



March 21, 2016

Comments on HB 137 Hunting License and Tag Fee Increases

Dear Senator Giesel and members of Senate Resources Committee,

Resident Hunters of Alaska (RHAK) wants to express our strong support for HB 137.

As you are all aware, the last time hunting license and tag fees were raised was in 1993. That's hard to believe really considering how much the price for everything involved in Fish & Game management has increased in the last two decades. It's also hard to believe when you consider the loss of potential Pittman-Robertson matching funds from the sale of hunting licenses and tags.

Both resident Alaskans and nonresidents pay far too little to hunt in Alaska. If you compare our hunting license and tag fees with other states, it's remarkable how much lower the cost is for Alaska hunting licenses and tags to both residents and nonresidents.

Legislators have naturally been reluctant over the years to raise hunting license and tag fees because it is considered by many to be a "tax" increase. RHAK would remind any legislator reluctant to support this bill, however, of the North American Model of Wildlife Management that every state and hunter lives by, that speaks to a user-pay system whereby hunters pay via hunting licenses and tags for sound and necessary wildlife management within each state.

Currently with our Alaska budget shortfall, the Division of Wildlife Conservation (DWC) budget is being cut. We have many longtime Fish & Game staff retiring and we may not be able to replace them due to budget cuts. We will also lose general fund monies that have gone to DWC in the past for Intensive Management (IM) efforts. It would seem judicious to try to make up for these budget cuts at this time with fair resident and nonresident hunting license and tag fee increases that are long overdue and would capture three dollars for every one dollar via matching P-R funds.

RHAK supports the resident and nonresident fee increases in this bill. RHAK would also support a separate "Intensive Management" fee to make up for the loss of general fund monies that have gone to IM programs in the past (Pittman-Robertson matching funds cannot be used for Intensive Management efforts). We want to stress however that any IM fee should apply to both residents and nonresidents, since both user groups benefit from IM efforts.

Thank you for your consideration of this bill.

Sincerely,

Mark Richards

Executive Director - Resident Hunters of Alaska

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