

**Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group
2024 Meeting Summary**

December 11-12, 2024

Downtown Marriott Hotel, 820 W. 7th Ave, Anchorage

For review & approval by WACH Working Group at December 2025 meeting.

The Western Arctic Caribou Herd (WACH) Working Group (WG) met in person on December 11 and 12, 2024 (see agenda at the end of this document). The following is a summary of meeting presentations and Working Group member discussions. Motions passed at the meeting can be found on pages 17-18.

Call to Order – WG Chair Vern Cleveland called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

WACH WG Roll Call / Establish Quorum – Quorum was met with 15 of 20 WG members present at 8:30 am on Day 1. 15 of 20 members were present on Day 2. The following table lists WG membership attendance at this meeting.

Working Group Seat	Working Group Member
1. Anchorage Advisory Committee	Neil DeWitt
2. Buckland, Deering, Selawik	Vida Coaltrain
3. Anaktuvuk Pass, Nuiqsut.....	Mary Hugo (not present)
4. Elim, Golovin, White Mountain.....	Morris Nakaruk (not present, alternate)
5. Fairbanks Hunters	John Wisniewski
6. Hunting Guides.....	Justin Horton
7. Kivalina, Noatak	Daniel Foster, Sr. (not present)
8. Kotzebue	Cyrus Harris (Vice Chair)
9. Koyukuk River.....	Darrell Vent
10. Lower Kobuk River	Vern Cleveland, Sr. (Chair)
11. Middle Yukon River	Michael Stickman
12. Point Hope and Point Lay.....	Steve Oomittuk
13. Nome.....	Charlie Lean
14. Conservationists.....	Tim Fullman
15. Northern Seward Peninsula	Johnson Eningowuk (alternate)
16. Reindeer Herders Association.....	Tom Gray
17. Southern Seward Peninsula	Morris Nassuk
18. Transporters.....	Kiva McCarthy (alternate)
19. Upper Kobuk River	Bill Bernhardt
20. Atqasuk, Utqiagvik, Wainwright	Joseph Leavitt (alternate)

MOTION by Tom Gray, second by Neil DeWitt, to approve Justin Horton as Working Group Chair – Seat 6. Motion PASSED unanimously on a voice vote.

MOTION by Neil DeWitt, second by Tim Fullman, to approve Kiva McCarthy to participate as a last-minute substitution for WG Alternate - Seat 18. Ben Child had a last-minute conflict. Motion PASSED unanimously on a voice vote.

Audience Attendance: Public and agency attendance was not taken. However, 30+ people were present in the audience, including agency staff that presented information to the Working Group.

Approve Agenda: Facilitator Holly Spoth-Torres reviewed the agenda (Attachment 1). MOTION by Neil DeWitt, second by Tim Fullman, to approve the meeting agenda. MOTION by Cyrus Harris, second by Micky Stickman, to amend the meeting agenda. The agenda needed to be adjusted because the guest elders' travel was delayed due to weather. The following changes were proposed to the agenda:

1. Round Robin Updates: 8:35 am
2. Herd Status: Alex Hansen: 9:35 am
3. Herd Status: Kyle Joly: 10:50
4. Guest Elder, Fred Eningowuk: after lunch

The amendment PASSED unanimously on a voice vote. The original MOTION as AMENDED passed unanimously on a voice vote.

Western Arctic Caribou Herd Status & Management Level

Western Arctic Caribou Herd Overview and 2023 Census – Alex Hansen, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) Division of Wildlife Conservation, presented information about the WACH population status and trends (see p. 13 in 2024 WG Binder). The presentation laid the foundation for the WG's later recommendations regarding future management of the caribou herd. Key points in the ADFG presentation included:

- WAH Abundance over time - In 1977, the herd bottomed out at 75,000 animals and then climbed rapidly for a number of years. The herd leveled off in the 90s and then peaked in 2003 at 490,000 animals. For the next 20 years the herd has been declining.
- ADFG was unable to capture a photocensus in 2024 due to weather. There is no new herd population number to report this year.
- Calving (parturition) is about average – Summer surveys show that 71% of collared cows had calves in 2024, compared with 77% in 2023, 64% in 2022, 68% in 2021, 67% in 2020, 81% in 2019, 86% in 2018, and 83% in 2017. The long-term average calving rate is 70% (1992-2024). Parturition is down slightly from last year but overall, nothing we see here is concerning.
- Yearling recruitment is above average – Yearling recruitment in 2024 was 22:100 yearlings:adults, which is up from 2023 and is greater than the 25-year average (1998-2024).
- Fall herd composition: The bull:cow ratio is 44 bulls for every 100 cows. The management plan states that we should be maintaining a ratio of 30 bulls for every 100 cows (or above) – we are well above that and there are no major concerns.
- Adult cow survival is below average – Cow survival rate for 2024 was 75%, which is below the long-term average of 80% (1987-2023). Adult cow survival is the primary concern related to the recent population decline. The herd won't see growth unless survival is above 80% and will continue to decline.
- Surplus is less than average harvest – it will be important to limit cow harvest - We know we have a harvestable surplus (7296) that is below what we know to be our long-term average annual harvest (8000 – 12000). Therefore, we need to think about what changes might need to be made to prevent over-harvesting and the continued decline of the herd. ADFG recommends no more than 750 cows/year.
- Why cows matter – each cow has a lot of reproductive potential.
- Board of Game Actions since December 2023:
 - Bag limit changed in GMUs 22, 23, and SW 26A (15 caribou per year only 1 can be a cow)

- Nonresident harvest in GMU 23 changed from general harvest ticket to drawing tag (up to 300 permits issued for 1 bull.
- Increased bear harvest opportunity. Year-round resident brown bear harvest in GMU 23. Nonresident limit increased to 2 bears/year.
- Management level per WACH Cooperative Management Plan – Each year, the Working Group considers what management level should be assigned to the Western Arctic herd, based on Table 1 of the WACH Cooperative Management Plan (updated 2019). At its meeting on December 10, 2024, the WACH Technical Committee recommended that the Working Group assign the same management level as 2023, the management level “Preservative, Declining”, based on the herd size (within the range of 130,000-200,000) and adult cow survival rate less than 80%. The Preservative, Declining Management Level recommends a harvest of somewhere between 6000 and 10,000 caribou. At this “Preservative” management level, the Cooperative Management Plan indicates that the following management recommendations should be considered (see Table 2 in the 2019 Management Plan):
 - No harvest of calves
 - Limit harvest of cows by residents through permit hunts and/or village quotas
 - Limit subsistence harvest of bulls only if <30 bulls:100 cows
 - Restrict harvest to residents only, according to State and federal law. Closure of some federal public lands may be necessary.

