

Thank you to co-chairs Representative Josephson and Representative Tarr, and members of the Resources Committee for this opportunity to comment on HB 40.

My name is Connie Brandel. I am a 30-plus year resident of Alaska and a dog owner since childhood. I strongly urge you to vote in favor of HB 40.

First and foremost, trappers themselves know these traps are dangerous. Setting traps a good distance from public trails should be a courteous, considerate and most obviously a common sense thing for trappers to do, without the necessity of a law mandating a setback distance. The Trapper's Code of Ethics (voluntary rules), from the Alaska Trappers Manual, states: "Promote trapping methods that will reduce the possibility of catching non-target animals."

Unfortunately, the growing number of reports of trapped pets indicates this isn't happening. Some trappers apparently do not believe they have an obligation to share public trails and facilities. They are not only disregarding common courtesy and the organization's suggestions to avoid conflicts with other users, they are actively courting conflict by placing traps directly on trails. Because of a few, regulation for all becomes necessary. It is unfortunate that what I am sure is a minority of "bad apple" trappers forces this, but they have.

These traps are not merely an inconvenient obstacle like a rock or branch on a walking trail. They are dangerous and deadly. By design some traps are designed to kill instantly. At best, if a pet is freed from a trap relatively unharmed, one cannot imagine the anxiety that would linger with the owner (and the pet) after such an unexpected, terrifying event. These traps have no place adjacent to public trails or facilities.

In conclusion, I ask that you please vote in favor of HB 40, the No Traps Near Trails bill. Thank you very much.

Connie Brandel
Wasilla, Alaska

From: footloosealaskans-request@lists.riseup.net [<mailto:footloosealaskans-request@lists.riseup.net>]
On Behalf Of Barbara Brease
Sent: Monday, February 13, 2017 4:59 PM
To: Michael Haukedalen <mhaukedalen@humanesociety.org>
Cc: footloosealaskans <footloosealaskans@lists.riseup.net>
Subject: [footloosealaskans] Photo for Congressman

Michael, this photo came from Alaska Trapping Forum, which might make it public. It was provided by one of Coke Wallace's clients (aka Midnight Sun Safaris) The photo was taken on the park boundary. I'll try to find the direct source.

Barbara

From: cherie.northon@gmail.com [<mailto:cherie.northon@gmail.com>] **On Behalf Of** Cherie Northon
Sent: Tuesday, February 14, 2017 11:18 AM
To: Rep. Andy Josephson <Rep.Andy.Josephson@akleg.gov>
Subject: HB 40

Dear Andy

As parents, grandparents, and pet owners, it is extremely terrifying to have traps in any location that could hurt a human or pet. Alaska is so well loved for its trails and outdoors, that something as deadly as a trap placed close to trail use areas does not make sense (except possibly for the ease of the trapper).

About 12 years ago when I was teaching at UAA and trying to reduce human/beaver conflicts on Chester Creek, some unknown person placed 3 Conibear traps adjacent to the creek in the UAA dorm area. A youngish beaver was caught by one and killed. This is an area frequented by students, dogs, waterfowl, and children. Besides being dangerous enough to kill a small victim, it was horribly sad--just as the trap that was set in Spenard a few days ago that killed a pet dog.

Traps are illegal in urban areas, and we do not expect to find them in close proximity to high population areas. A law that would have trappers refrain from placing them in popular use areas should be put into place immediately. Dogs wander, kids wander--the thought of witnessing either of them in any trap is horrifying. We need to err on the side of caution in this matter and protect humans and pets.

Thank you for introducing the bill and caring about the safety and welfare of ALL Alaskans.

Cherie Northon

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From: Sean Cahoon [<mailto:sean.cahoon@gmail.com>]

Sent: Tuesday, February 14, 2017 8:54 AM

To: Rep. Andy Josephson <Rep.Andy.Josephson@akleg.gov>; Rep. Geran Tarr
<Rep.Geran.Tarr@akleg.gov>

Subject: HB 40

Dear Reps. Josephson and Tarr,

I would like to express my support for HB 40, requiring traps to be set at least 200 ft from public trails and trailheads. As a dogowner and frequent visitor to public trails, I have the right to safely access these facilities without fear of injury or death to my pet. Moreover, as a soon-to-be father, I worry that a curious child could easily discover a nearby trap and result in horrific consequences. A trap set too close to a public bottleneck creates a situation where one user group exerts a major impact on others. This bill is a simple way to minimize conflict between user groups and is a common-sense restriction to trapping.

