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Subject: Comment re CSHB137 support with non consumptive user fees included

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To: house.resouces@akleg.gov

Dear Committee Members.

I am in support of increasing all user fees and believe all of our resources would further benefit from establishing non consumptive user fees through this bill as well.

However, this bill should not include incorporating any fees dedicated to funding Intensive Management (IM/predator control).

IM law is convoluted. When implemented it's generally been artificially induced. And, for mostly good reasons the practice of IM itself does not have broad public support. For those reasons (convoluted, artificial and contentious) I am opposed to integrating fees to support Intensive Management into this proposed legislation.

I am in favor of this legislation being thoughtfully crafted with intent to reduce the need for IM and reducing the amount of time an area stays under IM.

I am not personally opposed; when it becomes necessary, to the concept of IM per se. For instance I supported individuals being authorized to conduct same day aerial wolf hunting activity but since the tribe has spoken I am no longer opposed to the department being the entity conducting that type of activity.

One reason we even have IM is directly related to bargain priced non resident license/tag fees (too many non res hunters that only hunt prey like moose and caribou). The other reason we have IM law is related to all that swirl's around Alaska's unique 'must be guided' law. Put the two together and it's not very difficult to conclude that we have artificially induced the need for IM in the first place.

Encouraging non residents to come to Alaska and hunt prey species by under valuing licensing fees while at the same time discouraging non residents from hunting bears due to the cost burden of hiring a guide; has over the years and without much doubt, contributed significantly to the need for IM.

If non resident tag fees are not raised enough to curtail prey species hunting by non residents and if non residents continue to be blocked from hunting bears we're going to see more and more of Alaska going under IM.

Incredible as it may be; despite many proposals to limit non residents activity in IM areas, the Board Of Game continues to authorize non residents to hunt prey species even in areas where Intensive Management has been implemented. That practice should be stopped. For a lot of reasons.

The non resident 'must be guided' law was born with the second degree of kindred exception and unless or until non residents are allowed to hunt bears without a guide; especially in IM

areas, we will end up with more and more areas going into IM. Areas that are in IM will stay in IM longer than is necessary too.

Given the incentive, non residents are likely willing to forgo hunting a moose or a caribou for the opportunity to take a bear in an IM area (leaving more food resources for Alaskans) if not required to hire a guide.

Authorizing non residents to hunt bears without a guide would help to balance predator/prey hunting efforts. Non residents hunting bears without guides would decrease the cost and duration an area would need to be in IM status. Generally, authorizing non residents the opportunity to hunt bears without being required to be guided would like prevent or at least slow the rate at which areas are going into IM too.

To be clear I am not advocating a non resident war on bears. I'm saying the Board of Game has failed their duty to the people of Alaska to sensibly limit non resident hunting and keep us out of IM situations.

It is up to the legislature to authorize another way (besides the next of kin exception) for non residents (repeal the 'must be guided' law if necessary) to hunt bears without guides. Especially in IM areas.

It is up to the legislature to price tags for prey species for non residents; at least in IM areas, high enough to discourage them for participating in hunting prey species since the BOG is not going to do it.

Summing it up what I am attempting to communicate is that it's reasonable to balance the predator/prey hunting effort by non residents. It is reasonable to authorize non residents the opportunity to hunt grizzly/brown bears without guides.

Raising fees to the point it slows the annual rate that our resources are being depleted by non residents and on a statewide across the board basis is now a legislative obligation because the BOG process is broken.

In closing, I understand the Outdoor Caucus Advisory Council is opposed to including non consumptive use fees into Alaska's wildlife management funding through this bill. I expect the same groups represented by the Caucus will be opposed to any legislative effort to balance non resident prey/predator hunting efforts too and is already making an effort to kill this bill.

If that's true it would make the point that special interest hunting groups like SCI, APHA, WSF coming out opposed to putting both consumptive and non consumptive user groups on a level playing field and opposed to balancing non resident prey/predator hunting efforts were in reality counting on the status quo being maintained when they wrote a nice letter and testified that paying a little more in license is a good thing as long as it does not curtail non resident interest in hunting Alaska.

Respectfully.

Mike McCray