

House Bill 304 Sponsor Statement

“An Act modifying the boundary of Chugach State Park; directing the sale of land to the Eagle River Lions Club; and providing for an effective date.”

In 1964, the Eagle River Lions Club was granted a special land use permit by the Department of Nature Resources for lands within the future boundary of Chugach State Park. The original permit was for 20 years and has been renewed twice; the current permit expires January 2, 2024.

Lions Club Park is a very popular community park encompassing 40 acres, centrally located in Eagle River at the junction of Eagle River Road and Eagle River Loop Road. Since 1964 when this agreement was finalized, the Eagle River Lions Club has developed the park, building baseball fields, the clubhouse building, and other facilities. As the community has grown, Lions Park has become a recreational staple of the town. Many public events are held there, from sports like little league to community gatherings and holiday fireworks.

The Alaska Supreme Court’s 2013 decision in *SOP v. DNR* requires that permits for use of legislatively designated state parks must be revocable at will. This decision means that DNR cannot issue a new permit to the Eagle River Lions Club, since the facilities cannot be readily removed.

Both the Lions Club and the Department of Natural Resources believe that the Eagle River community will be better served by this park if the Eagle River Lions Club is allowed to operate the park under their direct ownership. This requires a modification of the Chugach State Park boundary and removes this land from it.

A memorandum of understanding between the Lions Club and the Department of Natural Resources outlining the terms has been signed by both parties. Four parcels of approximately 10,304 acres of general state land will replace the 40-acre parcel being conveyed to the Lions Club. There is no cost to the State, as the Lions Club will cover the fees to the department and any appraisal costs associated with all five parcels.

HB 304 ensures this treasured part of the Eagle River community will be around for years to come.

3/8/2022