Please feel free to distribute my comments to remaining members of the House Resources Committee.

Sean Cahoon
2912 Illiamna Ave
Anchorage, AK 99517

From: Gary Steele [<mailto:info@8staralaska.com>]
Sent: Monday, February 13, 2017 6:13 PM
To: Rep. Andy Josephson <Rep.Andy.Josephson@akleg.gov>
Subject: I support HB 40 - Trapping and Public Trails

Dear Andy,

I am a life-long Alaskan and dog owner. I know and have known people whose dogs have been injured/maimed/killed in traps set too close to public trails/roads, for years. The Trappers Ethics Code is clearly not working. It is past time there was a law to punish unethical, and frankly, lazy trappers.

My own dogs almost got caught on snares set on the Ingram Creek end of the new Historic Iditarod Trail in Turnagain Pass. This is Forest Service Lands/ Trails.

Would HB 40 apply to ALL public lands - or only state?

Sincerely,

Gary Steele
Anchorage- Moose Pass

To whom it may concern:

I live on the Stampede Road northwest of Healy, AK and have had dogs caught in traps set right in the middle of public trails. It only makes sense to separate trapping from areas used by lots of people and their dogs. I support HB 40 and hope it will become law this session.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,
Susan Braun

-----Original Message-----

From: Stephanie Millane [<mailto:smillane@gmail.com>]

Sent: Monday, February 13, 2017 9:39 AM

To: LIO Seward <lio.seward@akleg.gov>

Subject: Letter of Support for HB 40

Hello,

I am writing in support of HB 40 as a dog owner, and a user of our trail systems, beaches, campgrounds and public areas. During trapping season, I am often uncomfortable with the thought of even taking my dog out (even leashed) into our public areas as I commonly hear horror stories of unfortunate pet/trap encounters much too close to trail systems. It terrifies me to think of my dog caught in a trap, and that fear takes away from my experience when out on many of our trails.

It seems like common sense to offer a buffer so responsible trappers, and responsible pet owners can equally enjoy our public spaces without worrying about unintended encounters. Additionally, steep fines and potential jail time are very appropriate for those who trap in an irresponsible manner.

Thank you for taking HB 40 into careful consideration, as a benefit to all public land users.

Stephanie Millane

VP - Save Our Seward Pets

smillane@gmail.com

From: Daniel Bissinger [<mailto:dan.bissinger@gmail.com>]
Sent: Monday, February 13, 2017 8:27 AM
To: Rep. Andy Josephson <Rep.Andy.Josephson@akleg.gov>
Subject: HB 10

Dear Rep. Josephson,

Thank you for your work in protecting wildlife and public use areas. I understand that in the face of opposition your job can be a thankless one at times. HB 10 is no exception. The "trapping culture" is, although antiquated and unnecessary in modern times, quite as driven in their principles as you and I are about wildlife protection.

It is important that we ensure public lands are serving the public without negative externalities on individual users. It's difficult to imagine a starker infringement than a trap set close to a trail or parking lot, yet there is somehow still room for opposing arguments from trappers. Thank you again for your work.

Sincerely,
Daniel Bissinger
Anchorage, AK

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(302) 383-5876
danbissinger@gmail.com

Good Day,

I applaud the introduction of HB40. This issue is something that is, and has been, really needed for a long time. Hearing stories of dogs trapped and dying (sometimes a slow death) is very disturbing in this day and age. Trapping in and around recreational areas used by many people and pets is simply not necessary and the majority of Alaskans want this practice curtailed.

Saying that “trapping” is a traditional right is insane. Driving herds of caribou off a cliff is a traditional right but is out of place in this society and not allowed and trapping anywhere you please is also history and should not be allowed. Identification should be on every trap and those unmarked should be confiscated.

I hope this bill gets passed quickly. Trappers don’t own our trails.

Thank you.

Terry Cummings

6740 E. 10th

Anchorage, AK 99504

907-333-7809

Dear Representative Josephson,

Your position re: trapping (HB 40) has particular relevance to me. My wife and I lived in Alaska from 1960, through 1997. Most of those years were spent in "bush Alaska" residing in small communities such as Barrow, Wainwright, Huslia, Hughes, Shungnak, Bettles, Kotzebue and King Salmon. We joined with our Native and non-Native neighbors in time honored subsistence pursuits (hunting, fishing and trapping) collectively referred to as subsistence. We also traveled extensively by dog team, boat and light aircraft throughout remote wilderness regions of the state. This includes a 1200 mile dog team trip in 1974, across the northern region of the state. Before it became illegal I participated in the harvest of seals, walrus and whales. In the mid 1970s I was involved in the pioneer studies of contemporary subsistence carried out by the rural residents of the Kobuk River, the Koyukuk River and the central Brooks Range. These studies resulted in the publications, "Kuvuungmuit Subsistence" and "Tracks in the Wildland".

