



Kachemak Bay Conservation Society
3734 Ben Walters Ln, Homer, AK 99603
907 235.8214
kbayconservation@gmail.com

To: House.Resources@akleg.gov

CC:

Rep.Andy.Josephson@akleg.gov

Joe.Meehan@akleg.gov

representative.Sarah.Vance@akleg.gov

RE: SUPPORT HB 321

Dear Co-Chairs Tarr and Josephson and Members of the House Resources Committee:

The Kachemak Bay Conservation Society's mission is to protect the environment of the Kachemak Bay region and greater Alaska by encouraging sustainable use and stewardship of natural resources through advocacy, education, information, and collaboration. We represent over 300 folks living in and around Homer.

One need only take a short look at the Homer Chamber of Commerce website and Facebook page to see that the economy of our region depends the protected lands and healthy habitats supported by HB 321. We have hundreds of small and mid-size local businesses that guide, sport and commercial fish, curate adventures, and offer wilderness hospitality in our region. These protected lands and waters bolstered by HB 321 are also where our young people go to learn about ecology, wilderness survival, hunting and trapping; it is where our families recreate, hunt, and fish.

We support the following provisions in HB 321 because they will support Homer's way of life and local business community:

1. Changing the title "game" refuge and critical habitat areas to wildlife refuge (WR); and "game" sanctuary to wildlife sanctuary. It might seem odd to call Kachemak Bay a wildlife refuge but we were trying to make the terminology consistent. Rest assured that the statutory purpose and protections of the current CHAs will not change (and please note that in the revised Purpose Statement in the attached bill (page 4, line 3), the term "natural habitats" will be added back in as an amendment – it was inadvertently deleted by the legislative bill drafter).
2. Add one small parcel to Kachemak Bay WR and some tidelands to the Fox River Flats WR. These areas are missing from the current boundary (see map).
3. Prohibit personal watercraft in Kachemak Bay and Fox River Flats WRs.



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4. Expand the Homer Airport CHA and rename it the Beluga Wetlands WR (note the land descriptions for that change will be added to the bill as an amendment but the attach map highlights the addition).
5. Expand the Anchor River Fritz Creek WR to include acquired parcels near the south end of North Fork Road.
6. Close brown bear hunting via statute in areas adjacent to the McNeil River sanctuary (i.e. close the McNeil River refuge and the Kamishak/Douglas River area).

We hope this committee will support the people of Homer and the Kenai Peninsula and support this bill. We who live here know that we need healthy lands and waters for the health of our communities.

Sincerely,

Penelope Haas

Vice-President, Kachemak Bay Conservation Society



Friends of Kachemak Bay State Parks

95 Sterling Highway, Suite 2, Homer, Alaska 99603

info@friendsofkachemakbay.org

www.friendsofkachemakbay.org

A non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing, preserving and protecting the resources of Kachemak Bay State Parks.

To:
Alaska House Resource Committee
120 4th St. Room 3
Juneau, AK. 99801
Submitted Electronically
House.Resources@akleg.gov

March 3, 2026

Dear Committee Members,

On behalf of Friends of Kachemak Bay State Parks, we respectfully submit our support for House Bill 321.

Friends is a volunteer nonprofit dedicated to protecting and enhancing the natural resources of Kachemak Bay State Parks and surrounding protected lands. HB 321 aligns with our mission by strengthening habitat protections while maintaining the existing statutory purposes of these areas.

We support the modernization of terminology from “game” refuge and sanctuary to “wildlife” refuge and sanctuary, which more accurately reflects their broader ecological purpose. We appreciate the clarification that existing protections for Critical Habitat Areas will remain intact, including the restoration of the term “natural habitats” in the Purpose Statement.

We support the boundary corrections and additions to the Kachemak Bay and Fox River Flats Wildlife Refuges, as well as the expansion and renaming of the Homer Airport area to the Beluga Wetlands Wildlife Refuge and the inclusion of acquired parcels in the Anchor River–Fritz Creek Wildlife Refuge.

Importantly, we strongly support the prohibition of personal watercraft within the Kachemak Bay and Fox River Flats Wildlife Refuges. Reducing disturbance in these sensitive marine and tidal habitats will help protect wildlife and improve the experience for visitors seeking quiet, nature-based recreation.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge your support of HB 321.