(NOTE – Later in the meeting, the Working Group passed a motion designating the Western Arctic herd as “Preservative, Declining”.)

- Recommended Management Actions
 - Reduce cow harvest
 - Report caribou harvest through RC907
- Summary – We anticipate continued decline in the herd, and we should focus on limiting the harvest of cows. It is important to educate the public on the importance of limiting the harvest of cows. Harvest data is still being crunched but it is looking like of the animals taken, 80% were bulls.
- Summary of WAH Heath Stats –
 - Population size: 152,000
 - Population trend: Declining
 - Calving Rate: 71%
 - Calf Recruitment: 22 calves:100 adults
 - Cow Survival: 75%
 - Bull to Cow Ratio: 50 bulls : 100 cows

Working Group member questions and discussion on herd status included:

- Q: If there are 44 bulls for 100 cows, is the population 44% bulls?
A: No, we estimate there to be about 25% bulls, 25% calves, and 50% cows.
- Comment – We must consider both predator control as a way to protect the herd.
- Q: How many bulls were taken this year by non-residents?
- A: 150 bulls were killed this year by nonresidents and this doesn’t have a biological effect on the herd.
- Comment – Local hunters must be prioritized over nonresident hunters.
- Q: Because both the Western Arctic Herd and the Teshukpuk herd are included in the ANS, is the harvestable surplus of 7296 doing us harm long-term? Are we bumping up the numbers to keep us out of Tier 2 management? Because the herds are combined in the ANS, could the 7296 number actually be overharvesting?

A: Maybe. But it is more important to slowly make changes, so all stakeholders are on board with management adjustments.

- Q: What is a Tier II system for managing harvest?

A: Tier II permits are special hunting permits for Alaska residents. They're used when there aren't enough animals to meet everyone's subsistence needs. To apply, you have to live in Alaska, and applications are scored based on how much you rely on that game for food compared to other options you have. The permits go to the people with the highest scores, making sure those who depend most on the resource get priority when it's limited.

Caribou Bull to Cow Ratios in the Western Arctic Herd - Alex Hansen, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) Division of Wildlife Conservation, presented information about the bull to cow ratios in the WAH. (see p. 20 in 2024 WG Binder). Key points in the presentation included:

- The WG Plan recommends 30 bulls:100 cows. There is biological concern when the ratio is much lower. Some literature suggests 18: bulls to 100 cows is a data point for concern. The current ratio is 44 bulls:100 cows and the data point has been above 30 since we've been conducting this survey.
- 2017 Harvest: 89% bulls, 11% cows
- 2022 Harvest: 64% bulls, 36% cows
- The goal is always to continue to reduce cow harvest.
- Value of the bull: breed for 3-4 years, then die. Secondarily it is for harvest/meet.
- In general, mature cows lead migrations and bulls will follow. Unlike bulls, the loss of reproductive potential from one cow, cannot be compensated for by other cows. If you lose one bull, you've lost one bull. If you lose one cow, you've lost their reproductive potential to produce many animals.

Working Group member questions and discussion on herd status included:

- Q: Do caribou have twins?
A: Rarely, if ever.

National Park Service Caribou Monitoring – Kyle Joly, NPS, presented information on the movements of caribou the NPS has collared (see p. 27 in WG Binder). Points from the presentation:

- WAH Collar Results (Sept 2023 – Aug 2024) – 46 GPS collars were deployed, all via netting.
- Where was the herd? – In October of 2024, about half the herd was at the base of the Wainwright Inlet and the other half was in Noatak. In October they stopped moving and then after the large storm that flooded Kotzebue, the animals started moving south using typical channels.
- Fall migration, Kobuk River Crossing – In 2023 75% of the herd crossed the Kobuk River.
- Over time we know that caribou are crossing the Kobuk almost later than is typical. In 2023 the animals crossed on November 6, which is much later than average.
- Overwintering – No caribou wintered in the Bering Land Bridge National Preserve – while 7 - 8 years ago 75% of the collared animals wintered there. 16% of collars ended up in Gates of the Arctic, this is below average.
- Migration distance – The mean distance of travel by collared caribou from September 2023 - August 2024 was 2,282 miles, about average.
- Fall Migration, Noatak River Crossing – About 90% of the animals crossed the Noatak River one area. This was the largest concentration of animals crossing the Noatak that we have seen. Western communities along the Noatak River saw less than 1% of animals. Most animals crossed farther east.
- Spring migration – The route and timing of spring migration doesn't show as much variation over the years, as cows are motivated to get to the calving grounds and timing of calving has not been changing much. In 2024 the herd was crossing the Selawik River moving north on April 27.
- Recent research papers of interest –

- “Behavioral adaptation to seasonal resource scarcity by Caribou and its role in partial migration”
- <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/caribou-winter-strategies.htm>
- “Evidence for an adaptive, large-scale range shift in a long-distance terrestrial migrant”
- <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/caribou-memory-influences-movement.htm>
- “How Wildlife are Responding to a Warming Climate”
- <http://www.nps.gov/articles/000/aps-22-1-5.htm>

Working Group questions and discussion on the NPS presentation included:

- Q: Can you tell how fast animals are migrating? Are they being impacted by aircraft?
A: We can track speed and direction of caribou, however we don’t have access to flight path information so we don’t have the ability to correlate aircraft to their movement patterns.
- Q: Are the animals north of the Kobuk right now?
A: Typically, about 18% of the animals stay north of the Kobuk River, however migration patterns change every year.
- Q: Do you think that animals migrate because of parasites?
A: It is unclear, however we are working to begin monitoring body condition and we may be able to understand how animals are impacted by parasites.
- Q: A member of the public was invited to ask a question (Lance Kramer with NANA Regional Corp., Committee Chair for the Lands and Natural Resources Committee). Lance asked if there were research and/or data gaps to help understand the herd better?
A: There are many topics, climate change, insect relief, snowpack conditions, etc. There are many questions to answer however we need funding and resources to do this work.
- Q: Do you think the WAH will split into two herds?
A: Kyle answered that there isn’t enough information to speculate on this. Alex Hansen added that the collars show the WAH coming together every year to calve.

Guest Elder Presentation

Guest Elders Fred and Frieda Eningowuk from Shishmaref spoke to the working group. An audio recording of their talk can be found at <https://westernarcticcaribou.net/guest-elders/>.

Working Group Decision on Herd Management Level

The Working Group discussed the recommendation from the Technical Committee that the WACH be within the “Preservative” and “Declining” management category, with regard to Table 1 of the WACH Cooperative Management Plan (p. 21 of the 2019 plan). Working Group members expressed the following comments in discussion of the herd Management Level:

- We should keep the management level recommendation the same because the count didn’t happen.
- The situation is serious, but we don’t have enough information to know if the herd status has declined further. We should move forward with the TC recommendation to remain at “Preservative” and “Declining”.
- Agree with the Technical Committee that Preservative, Declining is the right management category.

