

Alaska Trappers Association
PO Box 82177
Fairbanks, AK 99708

Dear Chair Revak:

3/15/22

The Alaska Trappers Association (ATA) appreciates the introduction of Senate Bill 230 (SB230):
"An Act establishing a \$25 fee to construct or use a trapping cabin on state land; and exempting trapping cabin permittees from additional land use fees."

In the mid-1970s the Alaska Legislature implemented statutes to authorize *Trapping Cabin Construction Permits (TCCP)*. At that time urban and rural trappers worked together and with the legislature to ensure trapping cabins on DNR lands would continue to be permitted now **and** into the future. AS 38.95.80 describes TCCP issuance in detail included the inclusion of a set fee for the TCCP amount other terms such as maximum size and duration of permit. AS 38.95.80 was vetted and ultimately implemented to address concerns that at some time in the future DNR might set cost prohibitive fees or begin to selectively authorize TCCPs. The TCCP program has largely been successful and those permits have proven accessible to both rural and urban users.

Stepping back from the specifics of AS 38.95.80 and SB230 it is important to consider why trapping cabins are necessary in Alaska. Trapping is a customary and traditional activity in Alaska that occurs during the winter in wild places often in vast wilderness areas. Economical trapping usually relies on ground transportation with snow machines, snowshoes, dog sleds or skis. All of Alaska is harsh in the winter-time where exposure can result in life threatening situations, injury from cold, death by drowning **or** sudden storm or other winter time perils. Trapping cabins are essential for trappers to safely maintain traplines of sufficient length and are often selected **as** a location that offers safety if weather conditions deteriorate quickly. Trapping as a customary activity has not changed much and Alaska is still extremely harsh in the winter-time. Trapping cabins are essential, not an optional amenity in Alaska.

SB230 solves three important problems that have arisen since 19xx. First, the set fee of \$10 is too low. This bill raises the fee to \$25. Second, over time and likely as a result of the fee being set decades ago, DNR has begun charging an application fee for TCCPs. SB230 removes DNR authority to charge a fee instead relying the aforementioned fee increase for cost recovery. Third, DNR permit officers have begun to issue TCCPs under general permitting provision not designed for the TCCP program. This alternate path to permit issuance results in trapping cabins being permitted as generic land use permits or LUPs. SB230 removes DNR authority to issue trapping cabins and LUPs and clarifies they may only be issued as a TCCP.

ATA supports SB230 because it offers necessary reforms and statutory guidance to return the TCCP program to how it was originally envisioned by trappers, legislators, the DNR and multiple Governors. Trappers and policy makers feared that over time the DNR would slowly go its own direction in how it issued trapping cabin permits or even begin denying them. This fear is why we have AS 38.95.80 and the explicit statutory provisions within. ATA strongly supports solving the issues identified by SB230 and looks forward to working with you, the Senate Resource Committee and DNR to achieve that goal.

Sincerely,

Randall Zarnke, president