



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

Department of Public Safety

DIVISION OF ALASKA WILDLIFE TROOPERS
Office of the Director

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Chairman Spraker
Alaska Board of Game
P.O. Box 115526
Juneau Ak, 99811-5526

Dear Chairman Spraker:

The following comments give a brief description of the positions that the Department of Public Safety, Division of Alaska Wildlife Troopers have on the proposals that are up for consideration at the February 2018 Central/Southwest Region regulations meeting in Dillingham.

In general, when the board considers seasons and or bag limit changes, the Alaska Wildlife Troopers request that every effort possible be made to align the season dates and bag limits with adjacent game management units and/or sub units. This is mainly due to enforceability of multiple seasons in multiple locations as well as consistency of the regulations for the public. When the board considers proposals having to do with allocation or biological concerns, AWT is generally neutral in position.

AWT recognizes that regulations are developed by the Alaska Boards of Fish and Game through the public process to support management plans. Further, all management plans rely upon public compliance with regulations to achieve success. Enforcement is a crucial element needed to ensure long-term compliance with regulations by the public. The Alaska Wildlife Troopers request the board recognize that the division has limited resources and man power and any new regulation scheme or area restrictions may place an additional burden on AWT.

Comments on specific proposals are included in this letter.

Thank you for you for your time,

Aaron Frenzel

Lieutenant Aaron Frenzel
Alaska Wildlife Troopers

Proposal 70-

Proposal 70 seeks to remove the Bettles Winter Trail travel exception for public use within the Dalton Highway Corridor Management Area (DHCMA).

The board should consider the laws set in place under AS 19.40.210 and if the proposal conflicts with it.

While addressing this it should be discussed how the regulation is currently written and what the intent was. Currently the regulation prohibits the use of motorized vehicles for the transportation of all game within the corridor. It also prohibits hunters and hunting gear from being transported on motorized vehicles, but does not restrict trappers or their gear. Game is defined in statute to include furbearers. The Alaska Wildlife Troopers would like to have clarification if furbearers were to be included in this restriction within the DHCMA.

5AAC 92.530(7)(C) could be a mute regulation due to the current laws set in place by AS 19.40.210, though Law is currently working on getting clarification regarding this.

Proposals 82-

These proposals seek to create a management area for the Mat-Su Borough's government peak recreation area.

AWT is neutral on this, though if the board does close an area AWT would only request that the boundaries are clear for both users and enforcement.

Proposal 83

This proposal seeks to remove the 50 inch requirement for legal bulls in GMU 16A.

The board should consider what the season and bag limits are for animals in adjacent GMU's and continue to have those aligned when practical. This makes it easier for both users and enforcement when the same animal is legal on each side of a GMU boundary line. It also prevents unnecessary investigations into determining with side of a line an animal was harvested on, when during a general hunt the bag limit is the same on both sides.

Proposal 116

Proposal 116 seeks to allow the incidental take of up to two furbearers per year during an open season for other furbearers.

The board should discuss the potential for cheating if this proposal passes. Trappers who catch furbearers incidentally and contact the Alaska Wildlife Troopers are dealt with fairly. In most situations simply turning over the incidentally caught animal in a timely manner results in no citation. If however enforcement catches the trapper trying to "launder" the illegally taken animal by claiming it was caught during an open season the trapper will receive a citation for the illegal take.

The proposal states that in order for the incidentally caught furbearer to qualify for one of the “two incidentally caught furbearers” that it must be caught in a trap set for a species that is currently open. Enforcement of this provision would be very difficult as AWT Troopers encounter trappers who are successful each year catching non-target species in traps and utilizing methods that were not set for the target animal.

The Alaska Wildlife Troopers ask that the board take this opportunity to discuss the importance of aligning seasons in trapping regulations as much as possible to alleviate these types of “bycatch” scenarios. Opening and closing as many trapping seasons as possible at the same time helps to ensure compliance with the regulations, eliminates bycatch and results in better enforcement.

This would be difficult for AWT to enforce since “take” when dealing with furbearers is over a prolonged period. When does take occur in trapping, and who takes an animal when multiple people operate a trap line?

Many times we see a group effort on a trap line where all participants might not be present. If three licensed trappers set traps at the beginning of the year, but only one person checks the traps on a given day, who claims the animals? Any one of the trappers that had operated the line could seal furbearers that were caught.

As an example in SE AK there is a limit of one fisher per a trapper. Currently it is suspected that a way trappers have gotten around taking an over limit of fisher is by putting the extra fisher in another licensed trappers name. There has been at least one occasion where a first time trapping license holder sealed a fisher after obtaining their only trapping license ever. Coincidentally, this occurred the same year the known trapper for that area had also sealed a fisher. Though this proposal would not affect fisher since there is a bag limit, this example demonstrates a way trappers could get around regulations governing any type of limit.

Another concern would be a person shooting a wolverine after the season closes for hunting or trapping, then claiming it was caught in a trap set for a wolf and they had put it down. Again making this unenforceable if we are not present when it occurred.

This proposal would lawfully extend wolverine season for up to two months in some areas and essentially put a bag limit of two-wolverine in those areas. Though there is other incidental catches that will occur, wolverine would likely be one of the most affected furbearers due to the length of wolf season and the range a wolverine covers during the early spring.

Proposal 124-

This proposal seeks to remove all GMU 13 proxy specific regulations. This request in-part is allocative in nature and AWT has no comment in regards to the number of beneficiaries a proxy can hunt for.

The second part of the proposal asks to remove the requirement that only Tier II permit holders can proxy for Tier II permits.

5AAC92.011(g) states:

(g) Except for reporting requirements required by (h) of this section, a proxy who hunts or kills game for a beneficiary is subject to all the conditions and requirements that would apply to the beneficiary if the beneficiary personally hunted or killed the game.

AWT enforces that a proxy must be able to lawfully participate in the hunt themselves in order to be a proxy. If a person is prohibited from participating in a hunt due to failing to return a hunt permit the previous year, we have advised them they cannot proxy for someone in a Tier, drawing or registration hunt due to 5AAC 92.011(g), since they themselves cannot meet all of the requirements for the hunt due to not being able to obtain a permit.

AWT requests the Board to clarify 5AAC 92.011(g) and if it is the intent of the regulation to prevent hunters who cannot or did not obtain a permit for a particular hunt to be hunting as a proxy in that hunt.