

From: David Byrd
Sent: Sunday, February 23, 2014 8:35 PM
To: Sen. Cathy Giessel
Subject: SB 160

Representatives and Senators

I am writing this letter as a concerned Alaska RESIDENT first and as a Hunting Guide Second.

HB 8 HB 158 SB160

These bills all relate to the DNR state land guide concession program, which will if passed give DNR the power to implement a program to limit the number of guides in the state and also limit the number of transporters for an area which will limit access for the resident hunter.

First I believe that we need to take a step back and look at the problems that we have in the state now that has caused the want for these bills. The number one concern is the Dall Sheep population in the state, the residents want something done because the BOG is saying that if the Guide Concession Program is not passed that is it very likely to that all the sheep hunts will go to a draw and there will be no more over the counter tags for resident hunters.

Alaska's sheep population is at the lowest point in history, hunting pressure from residents and non residents has been a factor in the decline of the population, but there are lots of other things that are going on. The Guide Concession Program will not help the population and this is already being proven in the state now.

For example the entire Eastern part of the north side of the Brooks Range in federal land, where a guide concession program has been in effect for 30 plus years, each of the areas are only allowed to have one guide and the number of sheep that can be hunted are regulated. Yet the population has been in decline for years!!!

Next the Chugach Mountains where there has been a permit system with a very limited number of hunters each year, yet again the population of sheep has been on a decline for years.

The same can be said for the TOK Management Area and the Delta Control Use Area where a permit system has been in place for thirty plus years.

Only full curl rams can be taken in 99% of these hunts, so in reality hunting should have no effect ewes and lambs, yet the population of ewes and lambs are on a drastic decline.

We as hunters need to stop fighting over Resident VS Non Resident and look at the bigger problem, if something is not done fast there will be no sheep hunting for any one!!!!!!

Yes I fully believe that residents should have hunting opportunity before non- residents, but both user groups are too busy fighting each other to look at the bigger problem!! We need to figure out what needs to be done to get the population turned around so that our kids and grandkids have the opportunity to hunt.

As for the current DNR guide concession program I am opposed to it as written. Nothing in the guide concession program is going to limit the number of non-res hunters, its just going to limit the number of guides.

There is also language in the bills that will limit transporters, which will limit the resident hunters as well as the un-guided non-resident hunter. If this happens most if not all the transporters will give up their licenses and fly as 135 air taxi. The only thing that the transporters license allows is for the air taxis to advertise and charge a flat rate for a hunt instead of charging by the hour. If they are licensed transporters than can be held accountable for there actions through the Big Game Commercial Services Board.

Guides are allowed 3 Guide Use Areas now, if the guide concession program is implemented most guides will not win 3 concessions and to stay in business they will take more hunters in the area or areas that they do win. Currently guides are able to spread out the hunters over a larger area.

Many things can be done now to regulate the guides such as making the guides register their guide use areas for a minimum of 5 years.

We already have the Board Of Game, which is supposed to manage the game populations in the state.

This is from the BOG website:

“The Board of Game’s main role is to conserve and develop Alaska's wildlife resources. This includes establishing open and closed seasons, areas for taking game, setting bag limits; and regulating methods and means. The board is also involved with setting policy and direction for the management of the state’s wildlife resources. The board is charged with making allocative decisions, and the Department of Fish and Game is responsible for management based on those decisions.”

We do not need to give DNR the power to manage the game populations in the state as we are already funding the BOG. Asking for the funds for this project while the schools do not have the funding that is needed!! The BOG needs to do their job and manage the states game populations.

If some or all of the animals need to go to drawing permit then that’s what needs to be done.

The Alaska’s Game Animals are the most important thing and this is not a battle between resident and non-resident as everyone makes it out to be. Resident hunters were not complaining when there were plenty of animals to hunt. There are more bears in the Alaska now, and you never hear a residents complaining about to many bear hunters.

Phil Byrd