MOTION by Michael Stickman, second by Neil DeWitt, to accept the recommendation by the Technical Committee to set the Management Level for the Western Arctic Herd at “Preservative, Declining” per the 2019 WACH Cooperative Management Plan, Table 1. Motion PASSED unanimously by a voice vote.

Alaska Board of Game: A review of the Alaska Board of Game Process

Dave Loring, Board Member, Alaska Board of Game gave an overview of the Board of Game process (see p. 43 in 2024 WG Binder). Key points in the presentation included:

- The Board of Game meetings are guided by the Alaska Constitution. The meetings typically generate a lot of interest and emotion from meeting attendees due to the issues being discussed.
- Alaska's Unique Fish and Game Management System
- Board Composition – Board members are appointed by governor and confirmed by the legislators. There are 7 members.
- Key Authorities – Regulation making authorities, but no fiscal authority, Intensive Management Law, Subsistence use and allocation of fish and game. Seasons, bag limits, quotas, areas, etc., are some examples of types of regulations adopted by the board.
- Fish & Game Advisory Committees – Important part of the Board of Game process. There are 84 committees throughout the state. Many are active, some are inactive because participation is challenging. If committees are inactive, they can be reactivated. The committees provide local forums for proposals.
- Steps in the Regulatory Process
- Meeting Cycles
- Procedures for Out-of-Cycle Actions
- Sources of Input to the Boards
- Public Comment Process
- How to get involved

Working Group questions and discussion on the presentation included:

- Membership on the Board of Game appears lopsided. I think we need more rural representation.
- Many rural Advisory Committee meetings have stopped. They should be reactivated.
- Face-to-face, in person AC meetings are very important to rural Alaska – they are more impactful than virtual meetings.
- The Board of Game should move to A Committee of the Whole like how the Board of Fish operates.
- Q: How do you get on the Board of Game?
A: You get on the Board through the Governor's office. Submit your request and bio through the Governor's office. Then get support from your local area.
- Q: Two of the current board members are guides, two are former guides. How confident are you they represent and make decisions that benefit the entire State of Alaska?
A: Agree, many members are guides, but I am confident in their ability to consider regulations, listen to public input, and make decisions.
- Q: Why did you vote against the Kotzebue AC, Native, and Village Corporations who recommended limiting non-resident hunting?
A: We listened to the biologists from Fish & Game who state that there isn't a biological impact to the herd from the non-resident hunters' take. We didn't eliminate non-resident hunting completely but we did significantly reduce non-resident hunting.

Federal Subsistence Board: A review of the Federal Subsistence Process

Lisa Grediagin, Supervisory Biologist and Robbin La Vine, Policy Coordinator for the Department of the Interior, OSM gave an overview of the Federal Subsistence Board process (see p. 56 in 2024 WG Binder). Key points in the presentation included:

- The federal regulatory cycles for wildlife occur every other year (even years).
- Description of the steps for the federal regulatory process – it takes about 1 year.
 - Call for Proposals + Verification of Proposals
 - Analysis of Proposals
 - Review of Proposals
 - Public and Tribal Comments
 - Regional Advisory Councils
 - Federation Subsistence Board (there are now 3 tribally nominated members)
 - Publication in the CFR
- Federal Subsistence Board Program & Structure – There is a chair, five (5) public members (2 rural subsistence + 3 tribally nominated members), and one member each from BIA, BLM, USFS, FWS, and NPS.
- FSB Powers and Duties

Working Group questions and discussion on the presentation included:

- Q: How does the board make decisions about actions that impact rural Alaska?
A: We ensure that all board members understand their responsibility to ANILCA Title VIII to prioritize subsistence uses.
- Q: Where do you have your meetings?
A: The RACs meet in the regions and the Federal Subsistence Board meets in Anchorage.

Summary of Regulation Changes by the Board of Game and Federal Subsistence Board

Alex Hansen, ADF&G and Wil Wiese, Selawik National Wildlife Refuge discussed recent state and federal regulation changes. Key points in the presentation included:

Working Group Proposals:

- BOG Proposal #2 – Reduce resident bag limit to 4 caribou annually, of which only 1 may be a cow in Units 21D remainder, 22, 23, 24B remainder, 24C, 24D and 26A
THE RESULTING ACTION: Bag limit is now: 15 caribou per year only 1 of which may be a cow.
- BOG Proposal #3 – Close nonresident caribou hunting in Units 21D remainder, 22, 23, 24B remainder, 24C, 24D and 26A
THE RESULTING ACTION: Regulations were changed from requiring a general harvest ticket to a Drawing tag with up to 300 permits issued (1 bull).
- FSB Proposal WP 24-28 – Reduce the harvest limit of caribou across the range of the WACH to 4 caribou per year per permit, only one of which may be a cow
THE RESULTING ACTION: Individual harvest limit was reduced across the range of the Western Arctic Caribou Herd. GMUs 21D remainder, 22, 23, 24B remainder, 24C, 24D and SW portion of 26A reduced to 15 caribou per year only 1 of which may be a cow.
- FSB Proposal WP 24-30/31 – Close to non-federally qualified users in Unit 23 from Aug 1 – Oct 31
THE RESULTING ACTION: Federal public lands in Unit 23 are closed to caribou hunting by non-federally qualified users from Aug 1 – Oct 31 unless the Western Arctic Herd exceeds 200,000 caribou.

DAY 2 – Thursday, December 12, 2024

Call to Order – WG Vice Chair Cyrus Harris called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

WACH WG Roll Call / Establish Quorum – Quorum was met with 15 of 20 WG members present at 8:30 am on Day 1. 15 of 20 members were present on Day 2. The following table lists WG membership attendance at this meeting.

Amend Agenda: MOTION by Neil DeWitt, second by Michael Stickman, to amend the meeting agenda to take public comments after the Communications Committee Report. The public comments will be limited to three (3) minutes per individual. Motion PASSED unanimously on a voice vote.

Resource Development in the Herd's Range

Tim Fullman, Chair of the Working Group's Resource Development Committee, gave an update on resource development projects within the range of the herd (p. 64 in WG Binder). Tim's role as the Resource Development Committee Chair is to keep an eye on development proposals in the range of the herd and assist the working group in drafting and submitting comments on these developments as appropriate.

