

From: Dave Lyon  
Sent: Friday, January 26, 2018 5:54 PM  
To: Rep. Gary Knopp <Rep.Gary.Knopp@akleg.gov>  
Subject: HB 263

Representative Knopp,

I am writing to voice my opposition to HB 263 regarding a relaxation of rules applying to water taxis as transporters.

As a water taxi operator on Kachemak Bay (and former licensed transporter) I see no reason for any change in regulation. Currently there are over a dozen water taxis operating on Kachemak Bay, but only a couple are licensed transporters. As a non-transporter, I have no problem referring clients to a licensed transporter when asked to provide that service. Licensed transporters provide valuable information to fish and game regarding hunter activity through their field hunt reports, are prohibited from actively assisting hunters in pursuit of game (i.e. suggesting areas to hunt based on recent sightings) and are legally held to a high standard of ethics being mandated to report any violations. HB 263 would effectively negate these requirements, and allow an unregulated uncontrolled approach to transporting hunters in Kachemak Bay state park.

In regards to this bill “leveling the playing field” I see it as doing anything but. The “playing field” is already level if you abide by current rules. Should I, or any other water taxi operator desire a transporter license we can simply purchase one. This bill would effectively reward those water taxis that have been caught in violation in the past, while penalizing those that have maintained transporter licenses here for years, through a loss of established clientele.

In addition, as a 15 year member of the Homer F&G Advisory Committee, I believe the black bear population in Kachemak Bay state park is in a state of concern. Hunters with their own boats regularly hunt here in the spring, and success has been steadily decreasing over the last several years. Over harvest threatens the stability of our bear population, and if not carefully managed we may soon see regulations akin to those imposed on Prince William Sound, which could limit opportunity for all Alaskans.

The department of fish and game will be doing extensive research on the black bear population in the area of Kachemak Bay State Park and Preserve in the coming season, and at very least I would urge you to hold off on any change to regulation until the study is concluded.

Should HB 263 pass I can assure you the BOG will see a number of proposals seeking to curtail black bear hunting in the park, anything from a reduction in bag limit to a registration hunt.

There are limited numbers of areas suitable for dropping off hunters in the park, and a significant amount of the south shore of Kachemak Bay is privately owned. The possibility of having over a dozen unregulated transporters operating in the bay will not benefit the resource or hunters in general, but only a small percentage of operators putting profit ahead of all else..

Dave Lyon

Owner/operator Ashore Water Taxi

From: Roark Brown  
Sent: Monday, January 22, 2018 4:12 PM  
To: Jayme Jones <Jayme.Jones@akleg.gov>  
Subject: Re: HB 263

Jayme,

Thank you for your prompt response.

Who requested this bill? I think it is inaccurate to say that ADF&G only issued 9 transporter permits in 2017. First of all they are issued by the Big Game Commercial Services Board under DCED, not ADF&G; second, they are biennial permits so they are only renewed every two years; and third, there are hundreds of transporters permits in use.

With regards to air taxis, you would be hard pressed to find a service that doesn't list hunting transport as a product, is that advertising? What constitutes "incidental"? Vague laws are not good laws. Adding more user groups to vague laws only compounds the problem.

As a water taxi operator I advertise hunting transport as a product, I pay a large license fee along with filing fees per State budgetary requirements, and attest that I have the skill set and insurance needed to perform the task. It is a small part of my business but not "incidental". Should I now have to compete with someone who is not licensed nor files any reports simply because they don't advertise a product? If it is so incidental to their business why do they bother with it? If it is not incidental why don't they get a permit and compete on level ground? What is the point of having some licensed operators that file reports and others that do not? If it doesn't matter then why not eliminate the transporters permit altogether? What is the financial hit to the state by no longer requiring some operators to be licensed? Shouldn't that require a fiscal note and a Finance referral?

I am a minimal regulation conservative that is in lockstep with many of Rep. Knopp's priorities but this is not a good bill. I would appreciate answers to the above questions. Thanks much!

Roark Brown