



PO Box 47 Homer, AK 99603 (907) 235-9408

To: Senate Resources Committee  
Inre: SB 170

Dear Senators,

Thank you for taking the time to consider SB 170. This bill is of great importance to many Alaskan hunters and anglers and we appreciate your committee's efforts on deliberations. Alaska Backcountry Hunters and Anglers (ABHA) is a dedicated group of hunters and anglers seeking to ensure Alaska's outdoor traditions in a manner that promotes the importance of *wild places for wild animals and fish* that has so come to define our "Last Frontier" state.

#### SB 170

ABHA supports the license and tag fee increases originally requested by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) as per their straightforward two-page *ADFG Hunting and Trapping License Fee Increase Proposal* of January 25, 2005\*. This proposal was based upon the fact that there hadn't been a license or tag fee increase since 1993 to keep up with inflation and ADFG was experiencing budget shortfalls that prevented the department from adequately continuing its mission. We recognize the need for these modest increases so that ADFG and the Division of Wildlife Conservation can carry out continued prudent and valuable wildlife management efforts, studies and research that are necessary for appropriate wildlife conservation. We support **only** the license and tag fee increases that would amend AS 16.05.340 as originally proposed by ADFG, along with annual ADFG budget reports made available to the public via the ADFG website.

We strongly **oppose** the divergence from the original ADFG draft proposal as per the following:

- 1) Added license and tag-fee increases well beyond what was originally requested by ADFG and particularly any "trophy" fees that add extra

monetary costs to non-resident hunters based solely on the “size” of the antlers, skulls, or horns of a harvested animal. We feel these added exorbitant “trophy” fees are unjustified, that they overly complicate the licensing process and unfairly discriminate against the average middle-class non-resident hunter. Many non-resident hunters save for years to travel to Alaska for the “hunt of a lifetime,” and should they come across a moose that may be “large” enough to cost them an extra \$500 that they don’t have and can’t afford, it would be an unfair monetary burden for them as well as an impossible decision to make under field conditions encountered during a hunt.

2) Tying license fee increases to mandates that would amend other Title 16 Statutes (and even add many new subsections) that govern *how* we manage our Fish and Game is unwarranted and in SB 170 these changes are also biologically and scientifically unsound. Surely in the twelve years since the last ADFG license and tag fee increase, the science of wildlife management and biology hasn’t changed enough to warrant such sweeping changes in our Fish and Game statutes, such as:

- Title 16 amendments that call for achieving “maximum carrying capacity of the habitat of the population” to “provide for high levels of human harvest.”<sup>1</sup>
- Further defining “high level of human harvest” as “the allocation of at least one-third of the harvestable surplus” of an ungulate population annually.<sup>2</sup>
- Title 16 additions that would “accord a subordinate priority to the conservation, development, and utilization of species that the board has not authorized to be taken for consumptive use.”<sup>3</sup>
- Title 16 additions that would allow the year-round “hunting” of brown/grizzly and black bears in any designated Intensive Management units or subunits via unregistered bait stations, same-day airborne hunting, assistance from an observer in an aircraft, and also allow the sale of bear (and other animal) parts, including gallbladders, claws, hides and skulls on the open market.<sup>4</sup>

None of the above amendments and additions to Title 16 Statutes are consistent with any prudent statewide wildlife management practices

undertaken by the Division of Wildlife conservation and would force wildlife biologists and managers at ADFG to tolerate and even promote the widespread killing of wolves and/or bears in perpetuity, which would be both biologically and morally unsound and contrary to the very purpose of the Division to practice conservation of all species on the “sustained yield” principle for the benefit of all Alaskans.

These proposed amendments and additions to Title 16 Statutes that call for achieving “abundance for the use and benefit of the people of the state consistent with the public interest, and to achieve maximum sustained yield”<sup>5</sup> are not in the overall “public interest,” but only in the interest of a select group of consumptive users (hunters) at the expense of other beneficial users—hunters like ourselves, and non-hunting wildlife viewers—who appreciate and enjoy and value the still-wild places and full diversity and complexity of predator and prey species that inhabit Alaska. In this day and age, the value of intact ecosystems that still hold indigenous species of predators and prey is priceless. This is why I choose to live here; this is why others choose to live here, and this is why so many hunters and non-hunters visit our state and spend millions of tourism dollars annually.

#### CONCLUSION:

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game needs a license and tag fee increase to keep up with inflation and carry on their necessary duties and mission. Transparency and budget reporting by ADFG are warranted so that the public can see how funds are spent. But we should not tie any license and tag fee increases, and budget reporting, to specific mandates and Title 16 amendments and additions that would force the department into practicing and promoting biologically unsound or unscientific management practices.

Alaska Backcountry Hunters and Anglers cherish the peace, solitude, challenge, tradition, freedom and health of the backcountry experience in the wild places of Alaska and recognize the need for prudent, long-term, adaptive wildlife management of all species by an adequately funded Division of Wildlife Conservation. We are hunters and anglers devoted to family and to passing on these traditions to our future generations.

Sincerely,

Mark Richards

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Footnotes:

(\*) <http://www.adfg.state.ak.us/special/license/huntproposal.pdf>

(1) Sec. 16, page 10 (2) Sec. 17, page 10 (3) Sec. 18, page 10 (4) Sec. 73, page 26-27 (5) Sec. 2, page 2