Ambler Road Project (p. 65 in WG Binder)

- In 2020 the BLM approved permitting of an Ambler access road.
- Two lawsuits were filed requiring the BLM to complete a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement.
- The BLM was then required to go back and fix some of the deficiencies in the original EIS.
- In October of 2023 the BLM released a Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement which looked at the same three alternatives for different roads to the Ambler District. The BLM also added another alternative (skip pioneer road and directly to a single lane road).
- Another change – BLM considered public access and trespass on the road as reasonably foreseeable.
- The DSEIS also proposes approving the road.
- The DSEIS acknowledges disturbances to caribou.
- At the 2023 Working Group meeting we approved submitting comments to the BLM on the DSEIS and those are included on page 66.
- In April 2024, the Final SEIS was published recommending the No Action Alternative – to not permit the Ambler Road.
- This decision was finalized in June 2024. The BLM therefore denied AIDEA's application for a right-of-way to build roads across BLM lands.
- Based on the results of the 2024 presidential election, it is likely that permitting of the Ambler Road will continue.

D1 Land Withdrawal (p. 82 in WG Binder)

- The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA) withdrew nearly 50 million acres of land from mineral and energy development to allow protection for the public interest.
- BLM is considering opening 28 million of these acres for development.
- Lands include calving grounds, summer range of the herd, and others.
- Last year, we as the working group voted to send a letter to the BLM asking them to retain those withdrawals to continue those protections for caribou and subsistence.
- Those comments were submitted in February 2024 (Page 83).

- The final EIS was released in July 2024. A Record of Decision was released in August 2024, which concluded that the D1 Withdrawals “continue to be necessary to protect the public interest” and so retained all D1 Withdrawals being considered. This position aligns with the Working Group’s request in the comments above.

NPR-A Special Areas Rulemaking (p. 89 in WG Binder)

- The strongest protections for wildlife, habitat, and subsistence in the NPR-A occur within designated “Special Areas,” including the Utukok River Uplands Special Area that protects much of the WACH calving grounds.
- After direction at our last meeting, we submitted comments suggesting to raise the northern boundary of the calving area for protection of the WACH.
- In April 2024, BLM released its final NPR-A Rule. This increased protections for caribou and other surface resources across the entire NPR-A, and especially within Special Areas. It also set up a process for identifying new Special Areas or expanding existing ones. This led to a comment period that ran through September 2024. The Working Group did not submit comments.

Teshkepuk Lake Conservation Right of Way

- The Willow Project, approved by BLM in March 2023, will expand oil and gas infrastructure in the northeastern National Petroleum Reserve–Alaska (NPR-A), near the Teshkepuk Lake Special Area, critical habitat for the Teshkepuk Caribou Herd.
- Approval included three drill sites, a central processing facility, connecting roads, a gravel mine, and an airstrip.
- As a condition, BLM required compensatory mitigation to protect the caribou herd and its habitat.
- In November 2024, BLM announced the Teshkepuk Lake Conservation Right-of-Way, a first-of-its-kind agreement with Nuiqsut Trilateral, Inc. (NTI), which prohibits oil and gas development across ~1 million acres around Teshkepuk Lake.
- The conservation right-of-way is designed to provide long-term protection for caribou, habitat, and subsistence; it is being finalized with NTI, and there are currently no opportunities for public comment.

Graphite One Mine (p. 92 in WG Binder)

- The Graphite One project is a proposed graphite mine on the Seward Peninsula between Brevig Mission, Teller, and Nome.
- Largest known graphite deposit in the nation, which is important for lithium batteries. There is interest in a domestic source for graphite because almost all of the world’s high-quality graphite comes from China.
- Graphite One continues to proceed with exploration and hopes to complete a feasibility study by the end of this year that will indicate whether the mine would be profitable. In the meantime, they are pursuing funding and signed an agreement in October 2024 with a Chinese company to obtain licensing and expertise that would help them develop their manufacturing plant in Ohio.
- There is not yet an opportunity for public comment, but the Working Group will pay attention to the project moving forward.

OTZ Microwave Tower Broadband Project (p. 93 in WG Binder)

- Arctic Slope Telephone Association Cooperative, Inc. (ASTAC) provides telecommunications, including internet access, for North Slope communities. They recently received Federal grants to

connect Anaktuvuk Pass, Nuiqsut, and Point Lay with high-speed fiber optic broadband.

- The original proposal was to build 33 towers between the Dalton Highway and the Ocean. In 2023, the proposal was dropped to 30 towers, six (6) on BLM managed lands, two (2) on FWS managed lands and the rest on either State of AK, NANA, or privately owned lands.
- The BLM and FWS released a preliminary EA in June 2024 that analyzes impacts of the towers on Federally managed land. This was followed by a 30-day comment period, but the Working Group did not provide comments. As of printing, the final EA has not been released for this project.

Annarraaq – Aktigiruaq Mining Exploration (laid on the table)

- The Annarraaq-Aktigiruaq mining exploration project would evaluate the potential of new mineral deposits north of the current Red Dog Mine. The Working Group commented multiple times on the Teck America Inc. proposal sharing information about caribou.
- Just on Monday, there was a news article stating that the Army Corps of Engineers has approved the project. I don't know many details yet and will continue to track.
- Will likely include a 6-year exploration program that will provide the information for Teck to determine if there will be a mine developed at the site.

The following comments and questions were raised in Working Group discussion of the Resource Development Committee report:

- Q: Do we have a platform statement that we use to provide comments on projects like this?
A: The Management Plan does provide limited guidance – however I'm not aware of something like this for the Working Group as a whole.
- Q: Are the OTZ tower construction require road access?
A: Materials will be flown in by helicopter.
- Discussion: There was continuing discussion about the impacts of roads on caribou migration patterns.
- Comment from VP of Lands at NANA regarding Teck America Inc proposal: The Army Corps of Engineers 404 permit was issued with specific conditions to protect caribou. The road is only an exploration road and a mine will not be developed until we know more. Helicopter traffic won't be eliminated, but it will be reduced. If you want a presentation on this, I'm happy to facilitate that.
- Q: Will the road for the potential new mine go all the way to the ocean?
A: If this project moves forward, the existing road to the port would be utilized. In addition, the Red Dog Port would not be upgraded to a deep-water port, it would continue to operate as it does today.
- Q: Is there a way to get funding that would research ways to modify roads so that caribou are not deterred?
A: There was no response.
- Q: Will the proposed new mine near Red Dog be underground?
A: Yes.
- Comment: The Bering Sea Intertribal Commission represents 38 tribes. We are in the process of creating a conservation district which will have an MOA with the USDA. This may include funding for guardians representing tribal communities within the conservation district. Just an FYI for the future.
- Q: Will the proposed new mine near Red Dog be underground?
A: Yes.

- Comment from Morris: The Native Village of Elim opposes uranium mining approximately 30 miles north of Elim. The mine could cause significant environmental damage including water consumption of up to 18,000 gallons/day. Toxic chemicals can contaminate water. Radiation and nuclear waste are concerning. The mine would impact the health of humans and wildlife and I want to bring this to the attention of the Resource Development Committee.