Respectfully,
Kathy Sarns
Kathy Sarns

Chair, Friends of Kachemak Bay State Parks board of directors

*Protecting the integrity and biological diversity of the Anchorage Coastal
Wildlife Refuge...*



FRIENDS OF THE
ANCHORAGE
COASTAL
WILDLIFE
REFUGE (FAR)

PO Box 220196
Anchorage, AK
99522-0196

Phone: 907-248-2503
Fax: 907-248-3159
E-mail: bc@farak.org

House Resources

Via email

House.Resources@akleg.gov

Subject: FAR support for HB 321

2026.3.4

Dear Honorable Co-Chairs Representatives Robyn Niayuq Frier and Maxine Dibert; Representatives Carolyn Hall, Donna Mears, Zack Fields, Dan Saddler, Mike Prax, Julie Coulombe and Bill Elam:

Friends of the Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge (FAR), writes in support of HB 321. It looks good to us. We also emphasize our support for no personal watercraft in Kachemak Bay and Fox River Flats refuges (AS 16.20.590(c) and (AS 16.20.580(b), respectively) to reduce user conflicts and to avoid disturbance to fish and wildlife and their habitats.

FAR is a 501(c-3) nonprofit organization in good standing with the IRS and the State of Alaska whose mission is: To preserve the integrity and biological diversity of the Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge. This easily damaged subarctic saltmarsh supports an unusual diversity of plants, birds, mammals, and invertebrates, and is of continental conservation importance. The proximity of the refuge to Alaska's largest city makes it important for public education and enjoyment but also makes it highly vulnerable.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Barbara Svarny Carlson

Barbara Svarny Carlson
President and Executive Director

Calvin Zuelow

From: Bill Sherwonit <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, March 2, 2026 9:10 AM
To: House Resources
Cc: Rep. Andy Josephson; Joe Meehan; Rep. Julie Coulombe; Sen. James Kaufman
Subject: House Bill 321 letter of support

Members of the House Resources Committee:

I am writing to voice my strong support for HB321, particularly the proposed name changes, including the elimination of the designation “critical habitat areas” and the increased clarity that state refuges are *wildlife* refuges and sanctuaries are *wildlife* sanctuaries. And furthermore (under “Purpose Statement”) that the primary purpose of refuges (and presumably sanctuaries) is to protect fish and wildlife populations and the habitat that they depend upon.

I also strongly support a (renewed) ban on personal watercraft in the Kachemak Bay and Fox River Flats refuges for the reasons stated in the bill.

Finally, and most importantly to me, I strongly support a legislative ban of brown bear hunting in McNeil River State Game Refuge and also what the bill describes as “state-owned ‘Kamishak’ lands between the sanctuary and Katmai National Park.” As language in the bill points out, the Alaska Board of Game has already closed these areas to brown bear hunting for more than three decades, but “An expanded statutory closure to the areas adjoining the sanctuary would permanently elevate the sanctuary’s distinction as one of the world’s premier wildlife viewing destinations.” Action like that proposed in the bill is long overdue.

Thanks for considering my comments and perspectives,
Bill Sherwonit

[REDACTED]
Anchorage, AK 99507
[REDACTED]

Calvin Zuelow

From: Derek Stonorov <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Tuesday, March 3, 2026 10:49 AM
To: House Resources
Cc: Rep. Andy Josephson; Joe Meehan
Subject: HB 321

March 3, 2026

To:

Alaska House Resource Committee

Representative Andy Josephson

Dear All,

I support HB 321 as written. I am not familiar with many of the lands in question but will mention three areas that I do know about.

The Anchor River-Deep Creek Critical Habitat Area would benefit from additions of conservation lands within the presently established boundaries. Development particularly in the Caribou Hills and Bald Mountain areas of Homer have made this Critical Habitat Area more and more important not only for moose (ADF&G data) but also as an extremely important denning area for brown bears (ADF&G data, personal observations over a 50 year period).

I helped in the original creation of this area along with ADF&G personal, several registered Alaska guides, the Governor's Office, Homer State Representatives, the Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly and many community members.

Homer Airport Critical Habitat Area would also benefit from the addition of conservation lands within the present boundaries and for any additional lands belonging to the state or city that could be incorporated. Again I was instrumental in the creation of this habitat area with the help of then Governor Tony Knowles, Speaker of the State House Gail Phillips, and the unanimous support of both the Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly, the Homer City Council, as well as local hunting and commercial fishing groups, all of saw the value of important winter moose habitat and the place of wetlands in the heath of Kachemak Bay.

Kamishak Bay Special Use Area. I support the permanent closure of these lands as described in HB321. This should have been done long ago. My history of area use goes back more than 30 years both as an individual and a watchable wildlife guide. At one time I held a permit for overnight commercial camping within the suggested boundaries.

