

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on HB 321 which I support

My name is Bruce Talbot. I'm retired after 24 years as Senior Planner with the Alaska Department of Natural Resources. Though I do not speak for the department.

I believe I have a unique perspective on some of the issues addressed by this bill after developing management plans for all state lands in the Kenai Peninsula Borough, Denali Borough, City and Borough of Juneau, as well as assisting with plans in the Mat-Su and Kodiak boroughs. I also was the project manager for management plans for legislatively designated areas such as Denali State Park, Wood-Tikchik State Park and initiated the revision of the Chugach State Park Plan.

Over the years I've come across many areas where boundaries of legislatively designated areas managed by both DNR and ADF&G need correction. I support the corrections proposed in this bill. I only wish that DNR undertook a similar effort to address (Legislatively designated Areas) I'll referred to henceforth as "LDA's" under their management. The comprehensive approach which this bill undertakes, though technical with many boundary changes, is an important improvement to clarify management of these areas now and in the future.

These changes are not significant changes in policy. They correct errors and omissions made in the past as well as include lands that are under the authority of DFG but not in the LDAs. Also they address lands that have been donated or acquired by ADF&G since the LDA boundaries were designated and though outside the LDA boundaries, are managed by ADF&G.

Examples include of boundary corrections include:

Imperfect tide and submerged land mapping done in the past that has greatly improved in recent years and boundaries need correction.

Areas managed by DFG but are not in the LDA boundaries.

Areas acquired after the LDA boundaries were established. These include lands donated to ADF&G by land trusts, cities and boroughs, or acquired with Federal wetland grants, land trusts and Exxon Valdez money acquisitions. These lands already have deed restrictions for conservation and cannot be managed otherwise

Errors in legal descriptions that sometimes put parcels of land six miles away from the actual intended LDA boundary.

Wetlands that should sensibly be added to the refuges for habitat or access reasons but were overlooked under the original designations.

Note that these proposed corrections and additions are mostly wetlands and that are inaccessible from the road system.

The bill also proactively excludes Native Corporation lands that were inadvertently included in the refuges.

May I also note that these refuges and their boundary adjustments only address the surface estate and do not affect the ability of DNR to lease land for oil and gas.

National Wildlife Refuge Boundaries

The National Wildlife Refuges in Alaska by existing statute are co-designated State refuges. Congress has changed the boundaries of these refuges over the years, particularly under ANILCA in 1980. May I suggest an amendment to HB 321. The Kenai National Wildlife Refuge and Kodiak National Wildlife Refuge boundaries have changed significantly over the years. For example, the lands along the coast north of Nikiski on the Kenai peninsula were once in the federal refuge but are no longer after the Federal Refuge was reduced in size. These lands, though now in private and borough ownership, are still designated as a State Refuge. The State Refuge boundaries for the Kenai and Kodiak National Wildlife Refuges need to be adjusted so they match.

Consolidating terminology for the State Sanctuaries, Refuges and Critical Habitat Areas makes sense. DNR areas managed by the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation has similar issues. As one example, the term wilderness as applied to some of the state parks is sometimes mistaken for a federal designation under the 1964 Wilderness Act. Fortunately state Management Plans address this by redefining wilderness consistent with state park purposes by it still confuses the public. This holds true for ADF&G Critical Habitat Areas that are LDA's and confused with federal critical habitat areas that have significant restrictions on development. Consolidating the terminology for both State Game Refuges and State Critical Habitat Areas into just "State Wildlife Refuges" will eliminate this misconception.

Note that these name changes in no way changes the statutory or regulatory or management intent for these areas.

Closing high public use areas to discharge firearms for non-hunting purposes.

This only makes sense. State Parks have similar authority but DFG does not. These areas as designated by DFG would eliminate target shooting and plinking bottles in small areas of high public use. This is a public safety issue as well as an environmental issue. For example: It's estimated the facetious named the "Rambo Rest Stop" which is now in the Palmer Hayflast State Game Refuge was estimated to cost \$2.5 million to clean up from lead contamination, shot up wrecked cars, appliances, glass and other contamination after illegal target shooting was stopped.

Also the bill gives DFG the authority to close certain areas for public safety such as the flats behind the Rabbit Creek Shooting Range and other areas where public safety is a concern.

Finally the areas adjacent to the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary should be closed to brown bear hunting. The bears in the sanctuary have significant state and national values. However, being bears that know no boundaries, they wander into adjacent areas where brown bear hunting is allowed. Fortunately, the two areas including the Kamishak Bay Special Use Area and areas north in the McNeil River State Game Refuge have been closed by the Board of Game for the last 40 and 30 years respectively. This prohibition should be done legislatively.

Once again I think this is a sensible bill and look forward to it being passed out of Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.