Knowledge of the Caribou: A Database for Accessing Working Group Observations

Ophelie Couriot, PhD, Post Doctoral Associate, and Anna Brose, Communications Manager, from SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, presented this project. See the presentation on page 94 of the WG binder.

- Project Goal: to compile knowledge and long-term observations and investigate threats to caribou in a rapidly changing Arctic. The mission of this project is to serve interests and lean on knowledge of communities, co-management boards and advisory councils to explore the impacts of a changing Arctic on caribou movements, space use and demography.
- Building a database/infrastructure to compile and share observations of caribou from existing reports and documents. Searchable, secure, access controlled. Designed in collaboration with local communities.
- Collaborating with ELOKA.
- We will ensure privacy, stewardship, and security of data. We are guided by ethical principles of sharing and collecting data.
- Feedback for the team from the WG:
 - Is there a way for us to understand how the herds are impacted by planes?
 - There would be value in collecting local knowledge – verbal history is so much harder to track, then data.
 - It should be easy to get transporter information.
 - Consider tracking information on rain events.
- We are submitting a proposal to the NSF to fund a project and are requesting a letter of support. The project aims to understand the cascading and cumulative effects of meteorological conditions on caribou distribution and evidence through carbon and nitrogen fluxes, vegetation, productivity, insect activity and movement barriers.

Communication Committee Update

Deb Lawton, Wildlife Education Associate – Region 5, Alaska Department of Fish & Game Division of Wildlife Conservation, and a member of the Communications Committee, briefly presented information about the actions of the committee during the past year. For details and a summary of what was presented please refer to pages 107 of the binder.

- Deb requests photos of you in your home communities if you would like to share them.
- Deb requests that if you have an idea for a topic for Caribou Trails to please reach out to her.

Public Comment

The Working Group invited members of the public to provide public comments to the group. Each commenter had three (3) minutes:

Walter Sampson, Kotzebue

I spoke in Inupiaq. For you to understand. That is exactly how people feel in rural Alaska. They don't understand the process that we all go through to have an impact on their way of life. Subsistence is really a dirty word. Excuse my language. A way of life in rural Alaska means putting food on the table with a family for the course of the year. I came to this meeting hopefully to gain knowledge of why 500,000 Western Arctic Caribou Herd declined. From that number 255,000. I'm not worried about a 12-mile road from Red Dog. I want to know why there is a decline. If

there's any discussions to occur, include those other impacts that are being made on the Western Arctic Herd. Besides the predators, wolves and bears, you also have transporters that transport 3 to 400 people up the ranges where migration of that caribou herd goes through for some of the people, they have to go further up north to hunt for their family, which means that if family has to purchase more gas, more food to go further at \$18 a gallon for fuel. How many of us will be able to go 100 miles? These are the things, these are the realities in Northwest Alaska, and we're here to listen to the impacts on the western Arctic herd. What is it that the State of Alaska is doing to properly manage that herd? We listened yesterday, regarding how a board system is set up. Through the process of a board system that I had to go through. I sat on the game board for 6 years. And I'm going to tell you right now. Some of you ain't gonna like it. That's a dirty board. It plays politics on the lives of many people. A proposal can be made at the village level. And it goes through the process. We heard it yesterday. As it goes through the process, it changes the intent of the original proposal that the folks have proposed. By the time it gets to the board it completely changes to the point. That original proposal might be a proposal that works against that community. And that's how the system is set up. We watched the two people yesterday, the federal system and the State employee. That's their day to day, working on these things that have an impact on the way of life of people. I think it's time that if we plan to make any difference as a board, as a committee, as managers, we need to go to some of these communities and hear from those people that are impacted by that very process that the Federal and State system provides. Go through the process of planning with the communities, not for the for the community, but with the community. So, they have input on that process and hopefully own the product at the end. I think it's time that we look at what we need to do. Too often we get dependent on getting expert help from what we call experts, forgetting those people at the village level who know where the resources are and what they do. Let's change that system to where we can all benefit from what we're supposed to receive. We have people that are sitting over here in the communities in Northwest Alaska. They spend their money to come down to listen. You're talking, probably over about 10 to \$15,000 to come down with a whole bunch of people to listen. Go out to the communities in rural Alaska and hold a meeting and listen to those people that are impacted by that very process. That we create. Excuse me for talking the way I am, but I'm trying to get the message out to some of you that make decisions on issues that impact the way of life of people in rural Alaska. If the village of Noatak spends \$18 a gallon to go further out and we have regulations in place, some people don't know until they get cited for breaking the law. If we're going to do that, let's bring those things out to the community and explain to them what the State is doing, and what the Federal system is doing. If I offend any of you. I apologize. I'm trying to get the meat of the message to you to think about. Thank you.

Rico Dewild, Huslia

Thank you, Mr. Sampson, for the strong words and yeah, I feel the same way he does about all the experts in college and scientists making decisions on people that live out in rural Alaska. In the end, it's almost like they're not managing the animals, they're managing the natives. That's how we feel. I think it's important that they get out there, and follow us, because, literally, the way the natives move around out there. If the people who are making decisions went with us, they would die if they had to follow us. We would have to show them. Show them how to move around. That's how connected and well traversed in the lands and understanding the lands we are where we hunt and fish. I think when it comes to caribou, if you ask any elder out there, "what's the problem?" There are more wolves and grizzly than we've ever seen, that's the problem. It's like we're all sitting around fighting over who gets to kill the last caribou that are dying off. There's a problem with wolves right now, and I don't think the answer is airplanes. Shooting from airplanes, that's a rich man's game. I think it's important they put a gas incentive because the price of snowgos, and the gas is so high. People aren't managing wolves like they used to. Some of us still do it. In Huslia, we got 86 wolves the last 3 winters to help our moose, and when we have a problem in rural Alaska we try to have an answer. We're stewards of the land. We don't just go and kill caribou and moose. We must manage predators. And as far as migration of caribou, I think the guides and the transporters must respect native knowledge on the fact that every native tribe says, "let the first herd go by". Stop dropping your clients in front of them and I think you'll see that people are more accepting. We could all get along. There's enough caribou for everybody, but we must respect each other. Don't come in like a cowboy and think you don't have to listen to what natives say, because native people, like you said, live with the land. So I think that it's important that when you come in, start respecting that. I know they always say when making rules, they say, well, science doesn't prove that. We must wait a couple of years studying them. I think it's important that they listen. Don't disrupt caribou migration with sport hunters being dropped right in front of them and picking out their lead bulls. And as far as the

Ambler road, what I have to say about the Ambler road is, we don't want it. That's clear and simple, and I think a majority of Alaskans don't want that. And I don't think they're showing the real road on the map. If you look at the map and what it's going to bring, that's a road going through. And then there's roads going to come off that road. Just looking at that one road on the map they're talking about and saying, oh, it doesn't really affect the caribou. But there's gonna be roads coming off that road everywhere. I'm on the south side of the mountains, Purcell mountainside, where my camp is about probably 40 miles by the crow fly from the Ambler road. I see those helicopters flying out there. They're digging for core samples. They're not talking to us about it. But why do you think there's a helicopter flying around last 10 years? They're doing core sampling and they're looking everywhere that there might be something special in the ground that they can make money off of. So I wish they would study more. Not just that road. But what that road is going to bring? It's going to bring everything in like that, and really affect not only the caribou, but the headwaters of all the salmon, sheefish, whitefish, spawning grounds. So it's important to start showing the real map of the Ambler road. That's what I have to say. Thank you.

