

Dear Senate Resources Committee-

I write in support of HB 105.

Some background: I first started coming to Alaska in the mid 1970s. Denali became my destination of choice with the opportunity to observe and photograph wolves and bears as the main attractant. Though I loved my visits, I felt obliged to honor the tourism boycotts called for by NGOS to protest the state's wolf management policies.

I retired from my federal job and moved to Fairbanks in 1990. In 2001, I opted to return to the workforce as a Natural Resource Manager with the Alaska Department of Natural Resources. After 11 1/2 years, I returned to the ranks of the retired. While with the federal government, I worked closely with both federal and state agencies in Alaska. I always kept in mind that all of us agency personnel worked for the citizens. In the case of the feds, all of the country's citizens, including Alaskans, and in the case of the state, Alaska residents. I felt that knocking heads and creating roadblocks between agencies created inefficiencies and ill-served the public that we were hired to work for. Consequently, while recognizing each agency is governed by its own laws and mandates, my goal was always to reach equitable solutions that were consistent with individual agency needs. As a state employee working with federal agencies, I followed the same policies. I bring this up because the current situation with the stampede area has resulted from churlish attitudes and actions by the Board of Game.

In January, 2000, I testified before the Board in Fairbanks supporting the establishment of the buffer in the Wolf Townships. The Board, in a wise decision, established the buffer, thereby bringing peace to the issue and serving the larger public interest. A few years subsequently, the Board, apparently prodded by groups like the AOC, Safari Club International, and the notorious Coke Wallace, elected to ignore the public interest and remove the buffer zone to poke a finger in the eyes of the feds and show them who's boss.

In addition to the the spiritual value provided by the Stampede wolves, they are constitute a major economic benefit to the state and to the Healey/ Glitter Gulch area. There are not many places in the world where a visitor can reasonably expect to see a wild wolf. Denali Park was such a place, until its most observable pack was extirpated. I ask that you compare the value of a trapped or shot wolf pelt to its harvester to that of a living animal that can be seen and photographed thousands of times over.

My brother and his wife came to visit several years ago and one of their visit highlights was seeing a wolf next to our tour bus.

A simple look at the map clearly demonstrates the cause of the problem. The Wolf Townships jut like an invading finger into the surrounding parklands. Effectively managing wildlife entails managing on an ecosystem basis. In the winter, caribou head out of the park to their winter habitat and the wolves follow. Unfortunately, the winter habitat lies outside park boundaries.

Killing habituated animals raises significant ethical issues. Eventually, public attention will again focus on this issue, giving the state a black eye and possibly commencing a boycott.

Hunting is a declining activity, while recreation and wildlife viewing are growing. As a hunter, I object to being made vulnerable to public vituperation and scorn due to the unethical actions of the few in the Stampede area, one of whom delights in aggravating the public. Hunters as group are poorly served by this situation.

We have made several trips to Africa and are hugely impressed by the enjoyment of seeing the myriad of animals we observed and impressed by the economic benefits brought to the residents there by virtue of the foresight exercised through their wildlife conservation policies.

As a manager with the Alaska DNR, I had to ensure that all of our decisions were in the best interest of the state. The buffer proposed by HB 105, costs little and returns much. It is overwhelmingly beneficial and clearly meets the constitutional mandate to manage the state's resources in the best interest of its people.

Leadership is exercised when tough decisions are made. I urge you to ignore the caterwauls of the handful of individuals affected negatively in the Stampede area and to rise above the short-sighted obstinate positions of some of the hunting groups, by correcting the churlish and puerile action of the Board of Game. HB 105 is a reasonable and innocuous solution to a problem begging to be resolved. I strongly urge you to exercise the leadership required to do what is definitely in the broader and long-term best interest of the state and pass this out of committee for a floor vote and to pass it on the floor.

Thank you for your consideration.