

From: Wayne

Sent: Wednesday, March 19, 2014 9:25 AM

To: Sen. Cathy Giessel

Cc: Sen. Click Bishop; Sen. Fred Dyson; Sen. Peter Micciche; Sen. Lesil McGuire; Sen. Anna Fairclough; Se.Hollis.French@akleg.gov; Sen. Charlie Huggins; Sen. Mike Dunleavy

Subject: SB 160 - DNR Guide Concession Bill

Senator Giessel and Senate Resource Committee Members,

Thank you for hearing SB 160. I strongly support this bill and hope your committee is able to move it along quickly.

There are roughly 1400 licensed Alaska guides of various levels. About 550 of those are registered and master guides and can sign contracts themselves, but many of them don't. Some of them work for other guides, and some of them just keep the license in case they decide to guide again. The average number that actually sign contracts each year is about 300. You have to be a registered or master guide to be a professional member of the Alaska Professional Hunters Association (APHA). APHA's professional membership averages about 125 per year or about 40% of the guides who sign contracts each year. Further research in the past has shown that APHA professional members conduct 50 – 70% of the total number of guided hunts per year. The argument by the opposition that APHA doesn't represent the industry or that they represent less than 10% of the industry is entirely false. **APHA represents a majority of the guides that conduct the majority of the guided hunts in Alaska.**

300 or so registered and master guides are in disagreement over whether a guide concession plan will help or hurt their business, and guiding *is* a very important industry in Alaska and should be treated as such. **But - what about the health of our wild life resource? What about the multiple thousands of Alaskan Resident Hunters, and all residents?** Do you think multiple thousands of resident hunters really want the state to continue to allow unlimited guide opportunities on state land so that more and more areas go to draw? If you take a look in any recent Board of Game proposal book, I think you will agree that the answer is no. You will find multiple proposals by resident hunters to eliminate or restrict non resident hunting and guiding opportunities.

In early February 2013, APHA'S Board of Directors invited the entire professional membership to participate in a teleconference on the DNR GCP. It went on for several hours and 45 professional members were in attendance. Support for the latest version of the DNR GCP wasn't unanimous but was a very significant majority. As a result, the BOD voted unanimously to support the latest version of the DNR GCP, and subsequently supports SB 160. Many from the opposition argue that APHA's support for this is based on personal greed. I've seen nothing in the prospectus that shows where APHA members get extra points. Will the best person get chosen every time or will we? In many cases the answer will be No. Will a capable guide be chosen and when we get down the road a ways, will the game resource, resident hunting experience, and guide industry be better off? I think they will. Every guide going through this process stands to lose something, but most of APHA's professional membership, see this plan as necessary for the long term viability of the industry. For most or at least many of us who support SB 160, the desired end result is more about "guide businesses being able to provide a quality experience for their clients that reflects well on Alaska" and "the guide industry remaining viable, credible, beneficial to Alaska's economy and residents, and able to exist far into the future" than "who the players are in the short term", even if it's not us.

My reason for supporting SB160, has nothing to do with setting up a monopoly for existing guides or keeping new or young guides out. Certainly you have heard that from some of those who oppose SB 160, and the proposed GCP. I don't even oppose "part time" or "hobby guides". There are currently several federal concessions that only allow a few hunts, and with the 90 limited concessions (only 4 clients per year allowed) proposed in the GCP, there is considerable opportunity for those trying to get started or who only want to do it part time. **I do oppose letting a long time, important industry decline to the point that only "part timers" – some body who makes most of their living some other way and often uses guiding mostly to write off their boats, planes, gear and "other toys" – can afford to participate.** I feel that if "open and unlimited entry" continues on state land, that more areas will continue to go to drawing, and then large scale booking agencies will be in the driver's seat and not Alaska. The "luck of the draw" is certainly no way to run a business. Also, instead of competing for concessions based on experience and qualifications, guides will have to compete for representation by the big agencies with huge data bases to get hunters, because agency clients will get many if not most of the draw permits. The agencies will choose the guides they want to represent, and that could easily favor non resident guide-outfitters.

While it will most likely require more effort initially to be able to guide on state land for all level of guides, I strongly feel that in the long term, the GCP will benefit the new registered guide trying to establish his own business, as much or more than any other segment of guides. **The new, young guide absolutely has the most to lose if the guide industry continues to decline,** because while many older guides will leave the industry soon, the new guy still has the potential for a 30 – 50 year career. It's important for credible guides who are committed to a profession in guiding, to be able to assure potential clients that they can indeed provide them a good experience. Many operators on state land can't honestly do that now, and many have already left state lands because of that. Also, the word is certainly out to many non resident hunters and outside organizations, to "beware" on state land.

Treating state land as an entitlement to anyone with a registered guide license, encourages more guide competition than our state land wild life resources can stand, and ultimately sets many new guides up for failure. Many new guides have gotten too big too fast, and incurred numerous negative consequences. Also, there are many instances of it reflecting negatively on Alaska and the guide industry as a whole. "Open entry" on state land has impacted Alaska's game resource and the hunt quality of multiple thousands of Alaska residents that hunt on state land. **The situation will only continue to get worse if we continue with status quo.**

Some guides say they don't have problems where they operate – now. Also some people hunt mostly bear and they have fewer issues than sheep and moose hunters. So if we just deal with the hot spots and sheep, then guess where all those that don't get what they want, will end up and what animals they will be guiding for. Some that already deal with permits think everyone should have to. I spoke to this earlier and want to avoid drawing permits.

Some guides say the DNR GCP isn't needed because non resident participation has declined. Well "Go Figure"! The Mulchatna Caribou herd has collapsed from 200,000 plus animals to almost nothing, and

moose populations in as much as 75% of Alaska have also declined during much of the last decade, due in large part to over predation. Recent predator control efforts are working but it will still be a long time before we get back to where we were in many places. Also, the national economy has been poor and many outside hunters are well aware of the excessive guide pressure that currently exists on many state lands in Alaska, and are going elsewhere. Even though non resident participation may have declined some, there is still excessive pressure in almost all areas that still have good ungulate populations.

I think DNR is the proper entity to manage land use and the board of game and the big game commercial services board should be consulted in their areas of expertise. I fully support SB 160 and hope it makes it through the legislature this year. With out it, I see no long term future for an industry that has been a vital part of Alaska for a long, long time.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact me. I'll do my best to answer promptly, except that I do have spring bear hunts starting April 1st.

Sincerely,

Wayne Kubat

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PS: I have lived in Alaska for 38 years and hold Alaska master guide-outfitter license #147. I became an assistant guide in 1981, have lived in the Mat-Su Valley since 1984, got my registered guide license in 1986, and joined Alaska Professional Hunters Association (APHA) that same year. I started my own guide business – Alaska Remote Guide Service in 1987 I served on the Mat-Su Valley Fish and Game Advisory Committee from 1998 to 2007 and as chairman the last 4 of those years. I also serve on the Board of Directors for APHA. I take between 8-12 fully guided hunts per year, split between single species and combination hunts and the average length is 11-15 days. Guided hunts account for about 70% of my total income per year.