Liz Qaulluq Cravalho, Kotzebue

My mom is the late Nellie Moore, and my Grandma was the late Ada Ward, and I serve as the Vice President of lands at NANA. I just wanted to come up and share a couple of thoughts with you all, and I want to thank you all for being here and for your service on this important working group. I'm grateful to our members who came from Noatak and Kivalina to listen today, and our board members who came too from NANA on our lands and Natural Resources Committee. Caribou, as you all know, are important to our way of life. I don't always like talking numbers, but I think for some people it helps them. In our region over 70% of our shareholders rely on subsistence foods for 50% or more of their diet, and that's for the whole region. But it also gets that dependence is even bigger for our communities that are farther out from our hub. In the work that we do in the Lands Department, we hear about the pressures of poor salmon runs, poor fishing runs in our region, and the pressure that it puts on our communities, in addition to the caribou being farther away. When I think about what our folks are experiencing in our villages, I live in Kotzebue, I didn't grow up in the village, and I only came home about 15 years ago. We hear about both of those things. We hear about the lack of fish. We hear about what that means for the next generation, learning how to do those things and what's happening with caribou. The work you're doing is important. One of the things that I encourage you to do, as our elder Walter shared, was to come out to Kotzebue. And if there's anything that we can do at NANA to support this Western Arctic Caribou Herd working group coming to Kotzebue, I just want it to be on the record that we will work with you to come out to Kotzebue to support a meeting out there if we can. It is important to hear from our communities. And you all as representatives, are so important to that. You do a great job, and it just gives our other folks an opportunity to hear what you're doing and address you if there's time. We have a resource protection officer program at NANA that that manages looking at our lands, especially during hunting season. We're expanding to have a year-round program with three officers in targeted areas. We've worked with Red Dog to expand our monitoring on the road to be year-round. And we're looking at technology that our elders have provided input on to help us understand more with what's going on with that road. I just want to encourage you that if you ever have questions and you want to hear directly from us, or you want to hear from Teck, please feel free to invite us to do an information sharing presentation. Anytime I come to you, my goal is just to share information, not sway, persuade anyone in one direction or another. NANA did take a position on the Ambler Access Project application that AIDEA put into the Bureau of Land Management. We withdrew from our working relationship with the Alaska industrial development and export authority, and they will not have access to NANA lands after December 31st this year. We have strong concerns about the ability of that project to potentially meet the subsistence requirements that we have in mind and the protections that our communities are concerned about, especially ensuring the private nature of the road. If you have questions about that, please feel free to ask me. We know that this road will come up in the next administration. I appreciate what Walter shared about 12 Mile Road. We are working very closely with our communities on conditions to protect caribou. And again, if we can come to the table and share information, we're happy to do that. And I think you have a lot of State and Federal entities that you can reach out to through your committee, who will share very clear information with you on the status of the project so you're getting full information. The last thing that I will share is that in considering the research projects, I just hope that you all strongly consider, or even the tribes that may be considering, partnering how information is shared publicly or not, I think the Northwest Arctic Borough did an excellent job in doing the subsistence mapping project that they have, and thinking about how they, as a public entity protect that data, but still provide information for permitting projects. And I think that should be the case for

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any of the research projects that you guys are looking at. And just to be clear, the National Science Foundation has more strict rules about awarding funding depending on whether projects get letters of support. The request to you all for letters of support is a powerful one, and you can use that as a strong tool. You probably already know that. But I just wanted to emphasize that. Thank you for your time, Mr. Chair. I really appreciate the service of this whole working group.

Robbie Kirk, Noatak

You know, we've had people speak on behalf of Noatak with the price of fuel, but I wanted you guys to hear from somebody from Noatak. It's very, very expensive to try to harvest caribou, which, like Liz explained, is more than 70% of our diet. And I have firsthand information of residents having just enough gas to go up the river to harvest caribou and must float for 2 days back to Noatak, because they can't afford to motor back. And this is real. It's something that's happening. It's a real hardship. We have multiple families going up together, putting their money together to buy gas, ammunition, food to share their time trying to harvest caribou. I heard Walter explain that you know the real experts are the people who are out in Noatak, Kivalina, Point Hope, Utqiagvik. They're the ones who must eat every day, and we can't just go to Walmart, Fred Meyer, and pick up a slab of cow. What we eat is what's available, and our lifestyle really revolves around what's available to us. I've heard many times, fish is a resource that's disappearing, and that's something that we rely heavily on as well. We rely on trout. But if there's no trout due to high waters we must lean heavily into moose, lean heavily into caribou to just to live. I like what he had to say about hunger has no law. When you're hungry you must eat and like I said, we can't just go out to a supermarket to grab something. It's whatever is available to us. Thank you for your time.

Annie Carlson, National Park Service, Kotzebue

I wanted to address a concern that I hear a lot, that was coming up this morning in discussion about transporters and where they're going with hunters in the region. There is some information that the Park Service has for transporters who operate within the national parklands, in Noatak National Preserve, where, if there's not a closure, there is a hunting season in the fall. So those transporters, through a commercial use authorization, do have to report back to the Park Service where they're bringing people. How many people? So, we have information like that, except for the past couple of years since the preserve has been closed. A lot of the transporters now are going further north, and we don't have information about the drop offs outside of Park Service lands. So, if this is of interest to anybody to know more about it. I just wanted to put myself out there as a resource.

Wil Wiese, US Fish & Wildlife Service, Kotzebue

I wanted to share with the working group that the Technical Committee can take on the role of research that is coming in and being proposed. The Technical Committee can give recommendations to the full working group on whether to write letters of support on research projects. The Technical Committee has done this in the past.

