



CUSTOMARY AND TRADITIONAL USE WORKSHEET

Grouse and Ptarmigan

Units 1-5

Alaska Board of Game
Southeast Meeting
January 25, 2026
Wrangell, AK

Division of Subsistence
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
RC 4 Tab 2.2



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BACKGROUND 2

State subsistence law (AS 16.05.258)

- Requires C&T finding

Joint Board of Fisheries and Game

- The 'eight criteria' (5 AAC 99.010)

Proposals

- Hunting seasons and bag limits for grouse
 - Proposals: 17, 18, and 69
- Hunting seasons and bag limits for ptarmigan
 - Proposal 36



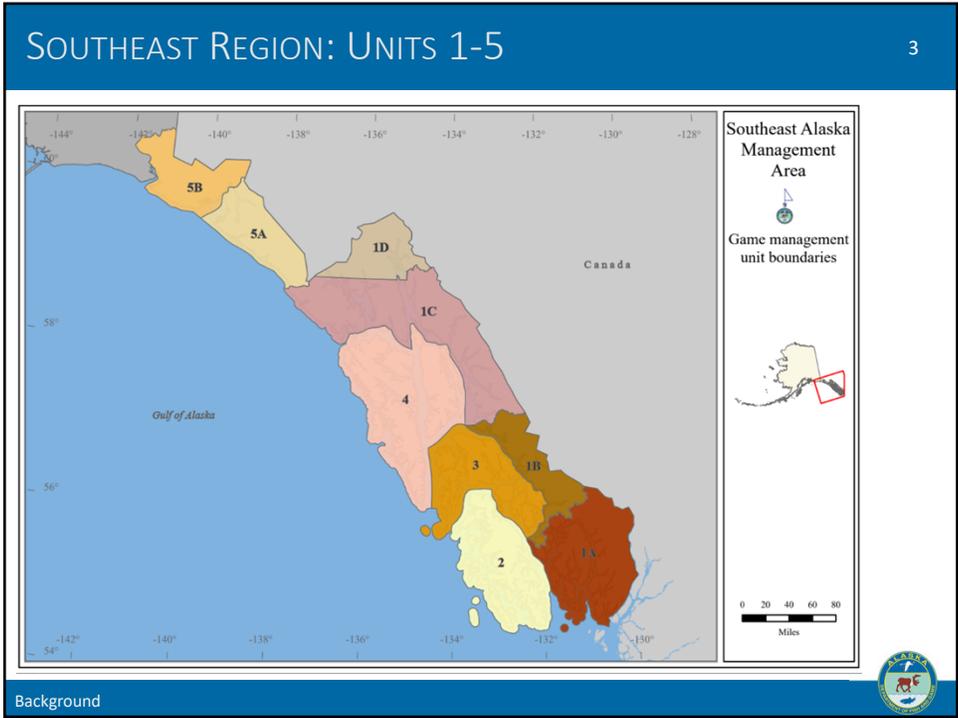
Spruce Grouse. ADF&G photo.



Willow Ptarmigan. ADF&G photo.

Background 

2



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SOURCES OF INFORMATION

4

Ethnographic accounts

- *A study of traditional use of birds' eggs by the Huna Tlingit.* Hunn, Johnson, Russell, and Thornton 2002.
- *Tlingit birds, an annotated list with a statistical comparative analysis.* Hunn and Thornton 2010.
- "Tlingit" [in] *W. Suttles and W.C. Sturtevant, eds. Handbook of North American Indians. 7: Northwest Coast.* de Laguna 1990.
- *Ethno-ornithology: birds, indigenous peoples, culture and society.* Tidemann 2010.

Division household harvest surveys 1980s-2020s

- Data provided by a total of 33 communities

Background

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CRITERION 1: LENGTH AND CONSISTENCY OF USE

5

Documented historical harvest and use

Ethnographic accounts

Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian people

Harvested grouse and ptarmigan for consumption and cultural uses

“We used to have grouse, and we used to have ptarmigan. Haven't seen either of them for a long time. I think probably twenty years ago there was still a few ptarmigan around. You'd go up on the top in, going deer hunting out in September, you know, and see ptarmigan, but as far as the grouse goes, down. No, I haven't seen a grouse in forever and forever.”
- Pelican respondent, 2024 ethnographic interviews

Criterion 1



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CRITERION 2: SEASONALITY

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- Opportunistic hunting while harvesting deer or berry picking
- Targeted hunts
- Harvested year-round
- Traditional seasons
 - Fall
 - Winter/spring



Willow ptarmigan with summer plumage



Willow ptarmigan with winter plumage



Early fall ptarmigan hunt in the alpine. ADF&G photos.

Criterion 2



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CRITERION 3: MEANS AND METHODS OF HARVEST

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Traditionally

- Clubs or sticks
- Projectiles such as rocks, arrows or bullets
- Long-handled nets or snares

Contemporary

- Firearms, such as small gauge shotguns and .22s
- Bows with blunt arrows
- Long-handled snares



Willow ptarmigan harvested with firearm. ADF&G photo.

