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## *Conserving Alaska Preserving Traditions*

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April 2, 2014

The Honorable Cathie Giessel, Chair  
Senate Resources Committee  
Alaska State Capitol  
Juneau, AK 9801

Dear Senator Giessel:

I am writing to inform the Senator Resources Committee that the Board of Directors of the Outdoor Heritage Foundation of Alaska (OHFA) strongly support HB 161 as written. I would like to also bring to your attention that the OHFA Board consists of 4 current or past leaders from the Alaska Department of Fish & Game as well as Senator Con Bunde who was the original sponsor of the Governor's Permit legislation.

The OHFA support this legislation primarily because we fully understand the value of education as it relates to the future of Alaska's outdoor traditions. In that regard, the debate over HB 161 basically revolves around two different viewpoints. One believes putting all the money we raise toward wildlife conservation. The other believes we have to do more to save wildlife conservation and its associated traditions which would include comprehensive educational efforts.

I would submit that those who believe we can save wildlife conservation efforts by simply allocating more funding to that effort haven't been paying close attention to the transformation of American Culture in the past century. Early in the last century America was still a rural culture with close ties to the land and traditions such as hunting and fishing. Since then, Americas has become primarily an urban culture with the transformation intensifying in the past couple of decades due to new ways of communicating.

We have seen the effect of urban acculturation over the past several decades where surveys conducted by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) every five years indicated a decline in the sale of licenses for hunting and/or fishing. According to research much of the decline occurred due to changes in child rearing and especially play habits. Where once kids all went outside to play, they now choose to stay indoors and play computer games. This phenomenon was brilliantly highlighted in author James Louv's book "Last Child in the Woods" and has since been substantiated in an increasing body of research.

HB 161 gives those organizations who believe that more than just funding conservation is needed to save wildlife resources and those traditions dependent upon those resources. It also provides an avenue for non-profits interested in those resources and the dependent traditions a chance to raise money without coming to the legislature for an appropriation as

many non-profits do. The OHFA hopes this committee sees the value in supporting that effort and understands the importance of education programs to the overall sustainability of wildlife conservation and traditions like hunting and fishing those conservation efforts support.

It may be that there will be some diversion of funds that thereby effects our ability to match federal P-R funding, but think about the fact that if the traditions of hunting and fishing fade away, there will be far less funds available to match P-R funding due to the fact that few if any people would be buying licenses. Societal trends in American culture over the last 100 years strongly suggest that possibility. It was such a concern to state fish and wildlife agencies and major sporting groups that a national effort was organized over 15 years ago to put more emphasis on recruitment and retention programs. That effort has worked and the decline in sales of licenses and tags has rebounded with the last 5 year survey conducted by the USFWS showing an increase in sales across the country, including Alaska.

HB 161 is in our opinion a necessary step if we are to save those traditions that make Alaska unique. It is a step toward creating and sustaining a vision that much more needs to be done if we are to retain remnants of America's rural culture. We hope this committee shares that vision.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Eddie Grasser", written over a horizontal line.

Eddie Grasser  
President