

Shutdown Forces Subsistence Comment Extension

Thursday, 31 October 2013

{audio}/images/stories/mp3/131031.subsistence_tease.mp3{/audio}

Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

The government shutdown earlier this month threw a wrench into many federal proceedings, including statewide subsistence criteria hearings. Back in September Federal Subsistence Board members held a public hearing in Kodiak to get input on how communities should be classified as rural or non rural.

Basically, those living in rural areas are allowed access to federal lands for subsistence purposes, people in non rural places aren't. The deciding factor has long been influenced by population numbers, and every ten years, when new census data comes out, the board typically reexamines statewide rural/non rural classifications. That process hasn't always been well received, so this year the board decided to hold community hearings and gather public input on how it should determine rural places. But things didn't go according to plan.

"The government shutdown cancelled five rural determination meetings we were going to be having."

That's Carl Johnson, the council coordination division chief for the Office of Subsistence Management. Because of those cancellations, Johnson said the deadline for public comments on rural determination has been extended.

"So that took away the public opportunity to participate, so we felt it was only appropriate to extend the deadline so that people would have opportunities to participate in these rural determination hearings which we have now scheduled out through the third week of November."

The new deadline for public comment is December 2. Johnson reemphasized that the cancelled meetings were rescheduled, and most of them will be taking place the first three weeks of November.

Tune in to KMXT news on Monday to hear more from Johnson about the rural determination process and his reactions to Kodiak's September hearing.