

RE: HB 304 CHUGACH STATE PARK/EAGLE RIVER LIONS LAND TRANSFER

Representatives Merrick, Fields, and McCarty; HB 304 Sponsors

Thank you for leadership in sponsoring HB 304. To all members of the Alaska Legislature, thank you for your consideration, and hopefully your support, of this important legislation. The Sleeping Lady Mountain Lions Club supports passage of HB 304, to once and for all, formalize ownership and permanent management and stewardship of the parcel known as Eagle River Lions Park.

This parcel (Eagle River Lions Park) is the home of numerous community assets including a softball and baseball complex with fields to accommodate various skill and age levels, basketball courts, football fields, soccer fields, tennis courts as well as picnic and playground areas. The ball fields are home to Knik Little League, formed in 1963. This site also houses a large building which serves as the meeting place for four Lions Clubs and two Boy Scout troops, sponsored by the Lions. With a large room and commercial kitchen, it is the biggest venue in the Chugiak-Eagle River area. It is the site of countless community events, the annual Chamber fundraiser and Ducks Unlimited to name just a couple. Throughout a calendar, Lions Park is used for multiple benefits. These include raising funds for medical costs, for youth projects in our community, and summer camp programs for Hope Community Resources. The Lions have been managing these assets close to fifty years without any annual operating assistance from state or local government!

The Lions host many community events, Bear Paw Rodeo, Easter Egg Hunt and the largest being the July 3<sup>rd</sup> Independence Day Extravaganza. Included is a Fireworks display at 12:00 am on July 4<sup>th</sup>, the first Independence Day celebration in the state. It is the place of our annual free community Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners. The Scouts, baseball and softball teams provide youthful volunteers for many of these events. This park is also a venue for celebrations, landmark anniversaries, weddings, and memorials to say goodbye to friends and community pioneers.

The previous leases, especially the recent longer leases, have been adequate to this point, but unfortunately this option will not be available after 2024 because of a recent court decision. We appreciate the pro-active efforts of Parks and Outdoor Recreation Director Ricky Gease, and the support of Governor Dunleavy's Administration.

It would be a real tragedy to not allow the Eagle River Lions to continue their half century of effective and efficient management. This parcel and the tremendous assets located on the acreage is a true jewel of recreational opportunities, operated without cost to government. We appreciate your consideration, and support of HB 304 to allow this half century success story to continue, and for our recreational opportunities to expand and improve.

This letter was unanimously approved, by The Sleeping Lady Mountain Lions membership on March 7, 2022.

Tracey Hupe/President- Sleeping Lady Mtn. Lions

Bonnie Leonhard/Secretary-Sleeping Lady Mtn. Lions