



# Taiga Resources Conservation

*a management and consulting firm specializing in conservation based natural resource industry support. We provide industry, governmental, regional, and community assistance in understanding, developing, and maintaining conservation based initiatives that will help sustain long term stewardship for important social/cultural atmospheres, fish, wildlife, land/water habitats, and industry developments within them.*

HC60 Box 299C Copper Center, Alaska USA 99573 Phone: 1.907.822.3410  
Email: taigaresources@gmail.com Web: www.taigaresources.com

---

February 20, 2014  
Lower Tonsina, Alaska

Senator John Coghill  
Senate Majority Leader  
State Capitol Room 119  
Juneau AK, 99801

Re. DNR Guide Concession Program SB 160

Dear Senator Coghill,

Please receive this letter as a very respectful show of support for and appreciation of your leadership effort to develop the much needed and long overdue DNR Guide Concession Program (GCP) and, that I am in full support of SB 160. Also, please consider and share as you may desire, the following comments about the program.

The following comments are provided from the background of having a deeply bedded history as a leader in professional hunting guide-outfitter industry stewardship and wildlife conservation advocacy for Alaska, the United States and countries throughout the world as well as a multi generation professional guide history in Alaska.

Additionally, this history includes leadership within Alaska's mineral industry (past member elected AMA president), long time involvement within Alaska's forestry, energy, and agriculture industries.

As well, I currently have the honor of representing America's guide-outfitter and tourism industries by appointment from the Secretaries of Interior and Agriculture on the respected bipartisan "Wildlife and Hunting Heritage Conservation Council".

Regarding Alaska's subsistence and related social/cultural heritage, I have served at the pleasure of three governors and continue work within the Wrangell-Saint Elias National Park and Preserve Subsistence Resource Commission.

I bring forward this unique history with the request that you place no respect for me personally but rather that you find respect for my knowledge, whatever limited, to the stewardship of natural resource related industry, especially, the professional guide industry.

The failure of former Legislatures to approve this initiative, in my opinion has done more to generate the nucleus of usurping State management authority by the Federal government than any other action since the passing of ANILCA. These actions include paving development of deep and dividing dual wildlife management actions, reducing mandated State/Federal cooperation and utilization of CITES actions to restrict prudent stewardship within Alaska. Adoption of the GCP program at this time will help sustain State authority within at least Bureau of Land Management lands in Alaska.

Without question, the DNR GCP will provide Alaska, our rural communities and professional guide service providers with a viable and important, long term sustainable industry. Without this development, we will see implementation of restrictions on nonresident hunter opportunity that will reduce and in many cases eliminate the viable future of this profession.

The reasoning behind this situation lies in the inability for the State of Alaska to restrict the amount of commercial enterprise from the hunting guide profession that currently impacts our revered wildlife populations, our social atmospheres relative to resident and subsistence hunters, other wilderness users and the related law enforcement/legal systems. Most of this negative impact falls into the lap of the Alaska Board of Game or the Federal Subsistence Board in proposal form from the resident public to eliminate or reduce nonresident hunter participation due to overcrowding of commercial hunting services on state lands.

As a person who attended every meeting of over eleven years of Alaska Board of Game meetings, I can assure you that the Board Of Game will have no choice but to eventually pass these proposal requests and by doing so, put the future of nonresident hunter participation into restrictive measures that closes the door on economic viability for a professional guide service provider.

Please know that I have seen this same equation play out in numerous western states throughout the U.S... In each case, resident hunters put forth initiatives which reduce the number of nonresident hunters through restrictive measures that eliminate the viability of professional hunting guide businesses. The results in each case were as follows:

- a. Elimination of many long time established guide businesses.
- b. Significantly reduced rural economies.
- c. Significant loss of important historical State generated funding for wildlife conservation through nonresident hunting license sales.
- d. Substantial loss of the Pitman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Funding which is generated by sportsman's excise tax and distributed to each state proportionately to

their overall hunting license sales for wildlife conservation.

e. Reduced overall wildlife conservation and stewardship.

What will actually happen to Alaska if we do not establish the GCP, is that long time service providers who have established successful businesses and maintain significant overhead investment, will not be able to effectively compete through the soon to be implemented allocative games of chance that future restrictive drawing permit programs will provide. These are the same business owners who often have long established employee's and established relationships with a labyrinth of other types of rural Alaska businesses. These great service providers, many of them second and third generation will be replaced by service providers who can operate on a more part time basis without having to maintain substantial overhead. Many of these new type of service providers will be nonresidents business owners who can secure licensing in numerous states, work the drawing permit games of chance and provide limited services wherever they may draw clients.

Alaska does not need to follow this course. With the GCP established, the Board of Game can be confident and fair with their conservation based decisions regarding allocation and social atmosphere considerations. Furthermore, the stewardship based selection criteria for the GCP will help build and sustain industry professionalism which Alaska can be proud to provide.

There is a tenor of outcry that we do not need more government in our entrepreneurship world. Please know that after dealing with DNR for many years within the guiding, mining, forestry and agricultural arenas as a small business owner, that I have all of the faith needed to know that they can and will provide a GCP program that will work and only get better with time.

Please, I urge you to help encourage, carry and pass SB160 for the sustainable future of a important rural Alaska industry. If I may be of any help to you in this or in any other consideration, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Very Respectfully,



Robert R. Fithian