

## Game Management Unit 23 Working Group

114 S. Franklin Street, Ste. 205

Juneau, AK 99801

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February 27, 2014

Senator John Coghill  
Alaska State Legislature  
Alaska State Capitol, Room 119  
Juneau, AK 99801  
[Senator.John.Coghill@akleg.gov](mailto:Senator.John.Coghill@akleg.gov)

Representative Mia Costello  
Alaska State Legislature  
Alaska State Capitol, Room 501  
Juneau, AK 99801  
[Representative.Mia.Costello@akleg.gov](mailto:Representative.Mia.Costello@akleg.gov)

**SUBJECT:** Senate Bill 160 / House Bill 158 - "An Act authorizing the commissioner of natural resources to implement a hunting guide concession program or otherwise limit the number of individuals authorized to conduct big game commercial guiding on state land."

Dear Senator Coghill and Representative Costello:

The Game Management Unit 23 Working Group is writing to express its support for both Senate Bill 160 and House Bill 158, each of which would authorize the Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to implement a hunting guide concession program or otherwise limit the number of individuals authorized to conduct big game commercial guiding on state land.

The Unit 23 Working Group was formed in early 2008 to address fall hunting conflicts between local hunters, nonlocal hunters and commercial operators in Game Management Unit (GMU) 23 in northwest Alaska.<sup>1</sup> The 20-member stakeholder / interagency group works collaboratively to find ways to reduce fall hunting conflicts in GMU 23, protect subsistence uses, and provide opportunities for other hunters. The Working Group includes representatives from the regional and tribal governments and organizations, the Big Game Commercial Services Board (BGCSB), guide and transporter businesses, local Fish and Game Advisory Committees, the Northwest Arctic Subsistence Regional Advisory Council, the Alaska Board of Game, the Federal Subsistence Board, and State and federal land and wildlife management agencies.

At each of its meetings to date, the Unit 23 Working Group has consistently agreed on the importance of the State of Alaska having the right tools in place to manage big game hunting commercial services provided by guides, transporters and other businesses. These management tools are particularly important to avoid conflicts and crowding among users in areas where substantial nonlocal hunting activity coincides with local subsistence hunting, such as in GMU 23, as well as to address potential wildlife conservation issues.

At its May 2013 meeting, the Unit 23 Working Group reaffirmed by consensus its support for the Guide Concession Program that DNR has been developing to manage

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<sup>1</sup> Unit 23 project web site: <http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=wildlifeplanning.unit23>

guided hunting on general State lands. The Working Group also recommends that the State of Alaska provide DNR the authority to expand the management program to include transporters that provide commercial services for hunters.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

For additional information about the Unit 23 Working Group, please contact the group's facilitator, Jan Caulfield at (907)523-4610 in Juneau.

Regards,

Unit 23 Working Group

Unit 23 Working Group Members (2014)

Phil Driver, Alaska Professional Hunters Association, Western Arctic Caribou Working Group

Cyrus Harris, Maniilaq Association

Stosh Hoffman, Alaska Board of Game

Victor Karmun, Northwest Arctic Subsistence Regional Advisory Council, Kotzebue Sound Advisory Committee

Melvin Lee, Upper Kobuk Advisory Committee (*unable to attend May 2013 WG meeting*)

Enoch Mitchell, Noatak/Kivalina Advisory Committee

Ron Moto, Sr., North Seward Peninsula Advisory Committee

Noah Naylor, Northwest Arctic Borough

Pete Schaeffer, Kotzebue Sound Advisory Committee

Joe Schuster, Alaska Professional Hunters Association

Ted Spraker, Chair, Alaska Board of Game

Julie Owen, Transporter representative

Raymond Stoney, Northwest Arctic Subsistence Regional Advisory Council, Lower Kobuk Advisory Committee

Tim Towarak, Federal Subsistence Board (*unable to attend May 2013 WG meeting*)

Alex Whiting, Kotzebue IRA

Jim Dau, Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Valerie Baxter, Alaska Department of Natural Resources

Shawn Bayless, US Fish and Wildlife Service (*at May 2013 meeting, USFWS was represented by former Refuge Supervisor Lee Anne Ayres*)

Frank Hays, National Park Service

Shelly Jacobson, Bureau of Land Management

cc: Governor Sean Parnell

Senator Donald Olson, Alaska State Legislature

Representative Benjamin Nageak, Alaska State Legislature

Commissioner Joe Balash, Alaska Department of Natural Resources

Clark Cox, Alaska Department of Natural Resources