Although I am a founding member of the Center for the Northern Environment I have refrained from participating in the controversy over trapping, in part because I was a trapper and close friend of other trappers. The great majority of trappers that I knew were contentious in their pursuit of target wildlife. They frequently checked their traps and would often remove traps to avoid over harvest of a given population. Unfortunately, there are others who do not adhere to these standards.

One rule of contentious trappers is to not set traps or snares along the edge of communally used trails, particularly where domestic animals or humans might be placed at risk. Dog mushers are especially concerned by the location of traps and snares where they might travel. I have had huskies injured by leg hold traps placed too close to a well-used trail. Large traps used for wolves, lynx and other predators can severely injure or even result in the death of domestic animals. Such large traps were referred to as "wrench traps", because the trapper would hang a wrench near the trap that would allow a musher or other traveler to dismantle the trap and release its victim.

I support legislation designed to make communally used trails safe for travel.

Sincerely,

Ray Bane

From: k.capp@yahoo.com [<mailto:k.capp@yahoo.com>]

Sent: Monday, February 13, 2017 7:03 AM

To: LIO Juneau <LIO.Juneau@akleg.gov>

Subject: House Bill 40

I strongly support this bill.

In fact, my wish is that trapping is stopped all together. It is indiscriminate and brutal killing of animals for no reason and with little to no control by Fish & Game.

If that can't happen, the traps must be the kind that kills instantly and are 300 feet from any public area. Areas where trapping is allowed should be well marked so humans don't venture into an area.

Karen Capp

TESTIMONY HB 40 – Alyson Pytte

My name is Alyson Pytte, I'm a dog owner and daily user of public trails. I want to thank Representative Josephson for introducing House Bill 40, and the committee for creating this additional time for public comment. I also want to thank all the trappers who take it upon themselves, in the absence of any legal requirement, to locate their traps a safe distance from public trails.

Like many Alaskans, I often allow my dogs to run off leash. I expect that some of the members of this committee do as well. It is one of the many pleasures of living in Alaska. I have not personally experienced the horror of a dog caught in a trap, but it is of constant concern to me. Every time I read about a new incident in the paper I avoid the area where it occurred. But the truth is it can happen anywhere, anytime.

The Alaska Legislature recently passed a law empowering judges in divorce cases to take into account the best interests of pets in custody disputes in Alaska. That law, which had solid bipartisan support, was an acknowledgement of what we all know to be true: in modern life, pets are important members of the family, we love them dearly, and their happiness and well-being are important to us.

Public sentiment about trapping near trails has evolved in a similar direction. I believe there is now broad support among Alaskans for the types of reasonable restrictions set out in House Bill 40. If this bill were in the form of ballot initiative, I believe it would pass. If another year goes by without action by the legislature, perhaps a ballot initiative is what is needed. Year after year we read the terrible stories of pets injured and killed in traps, sometimes in front of children, and yet nothing is done. Now is the time.

There is a lot of anger and divisiveness in our country right now, and when an easy opportunity for compassionate action presents itself, we should take it.

House Bill 40 imposes minimal burdens on trappers, and in the end it will benefit trappers by providing clear guidance and discouraging the reckless placement of traps, which only leads to suffering and bad press. Because a conviction under the bill requires proof of criminal intent, there is no risk that a trapper will be punished for an honest mistake.

I do think there are small ways the bill could be improved. I would respectfully encourage the committee to make more explicit that the bill applies not just to the State Park system but also to public trails in State Game Refuges, general state lands, municipal lands, and federal parks and refuges in Alaska. A second consideration would be to require traps to be marked with a trapper's permit number or similar identifier so that illegal traps can be noted and removed without violating laws that prohibit tampering with legally set traps. Third, I would personally support increasing the distance from 200 feet to at least 500 feet – while at the same time recognizing that the 200 feet restriction is the product of a difficult political compromise.

Thank you again for considering my testimony, and for taking action on a public safety issue of importance to all Alaskans.