This is an incredible area that is important to brown bears (ADF&G—Rhodes, Farly, Hilderbrand reports) and many years of my own observations. The fen or sedge meadow near

the western terminus of the Douglas River may be the most important mating area between Swikshak/Hallo Bays to the south and McNeil/Kamishak River to the north. (My personal high count was 40 bears present at one time). A known denning area exists nearby in Katmai NP (Faro and Troyer 60's) and marked bears from this area have gone over to McNeil and the Katmai Preserve. Douglas River has an important silver run and a small tributary of the Douglas River to the east has harvestable red salmon. Kamishak River has a very substantial and harvestable chum run and important clam beds at the mouth.

The area needs additional protection due to the popularity of bear viewing and it's impacts on brown bears. The beaches, salt water, and a small lake make this area readily accessible to aircraft. Lack of enforcement has opened the area up to illegal commercial camping and wildlife harassment.

Sincerely,

Derek Stonorov

[REDACTED]

Homer, Alaska 99603

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Calvin Zuelow

From: Nina Faust <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Saturday, February 28, 2026 1:26 PM
To: House Resources
Cc: Rep. Andy Josephson; Joe Meehan; Sen. Gary Stevens; Rep. Sarah Vance
Subject: RE: HB 321

[REDACTED]
Homer AK 99603

February 28, 2026

House Resources Committee

RE: HB 321. "An Act relating to state refuges, sanctuaries, and fish and game critical habitat areas; relating to the hunting of brown bear; and providing for an effective date."

I urge you to support HB 321 as it will simply regulations governing Special Areas by changing all the various language used for these designated areas to just two specific terms: "Wildlife Refuges and Wildlife Sanctuaries." This will bring clarity and understanding of the uses and restrictions on these areas and their purpose.

It is important to retain the public uses and firearms regulations consistent with their original plans. I fully support the continued prohibition of personal watercraft in all these areas to protect their special qualities.

In the Homer area, many land acquisitions have been made adjacent to a number of these Special Areas. I fully support adding all of these to their adjacent Refuge or Sanctuary lands. The additional lands were protected to add a buffer to the protected areas, so they in turn should be protected under the State Refuge and Sanctuary regulations.

Adding adjacent state-owned lands sandwiched between McNeil Sanctuary and Katmai National Park is very important to the protection of the McNeil bears who roam these lands between the two special areas. McNeil and Katmai are world-class bear viewing areas, and as such, extra protection should be given to the land between to protect the bears. All these lands should be closed to brown bear hunting to protect this special bear population.

Thank you for your consideration, and I hope you will support this bill.

Respectfully,

Nina Faust

Calvin Zuelow

From: Rika Mouw [REDACTED] >
Sent: Monday, March 2, 2026 10:34 AM
To: House Resources
Cc: Joe Meehan; Rep. Andy Josephson; Sen. Gary Stevens; Rep. Sarah Vance
Subject: Letter of support for HB 321

Dear members of the House Resources Committee,

I am very much in support of HB321: State Game Refuge, Sanctuary and Critical Habitat Area.

As a long time resident in Homer, the refuges, sanctuaries and critical habitat areas (CHA) in the Kachemak Bay watershed and on the Kenai peninsula are particularly familiar and important to me in consistent terminology and thusly management and protection.

I live adjacent to the currently referred to *Homer Airport CHA* which is proposed to be re-named to the Beluga Wetlands Wildlife Refuge (WR). There is significant adjacent and contiguous land that is currently managed by Kachemak Moose Habitat Inc. critical habitat that would be prime land to be transferred and incorporated into the Beluga Wetland WR.

I am in support of the entire bill, and *especially* thrilled to see Homer Airport CHA, Kachemak Bay, Fox River Flats, the Anchor River/Fritz Creek WR and the McNeil River sanctuary included in amendments, expansion and protections in this very positive bill. So many people in our area have given decades of time and energy

Thank you for your attention to, and passage of, HB 321 that will make terminology consistent and boundary mapping clarifying in protecting these precious ecosystems that support wildlife (i.e. salmon!) and are treasured by so many.....residents and visitors alike.

Rika Mouw
Homer

Calvin Zuelow

From: Sue Christiansen [REDACTED] >
Sent: Wednesday, March 4, 2026 8:01 AM
To: House Resources
Cc: Rep. Andy Josephson; Joe Meehan; Sen. Gary Stevens; Sen. Bill Wielechowski
Subject: HB 321

Please support HB 321!