David Field, Norvik

I grew up in Norvik my whole life eating caribou, hunting caribou, and working on caribou. The big problem that I see is today. we're not able to get any more bulls because they show up too late. They show up after they go into the rut, and they're stink and skinny. So then there is this new law that we can only get just one female, you know. We could only get one female per year and 14 bulls, but by the time they show up, nobody wants to eat the bulls, so we must try to get the little ones. The little ones that are not able to mate. The problem that I see is the transporters are dropping people off, either up north, and then they go further north, which is, I think in my eyes, is highly illegal, because that's the caribou calving grounds where they have all their calves. They must run away from the wolves and the bears. There's no trees there. There's a gland that the caribou have in their hoof. When you work on the caribou you can see it. They secrete scent. And the leaders will secrete a scent on the tundra so that the other caribou in the back can follow behind and they will set their migration path. But when you set up a transporter in front of the migration path and the females are trying to go down, they end up, not going on their normal route. So a lot of times they would go to Onion Portage or around Quayana. They'll come funnel down the Squirrel River. But we don't see that now. Now they travel. Sometimes they cross above Kobuk, which is 250 miles

up the river. Or sometimes they cross by Pipe Spit, coming down over by Kivalina, and it'll be later. So the problem that I see is if we want to get more bulls to preserve the caribou, we need to not drop people off on the north because it's messing up the migration herd, and it's forcing us natives to shoot females, because every female that we shoot we're shooting two caribou because they're pregnant. Majority of the females are pregnant, and when you work on the caribou you pull a female out. If you want to preserve the Caribou, that's a big problem. And another thing is everywhere we go now when we start at a young age, you need to go look at the sandbars, you look at the beach. It'll tell you a story on who's walking on the beach, or what's on the beach. And now the story that I see there's way too many wolves. You can go walk up on the beach and look at the tracks. See what's around. If there's a moose in the area or bears or wolves. There's tons of bears and tons of wolves. Possibly need to bring back the aerial wolf hunt in our in our area, too. You know, give the caribou a chance.

Kyle Joly, National Park Service

Pollock Simon, one of the original members of the working group, has resigned. I think he might be the last original working group member, and something for the working group to consider is writing a letter to him. He's still in Allakaket.

Lance

So, you know that in our area. We believe in God. We also believe that as a Creator he created caribou. They're not our caribou. We don't own them. We didn't create them. We didn't make them. God allowed us to be stewards of them. So, regardless of regulations, regardless of who thinks they own what land. We are going to take it upon ourselves to be good stewards of this herd. I just wanted to make sure that you understood that we are going to take measures to make sure that this herd comes back. Secondly, as stewards, we hear from people, we hear human testimonies. I want you to think about what it might be if a caribou could talk. If a caribou could talk, what would it say to us? What would they say to us? What kind of hardships? They're the ones out on the land dealing with things. What would they say to you, person. Because we come from different backgrounds, and I respect everyone's background where they're from. What would they say to you? And what would they say to all of us in this room. What kind of testimony would a caribou give? They'd probably say, leave us alone for a little while. They would probably say we have a tough time eating now with rain events and climate change. They would probably say, we're getting torn up by insects on the calving grounds and summer grounds. They would probably say, Golly! You should hear all these planes, helicopters. They would probably say, Man, everywhere we go there's bullets flying at us. They would talk about all the hardships that they face in the winter, chased by wolves. Their calves are being demolished by bears. And I want you to think about being a good steward of the caribou in your area. That's why we're here, aren't we? We're here not to protect human rights. We're here to protect the herd, the caribou. They are our main concern. That's our big idea here and I want you to think about that as you go home. What would the caribou say to you? And then let's just listen to them.

Johnette Horner, Kobuk

I just wanted to make a comment that with the migration of caribou going upriver so late. A couple months ago, my nephew that lives downriver in Ambler, on top of having to pay \$18 a gallon for gas to go out hunting. Now he must pay a fine. On top of that he got fined for getting a couple caribou by fish and game. So, I just wanted to make that comment. On top of having to pay for the price of fuel. Now he's got to pay a fine.

Business Meeting

Write a letter of support to the National Science Foundation - MOTION by Neil DeWitt, second by Tim Fullman, to write a letter of support to the National Science Foundation to support Arctic System Sciences: Navigating change: leveraging transdisciplinary knowledge to understand the impacts of shifting caribou distribution and abundance on local communities. Motion PASSED unanimously by voice vote.

The location of the 2025 meeting will be in Anchorage and research the feasibility of moving the annual meeting to Kotzebue or Nome – MOTION by Michael Stickman, second by Neil DeWitt, to hold the 2025 WACH WG meeting in Anchorage and research the feasibility of moving the meeting to Kotzebue or Nome. Motion PASSED by a roll call vote. Votes – Yes: 16; No: 1; Abstain: 1

2025 WACH Working Group Meeting – The Working Group plans to meet in-person on December 10-11, 2025, in Anchorage. The Technical Committee will meet on December 9 in Anchorage. MOTION by Cyrus Harris, second by Neil DeWitt, to approve the 2024 WACH WG Annual Meeting dates and location. Motion PASSED unanimously by voice vote.

Election of Vice Chair - MOTION by Charlie Lean, second by Tom Gray to nominate Cyrus Harris for Vice Chair and close nominations. Motion PASSED unanimously by voice vote.

Approval of 2023 WACH WG Meeting Summary (p. 112 in WG Binder) – MOTION by Michael Stickman, second by Neil DeWitt, to approve the 2023 WACH WG meeting summary. Motion PASSED unanimously by voice vote.

Committee Membership - MOTION by Michael Stickman, second by Neil DeWitt, to keep committee membership the same. Motion PASSED unanimously by voice vote.

Technical Committee Membership Nomination – MOTION by Neil DeWitt, second by Morris Nakaruk to nominate Tom Gray for a seat on the Technical Committee.

Adjourn – MOTION by Micky Stickman, second by Neil DeWitt, to adjourn the meeting. Motion PASSED unanimously by voice vote.

Motions Acted Upon at WACH Working Group Meeting

December 11-12, 2024

1. Membership Approval: MOTION by Tom Gray, second by Neil DeWitt, to approve Justin Horton as Working Group Chair – Seat 6. Motion PASSED unanimously on a voice vote.
2. Membership Approval: MOTION by Neil DeWitt, second by Tim Fullman to approve Kiva McCarthy to participate as a last-minute substitution for WG Alternate - Seat 18. Ben Child had a last-minute conflict. Motion PASSED unanimously on a voice vote.
3. Agenda Approval: MOTION by Neil DeWitt, second by Tim Fullman, to approve the meeting agenda. MOTION by Cyrus Harris, second by Micky Stickman, to amend the meeting agenda. The agenda needed to be adjusted because the guest elders' travel was delayed due to weather. The following changes were proposed to the agenda:
 5. Round Robin Updates: 8:35 am
 6. Herd Status: Alex Hansen: 9:35 am
 7. Herd Status: Kyle Joly: 10:50
 8. Guest Elder, Fred Eningowuk: after lunch

The amendment PASSED unanimously on a voice vote. The original MOTION as AMENDED passed unanimously on a voice vote.

