

PO Box 549
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March 20, 2018

Alaska Senate Resource Committee:
Re: Support Denali Wolf Buffer

To Members of the Alaska Senate Resource Committee:

As a resident of Healy and Stampede cabin owner for the last 35 years, I strongly support HB 105 which will establish a protective Denali Wolf Special Management Area buffer for park wolves, Denali's wolves desperately need this protection since their territories include lands within the "Wolf Townships." A few hunters and trappers have caused a dramatic decline in the wolf population, enabled by the Alaska Board of Game. Those of us that live and work in Denali are calling on you to implement HB 105, a common sense measure.

Of Denali Park & Preserve's 6 million acres, 4 million acres are open to legal hunting and trapping under state regulation; **HB105 adds no acreage to Denali National Park or the NPS** but merely establishes a state special management area that protects wolves. Furthermore, the departments of Public Safety and Fish & Game indicate there will be no additional cost to the state for the buffer area.

The Wolf Townships are a sliver of state land to the northeast adjacent to the Denali National Park. The boundary is literally only a few miles away from the park road campground and headquarters. The habitat of the Wolf Townships is critical to park wildlife because it is lower in elevation and preferential to caribou. The rivers flow north and create natural corridors from the park into the Wolf townships for the wolves to follow the caribou into their wintering grounds.

We know that wolves require large territories to survive in this rugged environment. U.S. Congress, Alaska State Senate, Alaska Railroad and land managers have long known the importance of protecting wolves in this area:

Senate report 96-413, 1980, page 166: In the northeast portion of the area, near the existing headquarters, there are some 3 townships of state lands which are critical for sheep, caribou, and wolf habitat and should eventually become a part of the park. ... The Committee recognizes that these areas are important to the park and recommends that the Secretary seek land exchanges with the State of Alaska that would serve to bring these areas into the Park

I have worked, hiked and skied in Denali for many years and have seen wolf numbers plummet. In 2000, we were pleased that the Alaska Board of Game (AK BOG) created a small no kill wolf buffer within the Wolf townships. While it was small, it did make a difference. When the rebellious board eliminated the policy in 2010, wolf numbers and sightings steadily plummeted.

The last few years I frequently hear visitors express disappointment about lack of wolf sightings on their expensive bus trips through the park. Increasingly, I hear discussions among them that Yellowstone is the park to see wolves now, no longer Denali.

The very high turnover amongst Denali's wolves has been influenced by hunting and trapping. Dr. Brigit Borg's research tells us that the death of certain individuals in the pack can (i.e. the mother) destroys the family glue. As lawmakers, you can protect Denali's reputation as a place to watch wolves interact and know their history.

The Alaska State Constitution

Measures that protect Denali's wolves also protect the interest of the 70,000 Alaskans, who visit Denali each year to see living wolves. The right to see and experience wolves in Denali is addressed in the The Alaska State Constitution. Article VIII, Section 2 :

"The Alaska constitution guarantees that wildlife are to be used for the maximum benefit of [Alaska's] people, and reserved to the people for common use."

HB 105 guarantees Alaskan's rights under the Alaska State Constitution. It is not fair to Alaskans that a few hunters and trappers (including guides and their out-state-clients) can deprive us, the opportunity to see live wolves when we visit our park. All Alaskans have equal legal access to, and use of, the wildlife of Denali including those who want to experience and intact ecosystem.

Article VIII in the Alaska Constitution Sections 3

"The legislature shall provide for the utilization, development, and conservation of all natural resources belonging to the State, including land and waters, for the maximum benefit of its people."

Research and has shown links between wolves, mesopredators, prey populations, vegetation and landscape. In so many places throughout the world, wolves have experienced declines and decimation. There are compelling scientific studies to show that these declines are causing outcomes that result in ecological and human costs (#Trophic cascades, #mesopredator release,). If the legislature is charged with conserving and protecting natural resources, it is essential to consider the impacts of wolf hunting and trapping.

It is promising to see some pro-wildlife legislation and I am pleased that HB 105 in the House. Representative Josephson is reaching out to understand and represent all Alaskans. Please consider the impacts that are the result of a consumptive, trophy hunt mentality paradigm. Alaskans support HB 105. It makes sense for Alaskans

Thank you,

Barbara Brease



A wolf with a trapper's snare deeply embedded in his neck as it walks along railroad tracks in Denali National Park. Photo by Gordon Haber, 2008.