



ALASKA CENTER *for the* ENVIRONMENT

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Dear Co Chairs Herron and Munoz and Members of the Community and Regional Affairs Committee,

On behalf of The Alaska Center for the Environment (ACE) I would like to comment on HB 281. ACE is a non-profit environmental education and advocacy organization, whose mission is to enhance Alaskans' quality of life by protecting wild places, fostering sustainable communities and promoting recreational opportunities. ACE advocates for sustainable policy on behalf of nearly 7,000 Alaskan members.

House Bill 281 proposes to amend the Alaska Department of Fish and Game's mission statement to make public safety the number one priority in a municipality with a population of more than 100,000. It also allows the Anchorage Police Department the authority to take an animal when it poses as a threat to people.

In my capacity of Conservation Director, I have been working collaboratively with agencies, non-profits, the Municipality and volunteers on a very successful pilot project here in Anchorage to educate and incentivize responsible waste management in neighborhoods where bears are known to frequent. We have acquired grant money to retrofit dumpsters to make them bear-resistant and subsidized bear-resistant tipper carts. The result of this effort has been a remarkable decline in calls about nuisance bears. We have also been a part of a citywide effort to reach out to recreationalists and inform them about ways to reduce their risks of having a negative encounter with a bear.

The single reason that bears are attracted to neighborhoods is due to easy food sources. Once the food is managed responsibly, the problem goes away. While we here at the Center are also concerned about public safety, we believe there are other more productive and common sense ways to approach the problems of urban wildlife becoming food conditioned. We believe we should begin at the source of the problem, which are garbage and other attractants.

Let us first look to Juneau's successful campaign to clean up their garbage problems and therefore reduce costs to the city and make their neighborhoods safer.

Not unlike Anchorage, people who live in Juneau treasure the natural surroundings in which they live. We all live in bear country and feel lucky to do so. In fact, because Juneau residents understand our responsibility to the wildlife whose home we share, they were among the first in the nation to enact local laws aimed at keeping bears out of garbage. Juneau is becoming a model for other communities committed to living with wildlife. Anchorage can and should follow Juneau's example.

In Juneau, it's the law:

- Garbage cans may be put out to the curb for collection no sooner than 4 a.m. on pickup day.
- Other than after 4 a.m. on pickup day, garbage must be kept in a bear resistant container or enclosure
 - in a strong fully enclosed structure such as a garage

- in another "bear resistant enclosure," defined as an enclosure that you can't get into unless you use hands or tools. If it can be opened by stomping on it, kicking it, running into it with your body, or other similar action, it is not bear resistant.
- Garbage cans must be labeled with your address.
- Garbage cans must be fitted with lids so as to remain secure if cans are tipped over.
- If your garbage has attracted bears and you fail to take steps to legally store your garbage, *you could be cited for maintaining a bear attraction nuisance, a \$50 fine for the first offense.*

I would encourage the members of this committee to invite the City of Juneau and wildlife experts to come and address the success of Juneau's program before taking any action on HB 281.

We encourage the State of Alaska to put more money into enforcing existing laws which prohibit the feeding of wildlife, educational efforts and engineering solutions. We as a community can effectively make our neighborhoods safe by addressing the root of the problem. As you seek solutions please consider that many Anchorage residents value wildlife. It is one of the main reasons people move here and it is our responsibility as stewards to be responsible citizens first.

It is against the law to feed bears. State law states, "A person may not intentionally feed a moose, deer, elk, bear, wolf, coyote, fox, or wolverine, or negligently leave human food, animal food, or garbage in a manner that attracts these animals." It is also against the law to kill a bear you have attracted by improperly storing human food, animal food, or garbage.

Preventing bear problems is everyone's responsibility.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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For more information:

www.juneau.org/bears
<http://wildlife.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=bears.harmony>