4. WACH Management Level, 2019 WACH Cooperative Management Plan: MOTION by Michael Stickman, second by Neil DeWitt, to accept the recommendation by the Technical Committee to set the Management Level for the Western Arctic Herd at "Preservative, Declining" per the 2019 WACH Cooperative Management Plan, Table 1. Motion PASSED unanimously by a voice vote.
5. Amend the Agenda: MOTION by Neil DeWitt, second by Michael Stickman, to amend the meeting agenda to take public comments after the Communications Committee Report. The public comments will be limited to three (3) minutes per individual. Motion PASSED unanimously on a voice vote.
6. Write a letter of support to the National Science Foundation: MOTION by Neil DeWitt, second by Tim Fullman, to write a letter of support to the National Science Foundation to support Arctic System Sciences: Navigating change: leveraging transdisciplinary knowledge to understand the impacts of shifting caribou distribution and abundance on local communities. Motion PASSED unanimously by voice vote.
7. The location of the 2025 meeting will be in Anchorage and research the feasibility of moving the annual meeting to Kotzebue or Nome: MOTION by Michael Stickman, second by Neil DeWitt, to hold the 2025 WACH WG meeting in Anchorage and research the feasibility of moving the meeting to Kotzebue or Nome. Motion PASSED by a roll call vote. Votes – Yes: 16; No: 1; Abstain: 1
8. 2025 WACH Working Group Meeting - The Working Group plans to meet in-person on December 10-11, 2025, in Anchorage. The Technical Committee will meet on December 9 in Anchorage. MOTION by Cyrus Harris, second by Neil DeWitt, to approve the 2024 WACH WG Annual Meeting dates and location. Motion PASSED unanimously by voice vote.
9. Election of Vice Chair: MOTION by Charlie Lean, second by Tom Gray to nominate Cyrus Harris for Vice Chair and close nominations. Motion PASSED unanimously by voice vote.
10. Approval of 2023 WACH WG Meeting Summary: MOTION by Michael Stickman, second by Neil DeWitt, to approve the 2023 WACH WG meeting summary. Motion PASSED unanimously by voice vote.

11. Committee Membership: MOTION by Michael Stickman, second by Neil DeWitt, to keep committee membership the same. Motion PASSED unanimously by voice vote.
12. Technical Committee Membership Nomination: MOTION by Neil DeWitt, second by Morris Nakaruk to nominate Tom Gray for a seat on the Technical Committee.
13. Adjournment: MOTION by Micky Stickman, second by Neil DeWitt, to adjourn the meeting. Motion PASSED unanimously by voice vote.

**Western Arctic Caribou Herd (WACH)
Working Group Meeting Agenda
December 11-12, 2024, 8:30am - 5:00pm**

Marriott Anchorage Downtown
820 West 7th Ave., Anchorage, AK 99501

Western Arctic Caribou Herd Working Group Mission:

“To work together to ensure the long-term conservation of the Western Arctic caribou herd and the ecosystem on which it depends, and to maintain traditional and other uses for the benefit of all people now and in the future.”

DAY 1 – Wednesday, December 11

8:30 Call to Order

- Invocation
- WACH Working Group Roll Call / Establish Quorum
- Introduction of State and Federal Agency Leads
- New Working Group Member & Alternate Appointments
- Approval of Agenda – Preview Meeting Binder

8:40 Guest Elder – Fred Eningowuk, Shishmaref (50 min)

9:30 Round Robin Updates – What’s been going on since 2023? (60 min)

What has everyone been up to since the last working group meeting? Please take a few minutes each to share your update.

10:30 Break (15 min)

10:45 Western Arctic Caribou Herd Status and Management Level (60 min)

10:45 Western Arctic Herd Overview and 2024 Census (30 min) – Alex Hansen, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG)

11:15 Caribou Bull: Cow Ratios (30 min) – Alex Hansen, Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG)

11:45 LUNCH (90 min)

1:15 Western Arctic Caribou Herd Status and Management Level (continued)

NPS Caribou Monitoring (30 min) - Kyle Joly, National Park Service (NPS)

1:45 Working Group discussion and decision on Herd Management Level per the 2019 WACH Cooperative Management Plan (30 min)

Review Technical Committee recommendation on status of the herd.

2:15 Alaska Board of Game: A review of the Alaska Board of Game Process (45 min) – Dave Lorring, Board Member, Alaska Board of Game

3:00 BREAK (15 min)

3:15 Federal Subsistence Board: A review of the Federal Subsistence Board Process (45 min) – Lisa Grediagin, Supervisory Biologist and Robbin La Vine, Policy Coordinator, Department of the Interior, Office of Subsistence Management

4:00 Summary of Regulation Changes by the Board of Game and Federal Subsistence Board (45 min) – Alex Hansen, Alaska Department of Fish and Game and Wil Wiese, Selawik National Wildlife Refuge

4:45 ADJOURN DAY 1

DAY 2 – Thursday, December 12

8:30 Call to Order / Announcements / Review Day 2 Agenda

8:35 Resource Development in the Herd’s Range (45 min) – Tim Fullman, Resource Development Committee Chair

9:20 Knowledge of the Caribou: A Database for Accessing Working Group Observations (40 min) – Ophelie Couriot, PhD, Post Doctoral Associate, State University of New York, College of Environmental Science and Forestry

10:00 Communications, Education, and Outreach Update (30 mins) – Deb Lawton, Wildlife Education Associate – Region 5, Alaska Department of Fish & Game Division of Wildlife Conservation

10:30 BREAK (15 min)

10:45 Business Meeting – Actions - Assignments (60 min)

- Review and Confirm Any Day 1 Actions and Resolutions
- Approval of 2023 WACH Working Group Meeting Summary
- Committee Membership – Revise / Reconfirm
- WACH Working Group Membership – Discuss process for identifying and confirming members and alternates
- Election of Chair
- Business / Action Items & Confirm Assignments
- Next Meeting – Date / Location

11:45 LUNCH (90 min)

1:15 Business Meeting (CONTINUED) – Actions - Assignments (120 min)

- Review and Confirm Any Day 1 Actions and Resolutions
- Approval of 2023 WACH Working Group Meeting Summary
- Committee Membership – Revise / Reconfirm
- WACH Working Group Membership – Discuss process for identifying and confirming members and alternates
- Election of Chair
- Business / Action Items & Confirm Assignments
- Next Meeting – Date / Location

3:15 WORKING GROUP PHOTO (30 min)

3:45 Closing Comments – Working Group members (30 min)

4:15 ADJOURN