

Submitted by ADF&G at the request of Vice Chair Turner

January 11, 2019

Mr. Chair, members of the Board, my name is Lauren Sill. I am a Subsistence Resource Specialist III with the Division of Subsistence. I'm stationed in Douglas. Thank you for the opportunity to briefly share with you what we've been working on.

We've conducted or reported on several projects in Southeast Alaska since the last time the Board met here. I am just going to briefly go over what we did and present some very general findings, but I'm happy to answer any more detailed questions if the Board has them.

Since 2013, we've done household surveys in Haines and Klukwan, Hoonah, Angoon, Sitka, Whale Pass, Hydaburg, and Yakutat. These were all comprehensive surveys covering the harvest and use of pretty much all wild resources. To conduct our surveys, we partner with local community organizations, hire and train several residents to assist in survey administration and then we go door to door. The surveys are rather intensive, taking anywhere from 20 minutes to several hours to complete, depending on how active the household is. We ask about one calendar year's time and all of the harvesting, using, and sharing of resources that occurred in the household over that time period. The number of households we go to depends on the size of the community. In these communities that we've recently been to, it ranged from 21 households in Whale Pass, which was about 80% of all the households, to 212 households in Sitka, which was not quite 10% of all households. Because of the size of Southeast communities, we usually try to interview about half of all the households in a community.

What we found is that, as in years past, fish makes up the largest proportion of wild food harvests in Southeast communities, but large land mammals make up the second biggest portion, ranging from 13% to 32% of overall harvests, by weight, in these surveyed communities. Deer, or moose, depending on the community, is usually one of the top 3 species harvested. While somewhere between a quarter and a half of households in each community reported hunting large game, between 62% and 97% of households reported using it. Sharing is an important part of these harvests, both within the community but also outside the community with people living other places in Alaska. Deer and moose are the most widely used, but bison, caribou, goat, black

and brown bear, and musk ox were all used or hunted. Per capita harvests of large game ranged from 25 lb in Sitka to 80 lb in Whale Pass.

When we ask households about what they hunted and how much they harvested, we also ask assessment questions about how their use of large game compared to previous years, and if it was more or less: why it was different. We also map where people go hunting, fishing, or gathering. A community's use area can encompass many hundreds of square miles, but in general the majority of effort is concentrated within 20 or 30 miles of the community. From years past, when we've done these surveys in the 1980s and 1990s, it seems like the use areas are contracting somewhat. While it's hard to draw any definitive trends from just a few data points over time, this appears to be supported by what respondents tell us during surveys about the need to be as efficient as possible in their harvesting efforts because of the expense of fuel and boat or truck maintenance and the time available to harvest.

### **Food security**

Besides asking about harvesting, we also ask households questions about their food security. Food security, as defined by the USDA (U.S. Department of Agriculture), is access by all people, at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life. Alaska residents face unique challenges to their food security because of our remoteness, high costs of transportation, limited agricultural production, and generally high reliance on imported food. But Alaska is also unique in the major role that harvesting wild resources plays in support of food security. The USDA administers an annual, nationwide survey to assess food security. We administer a modified version of this questionnaire during our comprehensive surveys. It has been modified to account for differences in wild and store-bought foods, and to record the months in which food-insecure conditions were reported. Since 2003, we've administered this questionnaire in over 100 communities. Between 2009 and 2017, in 99 Alaska communities, food security scores ranged from 100% of households being food secure to about 54% of households being so. Last summer we produced a whitepaper on food security in Alaska which I have if the Board would like to see.