



## THE ALASKA WILDLIFE ALLIANCE

"LETTING NATURE RUN WILD"

March 22, 2018

Members of the Senate Resources Committee:

On behalf of the Alaska Wildlife Alliance and its supporters, I am asking that the Senate Resources Committee members vote **IN FAVOR OF CSHB 105**, which would establish a no-hunting buffer zone adjacent to Denali National Park.

The Alaska Wildlife Alliance speaks for more than 1,500 supporters of non-consumptive uses of wildlife. AWA is a non-profit organization based in Anchorage, founded more than 35 years ago. We advocate for healthy ecosystems, scientifically managed to protect our wildlife for present and future generations.

The Alaska Wildlife Alliance strongly urges you to support CSHB 105.

For years AWA and other groups have asked the Alaska Board of Game to re-establish a no wolf hunting/trapping buffer for the Wolf Townships, the area addressed in this bill. For years those requests have fallen on deaf ears at the Board: they were always summarily defeated. To date the Board of Game has steadfastly and single-mindedly maintained its mission to represent only the interests of consumptive users of wildlife – i.e., hunters and trappers.

AWA concurs with the expert testimony to be offered before the Committee for CSHB 105 by Dr. Richard Steiner, Biologist Vic Van Ballenberge and others. The need for the buffer will be well-stated and supported by those experts - I will not restate the basic issue here.

A few brief points in favor of HB 105:

1. 45 percent vs. 5 percent. The Wolf Townships (proposed buffer area) is situated just north of the Park road, meaning the wolves killed there are the same animals that would be the most easily viewed by the more than half a million people who visit Denali annually. National Park Service statistics confirmed this: when these wolves were protected by a buffer, 45 percent of visitors annually were

lucky enough to spot a wolf along the Park road. Since the last buffer was removed in 2010, only about 5 percent of visitors have been able to spot a wolf.

2. More than 500,000 vs. two or three. Only approximately two or three individuals hunt/trap within the Wolf Townships. That's all. If this area is closed, they are of course free to utilize adjacent state lands where hunting/trapping is allowed, on the hundreds of thousands of acres to the north, east and south of the park boundaries. Why should this mere handful of trappers have more of a "right" to these wolves than others?

3. Zero cost vs. potentially millions in addition revenue to Alaska businesses. It is important to note that while establishing this buffer area will cost the state nothing, "wildlife viewing" is consistently listed among the top reasons for coming to Alaska – particularly Denali - by visitors. Knowing that Alaska values these wolves enough to set aside a miniscule parcel of land to protect them, thereby greatly increasing their viewability, will surely pay financial dividends for Alaska for many years to come.

A wolf can be killed and cash – at most a few hundred dollars - collected for its pelt *only once*. That same wolf alive can be photographed, recorded, sketched, tracked and just simply watched and enjoyed perhaps *thousands of times* during its lifetime. A living, wild wolf able to be seen by hundreds of thousands of people has to be worth its weight in gold for Alaska.

Finally, I would like to thank Rep. Andy Josephson for offering a simple, logical solution to this situation. I sincerely hope that this committee will listen to the majority of residents who for many, many years have wanted this area set aside to protect wolves. I hope you will listen to their voices and recognize the many benefits the state will reap.

Again, on behalf of the Alaska Wildlife Alliance and our supporters I ask that you please vote in favor of CSHB 105, Taking Wolves Near Denali National Park.

Thank you very much.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Edward A. Schmitt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Edward" being more prominent.

Edward Schmitt  
Executive Director