



BACKCOUNTRY HUNTERS AND ANGLERS ALASKA CHAPTER



www.alaskabackcountryhunters.org

March 15, 2015

To: House Resources Committee
Inre: HB 137

CC: Governor Bill Walker
ADFG Commissioner Sam Cotten,
Bruce Dale, Acting Director Division of Wildlife Conservation

Dear co-chair Talerico and co-chair Nageak and House Resources committee members,

Attached with this letter is a letter of support for a hunting license and tag fee increase for both resident and nonresident hunters that we sent to Governor Palin back in 2008.

Alaska Backcountry Hunters & Anglers (AK BHA) has been working on this issue for the last seven years in hopes it would finally make it's way into a bill before the legislature. We sincerely thank Representative Talerico for sponsoring this bill and we look forward to working through the committee process to make recommendations and changes that all can agree on in order to move this bill forward.

Our letter to Governor Palin explains our position and we have sent in a similar letter over the years to legislators and Governor Parnell and to ADFG. Unfortunately, the Governor nor legislators were inclined to sponsor a bill regarding this issue. Now, however, with a looming budget crisis and cuts to various agencies, we have the opportunity to at least forestall budget cuts to the Alaska Department of Fish & Game's Division of Wildlife Conservation (DWC).

Already, DWC is short-funded, and can't carry on Intensive Management projects and the survey and inventory work that needs to be done to adequately monitor big game populations. We are still losing longtime biologists and managers to retirement and need to be able to recruit new staff

and research staff and pay them a good wage. From av-gas to the price of heating oil, everything has gone up since the last fee increase in 1993, yet DWC has not been fairly compensated from user fees.

The North American Model of Wildlife Conservation and Management is something our organization fully believes in and supports. That Model is wrapped around the common man and woman hunter paying user fees for scientific wildlife management, in order that we all have hunting opportunities on public lands. It is, to put it bluntly, absolutely ridiculous that Alaskan resident hunters pay only \$25 for a hunting license, which allows them to take several black bears, a grizzly/brown bear, a moose, five caribou, a sheep, a goat ...all at no extra cost. And at the same time expect DWC to carry out the necessary survey and inventory work, predator control, educational activities, research etc. with that level of funding.

Our nonresident license and tag fees are also ridiculously low.

Recommendations on Fees

We would like to see resident hunting license cost nearly doubled, from the current \$25 to at least the level of inflation over the years. ADFG has provided that information to the legislature. That would put current resident cost of a hunting license somewhere around \$43.

The only resident tag fees we support would be for trophy species like Dall sheep, Goat, and Muskox. We would like to see modest resident tag fees for these species, in order to capture more Pittman-Robertson (P-R) federal funding.

Regarding Intensive Management programs (predator control), if we cannot use matching 3:1 P-R funds to financially support IM programs conducted by ADFG, we could support a separate fee for residents to support those programs. However, nonresidents should also have to pay a separate fee, because IM programs benefit nonresidents as well as residents.

Nonresident hunting license fees need to go up, and we support the current nonresident hunting license fee increase currently in HB 137 CS. However, we would like to see higher tag fees for nonresidents that are currently in this legislation. Especially for Dall sheep.

Regarding resident Low-Income licenses, all low-income license holders should not have to pay any additional tag fees. Nor any Intensive Management fees.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and we look forward to supporting this legislation as it moves forward.

Sincerely,

Mark Richards – Chairman Alaska Backcountry Hunters & Anglers

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