

Nathan Turner

I was born and raised on a dairy farm in upstate New York. From an early age I learned the values and benefits of living a life close to the land, and especially the hard work and rewards that result from being dependent on the natural resources for your livelihood. I am grateful for those early years on the farm, and the important lessons that this type of life has to offer.

In 1989, at age 17, my father and I headed for Alaska with two pick-ups loaded with the essentials, the result of his lifelong dream of trapping in the Far North, and also a timely advertisement in Fur - Fish - and Game magazine; *Trapline For Sale in Alaska*. It took us 6 days to reach Alaska, and 10 additional days were spent on the road system in the Interior, preparing for our first winter on the Kantishna River. The trapline we purchased had been unused for the previous 12 years, but had been started in 1926, and few but the old timers in the country even knew where it was. We were dropped off by a local bush pilot from Nenana in mid September, and for the next ten months we learned a lot about Alaska... The winter of 1989 and 1990 was record breaking for the deep cold spells and snowfall – every winter has been an easy one since!

The next year one of my brothers joined us, we began in earnest to build our traplines into something that could support our family for the years to come. We started with the idea to treat trapping as though it were a business, working 6 days a week, with our cut-off period for trapping being 40 below. Three years later we started an additional trapline 85 miles to the west in the Nowitna country and during the next 19 years we cleared over two hundred miles of trapline trails for our dog teams and sno-gos, operated subsistence and test fishwheels (for both Fish and Game and the National Park Service), annually grew large gardens for our winter needs, built log homes and cabins for hire in the bush, and seasonally guided big game hunters. When we first arrived in the country, we were often told that the days of life on the trapline were gone; that this way of life wasn't possible anymore in Alaska. We found that they were wrong. The country hadn't changed and the economics of the life hadn't changed so much as the spirit of the people seemed to have. With first the dream, hard work, and room to grow we found that it is still possible to live a rich and rewarding life directly from the resources the country provides. Alaska has been generous to us.

In 1996 I started working as an assistant hunting guide in the Nowitna drainages for the neighboring trapper who had a small guiding operation. We worked together for 6 years, guiding hunters in our adjoining trapping areas, before I started contracting clients on my own in 2002. Since then, I have been fortunate to share this guiding opportunity with other neighbors in my part of the Interior – all of us currently live and trap close to the areas we hunt in. We have been able to meet our annual subsistence needs, while being paid to do so, much like the trapline. The harvested meat is shared among our families, and with less successful neighbors in the region. These packing and guiding jobs are the only local means of employment for most of us, other than trapping.

For the past 14 years I have also worked as an assistant guide for sheep in the Northern Brooks Range, and for Brown Bear out of Cold Bay on the Alaska Peninsula. In spite of having my own guiding business, I continue to work as an assistant guide on these hunts since it allows for me to annually visit these remote parts of the State, which have become a very important to me, and

also to simply be ‘a guide’ and share in the daily adventure with the hunters as the experience unfolds.

Participation in the Public Process:

In recent years, I have felt the need and responsibility to actively take part in the public processes that have to do with my family’s way of life. I have actively participated with the Board of Game process during the last 4 years, submitting proposals for consideration and volunteering to participate in side boards that I feel have the ability to affect my way of life. I have also been actively involved in the restructuring efforts of the guiding industry. In 2007 I was nominated and elected to the Board of Directors of the Alaska Professional Hunters Association, the only professional association for the industry in the State. Our work in recent years has focused on aiding the Big Game Commercial Services Board in bringing oversight and accountability to guiding activities in the State and working with the Dept. of Natural Resources in creating the Guide Concession Area program. The goal of this program is to minimize the overcrowding of service providers throughout the State, while at the same time establishing a framework by which service providers can be held accountable for resource stewardship and their conduct in the field. Every user group will benefit from these efforts at self reform.

Purpose for Applying to the Board:

As noted above, I have come to feel a strong sense of responsibility to participate in the public processes that have bearing on my family’s ability to make a living from the land. I recognize that there are many others in the State who are in similar situations, and yet I believe that I may have a somewhat unique perspective to bring to the table. I also feel that we need to continue the focus on restoring our wildlife populations in challenged parts of the State through sound management practices, and that these efforts will in time ease the conflicts among our various user groups.

Formal education:

I completed my final two years of high school through the Yukon Koyukuk School District, Northwind correspondence program based out of Nenana. A teacher visited by bush plane several times during the winter to check my work. I was twice selected for “Who’s Who Among American High School Students”, and also competed in the Academic Decathlon.

Work History:

Through 1989: raised on our family dairy farm

1989 through present:

- actively trapping 5 to 6 months of each season since 1989
- seasonally guiding big game guiding hunters (3 to 4 months each year) since 1996
- I and my family have built 19 structures (mostly log) along several rivers of the Interior, a number of these for hire during the summer months. For several summers I also worked

intermittently as a carpenter's helper for a local contractor in Fairbanks. We have built our own fishwheels, dogsleds, snowshoes, and boats over the years.

- subsistence fishing for our annual needs

Licensing Held :

Private Pilot license - land and seaplane

Captain - Inland Freshwater Six pack license

Alaskan Registered Guide – No. 1036

Past Participation with Government Processes:

- I have held a number trapping cabin permits with both the Bureau of Land Management, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service for many years now, all in good standing.
- I have several permitted hunting camps on BLM, USFWS, and State of Alaska lands, all in good standing.
- For many years we operated test recovery wheels for counting salmon entering Denali National Park via the Kantishna River drainage, funded by both the State and the National Park Service.
- In the early to mid 90's we supplied the USFWS in Galena with Lynx and Marten carcasses for their wildfire / marten studies, and continue to provide marten carcasses to the State Area Biologist in Galena to maintain the data continuity.
- We volunteered salmon blood samples to an ADF&G biologist in Fairbanks to aid in his studies related to stress levels in tagged salmon we had recovered, part of his Master's thesis.

Memberships :

The Alaska Trappers Association

The Alaska Professional Hunters Association