

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE Senator Josh Revak

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SB 22 - SPONSOR STATEMENT

"An Act repealing the termination date for the intensive management hunting license surcharge."

Hunting is a staple of Alaskan culture and essential to the lives of many Alaskans. It is of the utmost importance that the wildlife populations be carefully maintained throughout our state so that future generations can continue to provide food for their families and carry on this great Alaskan tradition. To fulfill this genuine need for conservation, wildlife populations must be monitored to prevent over-hunting and to promote vibrant, healthy, and sustainable wildlife populations.

In 1994, the legislature initiated an "Intensive Management Program" overseen by the Board of Game which uses careful observation and scientific analysis to manage Alaska's game populations. Since then, if a population drops below what is required to meet the needs of Alaskans and remain healthy, intensive management (IM) begins with an investigation into the causes of the low population numbers; whether there is a habitat concern, predator population shift, spread of disease, etc. From here, the Board of Game develops policies to meet the identified challenges and maintain sustainable wildlife populations across Alaska.

Originally funded with general budget appropriations, hunters supported a bill in 2016 which placed a surcharge (\$10 for residents and \$30 for nonresidents) on hunting licenses that lets the users directly fund the sustainability efforts of the IM program. Since its passage, an average of \$4 million has been raised every year by the surcharge and matched federal grants and the hunting community and industry continues to be in full support.

Currently, the IM surcharge has a sunset date which will repeal it and jeopardize the ability of the Board of Game to carry out effective intensive management projects. SB 22 seeks to permanently repeal that sunset date and allow the IM program to continue their sustainability efforts for the wildlife populations that are such an important food source for Alaskans. With the passage of SB 22, the IM program will not have to rely on the availability of more state appropriations or further federal funding as it did before 2016. Ultimately, careful stewardship of Alaska's wildlife resource is what will maintain Alaska's long-standing connection to hunting for generations to come and SB 22 directly supports that mission.