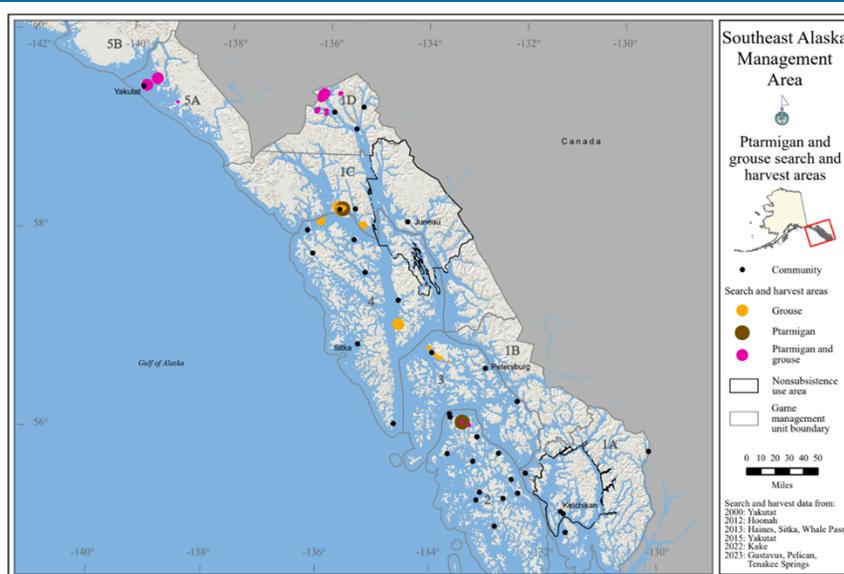
Criterion 3



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CRITERION 4: GEOGRAPHIC AREAS

8



Criterion 4



8

CRITERION 5: MEANS OF HANDLING, PREPARING, PRESERVING, AND STORING 9

Traditionally

- Gutted, plucked and boiled or roasted whole
- Smoked, or stored in oil, for future use
- Dried or frozen for preservation

Contemporary

- Gutted, plucked and boiled, roasted whole, grilled, fried, baked, or slow cooked in a crock pot
- Cooked fresh, or frozen for future use



ADF&G photos



Criterion 5

CRITERION 6: INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, VALUES, AND LORE 10

Hunting small game, such as grouses, is a common way for Southeast Alaska youth to be introduced to hunting.



Grouse hunting. ADF&G photo.



Grouse hunting. ADF&G photo.



Criterion 6

CRITERION 6: INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, VALUES, AND LORE 11

Grouse and ptarmigan are present in Tlingit and Haida traditional stories, they are depicted through song and dance, and they contribute raw materials to various traditional artforms.



Tlingit Dance Headdress with feathers. Unknown artist, late 19th century. Photo credit Portland Art Museum.



Cedar carved Raven rattle with gizzard stones. Unknown Haida/Tlingit artist, circa mid-1800s. Photo credit Denver Art Museum.



Cedar and fern rattle top basket. Woven by Haida artist Della Cheney. Photo credit Sealaska Heritage Institute.

Criterion 6



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CRITERION 7: DISTRIBUTION AND EXCHANGE 12

Subsistence resources are commonly shared throughout Southeast Alaska. In every community in Southeast Alaska where the division has conducted subsistence studies, researchers have documented extensive sharing of most wild resources, including grouses and ptarmigans.

Household surveys between 1983 and 2023 estimated:

Households giving

Between 0% and 8% of households gave ptarmigan and/or grouse

Households receiving

Between 0% and 10% of households received ptarmigan and/or grouse

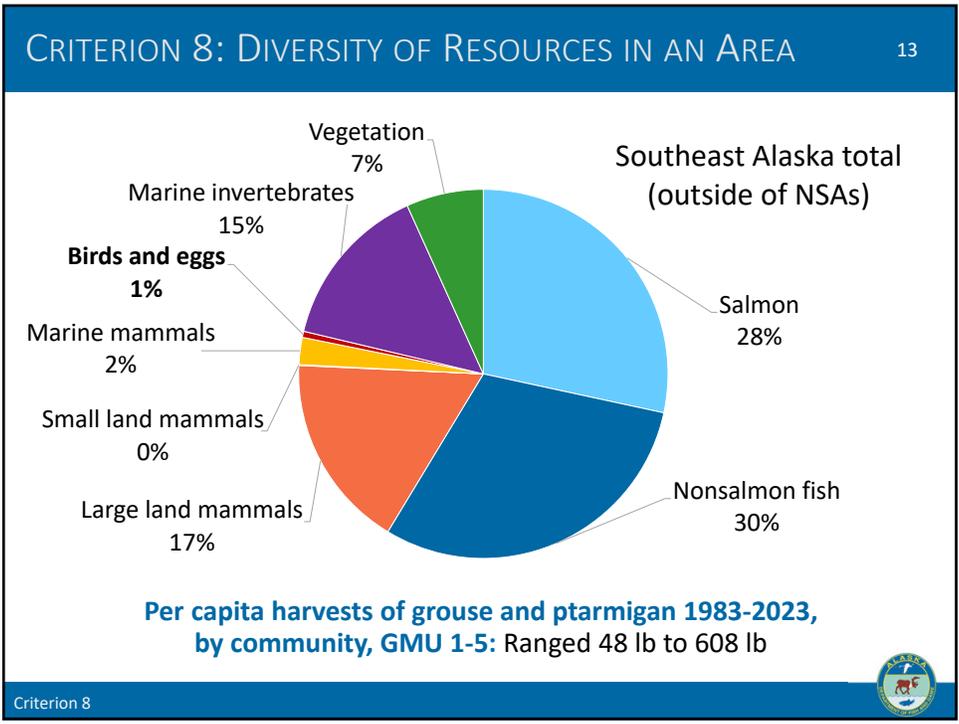


ADF&G photo.

Criterion 7



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