

The Department of Fish and Game has prepared the following responses to questions that Senate Resources Committee members asked in the February 2nd hearing on Special Areas Management and HB 130. Please let me know if I can provide any additional information or clarification on these or other items.

Provide a list of special areas that abut or overlap federal lands:

The following is a general summary of the land management purposes and intents for the federal lands types abutting state Special Areas. A side-by-side comparison of federal lands vs. state Special Areas for location specific rules will require a more comprehensive review.

1. Alaska Special Areas abutting federally managed forests, refuges, and parks:
 - o Izembek State Game Refuge: overlays and abuts Izembek National Wildlife Refuge
 - o Cape Newenham State Game Refuge: overlays and abuts Togiak National Wildlife Refuge
 - o Walrus Islands State Game Sanctuary: abuts Togiak National Wildlife Refuge
 - o Port Heiden and Port Moller Critical Habitat Areas: abuts Alaska Peninsula National Wildlife Refuge
 - o Redoubt Bay Critical Habitat Area: abuts Lake Clark National Park
 - o Dude Creek Critical Habitat Area: abuts Glacier Bay National Park

- o McNeil State Game Refuge: abuts Katmai National Park and Preserve
- o McNeil State Game Sanctuary: abuts Katmai National Park and Preserve
- o Stan Price State Game Sanctuary: abuts Tongass National Forest
- o Copper River Delta Critical Habitat Area: overlays and intermingled with Chugach National Forest

a) National Wildlife Refuges (NWR) abuts five state Special Areas. The stated purpose of the NWR system in Alaska is to “administer a national network of lands and waters for the conservation, management and where appropriate, restoration of the fish, wildlife and plant resources and their habitats within the United States for the benefit of present and future generations of Americans”.

The statutory purpose of Alaska’s state game refuges is to “protect and preserve the natural habitat and game population in certain designated areas of the state” (AS 16.20. 020); while that of Critical Habitat Areas is “to protect and preserve habitat areas especially crucial to the perpetuation of fish and wildlife, and to restrict all other uses not compatible with that primary purpose” (AS 16.20.500); and that of state sanctuaries is to protect wildlife populations and habitats (AS 16.20.090 – 16.20.162).

National Wildlife Refuges and state Special Areas are managed similarly in that they are typically open to most public uses including hunting, trapping, fishing, subsistence activities and other recreational uses (although hunting and trapping are limited or prohibited by state statute or Alaska Board of Game regulations in some state sanctuaries and refuges).

The primary difference between state and federal management of these areas are the types and numbers of commercial and public uses allowed based on an identified level of protection each area receives.

Additionally, the federal Wilderness land designation may restrict the types of activity that can occur in the federal areas.

b) National Parks or Preserves abut four state Special Areas. The mission of the National Park Service is “to preserve unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the national park system for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations.” Management of these federal areas varies dependent on their enabling legislation, management plans and other actions. National Park areas in general tend to be managed with an intent to maintain natural processes. Hunting, trapping and fishing are permitted in Lake Clark National Park and in Katmai National Preserve; while hunting and trapping are prohibited in Glacier Bay and Katmai National Parks. Land use activities can be more restrictive in national park areas and even more so in federally designated wilderness areas within the national parks.

c) National Forest Areas abut or overlap two state Special Areas and both are managed cooperatively through a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the state and federal agencies. The Copper River Delta is open to traditional activities including hunting, trapping, fishing and subsistence activities; while the Stan Price sanctuary and surrounding national forest lands are closed to brown bear hunting through Alaska Board of Game regulations. Through the MOAs for these two areas, they are managed similarly for public and other uses.

Provide a summary of permit denials that occurred over the past five years:

*Please see attached Denial Summary document.

How will landowners and users be notified of changes if this legislation passes?

The department does not have an established process for notifying adjoining land owners of boundary adjustments, simply because this boundaries are so seldom adjusted. The majority of adjoining land is state or federal; there are few adjoining private land owners where the boundaries are being changed, and no private lands are being incorporated into the boundaries. The public have potentially been notified through the legislative process of the proposed changes; plus the Gustavus City Council passed their resolution concerning the additions to Dude Creek so presumably they have some sort of public process. We will update our online land status maps and other information, and make efforts to contact affected parties.

How do special areas impact hunting, trapping, or fishing regulations?

The department does not in any way regulate hunting, trapping, or fishing through Special Area designation or management. The allocative responsibility lies with the Board of Fish and the Board of Game, though there is one special area that has been closed to all hunting and trapping by the legislature through statute. That is the McNeil River Sanctuary AS 16.20.162(b).

Again, please let me know if there is any additional information that I can provide. We're happy to answer any questions relating to Special Areas management or House Bill 130.

Best regards,

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Legislative Liaison

Office of the Commissioner

Alaska Department of Fish & Game