Kachemak Bay, with its mountains, glaciers, rivers, estuaries, salt marshes, mudflats, meadows, kelp forests, and alpine vistas...is home to threatened and endangered marine species. It provides refuge and habitat for shellfish - clams, oysters, mussels, cockles, year-round halibut, flounder, 5 species of salmon, herring, Tanner, Dungeness, King crab, whales, porpoise, sea lion, seals, sea otters, shorebirds, and waterfowl. The Bay provides winter homes for 90% of the seabird and waterfowl populations of Lower Cook Inlet. We are part of the Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve, providing critical habitat for migrating shorebirds. For the last 25 years, the first weekend in May, a shorebird Festival has happened here, with thousands of migrating birds and birders passing through from all over the world. We are a hub for commercial fishermen, recreational fishermen, sightseers, kayakers, tourists, and our communities are growing exponentially. This rapid development has created pressure without plans in place to mitigate pollution or the huge impact of tourism. We have seen declines in shellfish and fish populations, and fishing closures are impacting livelihoods. Threats from harmful algal blooms, invasive species, and pathogens have become worrisome. Our ocean is warming and acidifying, our wetlands are drying, and our glaciers are melting. This "knock your socks off beautiful place" that has so abundantly sustained us all these years is struggling. Unless we learn and act sustainably, this abundance will not be here for our children. Any bit will help. HB 321 is a start.

Kachemak Bay was once considered "one of the richest bays in the world". Over the years, millions of dollars have been invested in shared goals by government agencies, organizations, businesses, and communities committed to a healthy, resilient natural environment. The largest National Estuarine Research Reserve (NERR) in the United States is located in Kachemak Bay, covering 320,000 acres. We are a NOAA Habitat Focus Area (HFA), and the site of the University of Alaska's marine field stations, Kasitsna Bay Laboratory, in conjunction with the **National** Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (**NCCOS**). The Anchor River Critical Habitat Area, Fritz Creek Critical Habitat Area, and Fox River Flats Critical Habitat Area all exist here. The Watershed also includes jurisdictional boundaries of the, the 371,000-acre Kachemak Bay State Park and Kachemak Bay State Wilderness Park managed by the Alaska Department of Natural Resources. Kenai Fjord National Park, Kenai Wildlife Refuge, Alaska Maritime Wildlife Refuge are adjacent. Some of the most unique and productive habitats Alaska has to offer are here, Tide variation can be up to 31 'tide (2nd in the world to Bay of Fundi). The Bay hosts a remarkably high level of [biological activity](#), due in part to unique water circulation patterns. Please support HB 321. Thank you!

Calvin Zuelow

From: Susan Cushing [REDACTED] >
Sent: Tuesday, March 3, 2026 9:04 PM
To: House Resources
Cc: Rep. Andy Josephson; Joe Meehan
Subject: Fwd: House Bill 321: State Wildlife Refuges and Sanctuaries

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Susan Cushing <[REDACTED]>
Date: Tue, Mar 3, 2026 at 9:00 PM
Subject: House Bill 321: State Wildlife Refuges and Sanctuaries
To: <Houserresources@ak.org>
Cc: <Rep.Andy.Josephson@akleg.gov>, <Joe.Meehan@akleg.gov>

Dear House Resources:

Regarding House Bill 321, we support Kachemak Bay/Homer area provisions specifically. We are 50 year residents of Homer, and I am a lifelong Alaskan. We have both spent many hours in public service with the intention to preserve the natural wildlife of Alaska, yet facilitating a smooth coordination between humans and wildlife. As more and more people move here, we must have guidelines in place that address as many consequences of development as we can. History has shown that disregard for environmental considerations can lead to the deprivation of all nature's capacity to survive. Certain terminology must be in place. We respectfully ask you to recognize the following points that are of utmost importance to this area's integrity as a wildlife refuge and sanctuary.

1. Changing the title “game” refuge and critical habitat areas to wildlife refuge (WR); and “game” sanctuary to wildlife sanctuary. It might seem odd to call Kachemak Bay a wildlife refuge but we were trying to make the terminology consistent. Rest assured that the statutory purpose and protections of the current CHAs will not change (and please note that in the revised Purpose Statement in the attached bill (page 4, line 3), the term “natural habitats” will be added back in as an amendment – it was inadvertently deleted by the legislative bill drafter).
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Thank you,
Susan Cushing
Former Chair and 7 year member of State Council on Domestic
Violence and Sexual Assault

Jack Cushing, P.E.
Former 8 year term Mayor of Homer

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Susan Phillips Cushing



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Susan Phillips Cushing

Calvin Zuelow

From: Louis Dupree <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Friday, February 27, 2026 10:58 AM
To: House Resources
Cc: Rep. Andy Josephson; Joe Meehan
Subject: HB 321

Please support HB 321
This is very important to all of us that live in and around Homer

Thank you

Louis Dupree

[REDACTED]
Homer, AK 99603
[REDACTED]