

Alaska State Legislature

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Senate Resources Committee

Explanation of differences between SB 97 (2025-2026) and SSSB 253 (2023-2024)

"An Act establishing a big game guide concession area permit program on land in the state; relating to the duties of the Big Game Commercial Services Board, the Board of Game, the Department of Fish and Game, and the Department of Natural Resources; requiring the Board of Game to establish an initial big game guide concession area; and providing for an effective date"

The Senate Resources Committee held two hearings on SSSB 253, the original big game guide concession program bill, in April of 2024. On the final day of session, slightly modified language of SSSB 253 was amended into SB 189 on the House Floor and passed. The language that became law in SB 189 (now before the committee as SB 97), differs from SSSB 253 in five ways listed below.

The first four changes were drafted as a (S)RES amendment to better align the language of the bill with the Guide Concession Program Workgroup Recommendations and the sponsor's original intent. While that amendment was not taken up on the record by the committee, it was circulated to members at the time. These changes (along with the rest of SSSB 253) were incorporated into SB 189.

1. A syntax change was made to clarify that big game guide concession areas will be based off whatever the current guide use area boundaries are at the time a concession area is awarded.
2. A syntax change was made to clarify that guides are limited to three concessions on state land—meaning that if a guide also holds federal guide concessions, those federal concessions will not be counted toward the state concession limit of 3.
3. Language was inserted to explicitly state that concession areas can NOT be issued based on the highest bidder.
4. Language limiting the number of assistant guides who could work for a concession holder was removed. This corrects an oversight in the drafting process and aligns the bill back with the Workgroup's conclusion that limited concession permits would have limits on the number of clients, not the number of assistant guides.

The final change was introduced in the House. It was developed as a collaboration between the original bill sponsor, Leg Legal, the Alaska Federation of Natives, and Alaska Professional Hunters Association. It was circulated on the House Floor before it was incorporated (with SSSB 253 and the above four changes) into SB 189.

5. Added a provision allowing for major private landowners (who own more than 5,000 acres) in the game management unit to play a consultation role during the selection process of awarding hunting guide concessions in the relevant game management unit.