

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Members of the Board.

This is Katya Wessels, Acting Policy Coordinator with OSM

I am going to provide you with a brief update on the situation with the 2020 Subsistence Regional Advisory Councils (RACs) appointments.

- During 2020 open period for RAC applications we received 74 applications to fill 62 open seats out of 109 seats total on all the RACs. Having 62 open seats equals to 57% open seats of the total number of all the RAC seats.
- The Interagency Nomination Panels interviewed the applicants and their references and rated and ranked the applicants based on the rating standards developed and approved by this Board. The results of the interviews, rating and ranking were provided to the Interagency Staff Committee. Based on these results, the ISC provided their recommendations to the Board during Board's August 2020 work session. After reviewing the ISC recommendations, the Board provided their recommendations on the appointments to ten RACs to the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture. OSM finalized the Board's appointment recommendations packet and submitted it to the Department of the Interior on September 4, 2020, which is on time and provides sufficient time for the Department to review the recommendations.
- On January 15, 2021, OSM received copies of the RAC appointment letters signed by the former Secretary of the Interior, Mr. Bernhardt. The original appointment letters were sent by regular post and the applicants whose nominations were approved should be receiving their appointments soon if they have not already received them.
- As of now, after the January 15, 2021, appointments we still have 35 open seats on all RACs, which means that 56% of 2020 open seats were not filled. Some RACs now have as many as 8 open seats.
- Three of the 10 RACs did not receive appointments at all. Those were the Western Interior, Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, and Southeast Alaska RACs. Some RACs received partial appointments that left them with three to four vacant seats, which is significant for if the total number of seats each particular RAC is 10.
- We are working with our FWS headquarters office as well as with the Department of the Interior, to see if we can get the additional appointments considered out of cycle.
- The application period for this year's, 2021 RAC appointments, is open until Feb. 15. By December 2 of this year we are going to have 62 open seats for appointment or reappointment and as of today we received very few applications for this appointment cycle.
- The application period is open for another 19 days and we encourage people in the subsistence regions to apply to serve on the RACs. Serving on a RAC is the best way to proactively participate in the Federal subsistence management and help to sustain traditional way of life.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman