Thank you everyone, and one last comment; we'd
2 like to thank ONC for providing this space and (indiscernible).

3 (Indiscernible - speaking simultaneously).

4 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: Thank you, all.

5 (Indiscernible - speaking simultaneously).

6 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE SPEAKER: Thank you.

7 5:40:05

8 (Off record)

9 (END OF PROCEEDINGS)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA)
STATE OF ALASKA)

I, Lisa Nelson, CSR No. 5907, do hereby certify:

THAT the foregoing pages numbered 8 through 118 contain a full, true and correct transcript of the Department of the Interior and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Alaska Fisheries Tribal Consultation Meeting recorded electronically by Accu-Type Depositions' Court Reporter on the 5th day of October 2022, and transcribed by me, to the best of my knowledge and ability.



Lisa N. Nelson, CSR #5907
My Commission Expires: 02/06/24