

February 14, 2024

Senator Bjorkman
State Capitol Room 9
Juneau AK, 99801

RE: Support for SB171: An Act changing the residency requirements for hunting, trapping, and sport fishing privileges; and providing for an effective date.

Senator Bjorkman and members of the Senate Resource Committee,

The Tanana Chiefs Conference (TCC) writes in support of SB171. TCC is a tribal consortium made up of 42 members, including 39 villages and 37 federally recognized tribes. Our region covers an area of 235,000 square miles in Interior Alaska. Tanana Chiefs Conference provides a unified voice in advancing sovereign tribal governments through the promotion of physical and mental wellness, education, socioeconomic development, and culture of the Interior Alaska Native people.

Tanana Chiefs Conference and our member Tribes have been leading the fight to keep salmon in Alaska Rivers. We feel the loss of our food resource more acutely in our rural communities than many others. With the increased pressure on our limited fish and game resources, it is essential to ensure that those who enjoy the lower cost and increased bag limits associated with a resident license are, in fact, full-time residents of the State of Alaska. Allowing greater access to fish and game resources for year-round residents of Alaska who invest in their communities in all seasons will ensure that individuals and communities who depend most on the resource will have access.

Thank you for your work for Alaskans.

Sincerely,

TANANA CHIEFS CONFERENCE



Brian Ridley
Chief/Chairman



SCI Alaska Chapter
Eagle River, Alaska 99577
Cell (907) 903-8329 Tel: (907) 980-9018
www.aksafariclub.org

January 25, 2024

Alaska Legislature
State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99811-0001

Re: SCI-AK Support for Senate Bill 171 RESIDENCY REQ: HUNTING, TRAPPING, FISHING

Honorable members of the Senate Resources Committee,

The Safari Club International Alaska Chapter supports Senate Bill 171 RESIDENCY REQ: HUNTING, TRAPPING, FISHING.

Founded in 1971, Safari Club International is the country's leading hunter rights advocate and additionally promotes worldwide wildlife conservation. SCI's approximately 50,000 members and 200 Chapters represent all 50 of the United States as well as 106 other countries. The Safari Club International Alaska Chapter (SCI-AK) is a 501c4 conservation non-profit Corporation established in Alaska in 1977. We currently have over 1,150 members. Our mission statement is "First for Hunters - First for Wildlife."

The Permanent Fund Dividend (PFD) gets a lot of attention in the political sphere as well as the media; however Alaska's true wealth lies in its sustainably managed fish and wildlife resources. Residents of the state get to enjoy reduced license and permit fees and—more importantly—increased bag limits and access to resident-only hunting opportunities so that they can fill their freezers to get through the winter months.

This legislation amends Fish and Game residency determination statutes for licensing of sport fishing and hunting to match the qualifications to receive a PFD payment. SB 171 states that a person may only be absent during that 12-month period as allowed under the PFD allowable absence statutes (including college students, medical travel, caring for an ill family member, serving on active duty in the military, etc.) to qualify as a resident for licensing purposes. If a person is absent from the state for more than 180 days and does not qualify for an additional allowable absence, they would no longer be considered a resident for purposes of applying for a resident license. This bill does not prevent non-resident or guided hunters from purchasing permits. SCI AK supports increased opportunity for resident and subsistence hunters and fully supports this bill.

Thank you for your consideration.

John Sturgeon

SCI Alaska Chapter President

E-mail: president@aksafariclub.org, Cell: (907) 230-0072

Safari Club International Alaska Chapter
First for Hunters - First for Wildlife

Upper Tanana/Fortymile Fish & Game Advisory Committee

Interior Region Fish & Game Advisory Committees

Leif Wilson
Chairperson
PO Box 707
Tok, AK 99780
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Central	Middle Nenana River
Delta	Middle Yukon River
Eagle	Minto-Nenana
Fairbanks	Ruby
GASH	Stony Holitna
Koyukuk River	Tanana-Rampart-Manley
Lake Minchumina	Upper Tanana Fortymile
McGrath	Yukon Flats

February 9th, 2024

Alaska State Legislators,

The Upper Tanana/Fortymile Fish and Game Advisory Committee held a meeting on February 6, 2024 and unanimously voted to support HB 201 and SB 171. We urge you to support this legislation.

Our committee represents 6 Upper Tanana communities; Healy Lake, Dot Lake, Tanacross, Tok, Tetlin, and Northway.

We feel that the fish and game resources in our state are extremely valuable and should be protected, at least to the extent that the PFD is.

Competing with seasonal residents for the more and more limited resources, and then seeing them pack them off south with them is wrong. Having to live here at least 6 months of the year to qualify for the resident hunting and fishing privileges is, in our opinion, still a low bar to set.

They will still be able to hunt and fish, but would have to do so under the season and bag limits and at the cost of non-residents.

We are not sure that anybody can quantify exactly how many people are doing this. We believe, based on anecdotal information, that it is a significant number. The number of people that are taking advantage of the state of Alaska and its year-round residents right now is irrelevant, if even one person is doing it and it is legal to do so, then we believe the law should be changed.

Please move this legislation forward.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Leif Wilson, Chair
Upper Tanana 40-Mile Fish and Game Advisory Committee

Laura Achee

From: David Egelston [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, February 14, 2024 1:56 PM
To: Laura Achee
Subject: SB 171

Thank you for allowing me time to add my comments regarding SB 171. My name is David Egelston. I am a resident of Thorne Bay on Prince of Wales Island. I am a retired Colonel from the New York State Environmental Conservation Police and a former New York State Trooper. I spent over 30 years in law enforcement enforcing state and federal laws and regulations, mainly fish, wildlife and environmental statutes. I am a member of the East Prince of Wales Advisory Committee.

I have extensive experience enforcing laws as well as writing and/or critiquing them while in the legislative processes. I fully support SB 171 and am grateful to Senator Bjorkman and his staff for their work to get this bill in front of you.

You may have heard many reasons why this bill is important. Let me give you some specifics from Thorne Bay. A couple years ago a few of us went through the resident sporting license sales for communities on Prince of Wales Island. In our small second class city approximately 5% of the supposed residents who purchased that type of license were not legal residents. Most of them were in town for between two and four months each year at the most. Some of them would travel back and forth to their out of state homes during the summer. None of them owned a snow shovel in Alaska. Other communities had much higher rates of vacationers calling themselves residents.

They all had their real jobs and homes in the lower 48. A few had fishing lodges here in Alaska. One might think that this is not a big deal because it is way down in the southeast. You should know that some of these fake residents also go north regularly and hunt caribou, sheep, goats and brown bear. Their activities are not limited to the panhandle. Undoubtedly this situation is found statewide in other areas popular for fishing and hunting.

I have only lived in Alaska for twelve years, but it is my home until I don't need one anymore. I dealt with non-resident issues in my law enforcement career and thought I was done with it when I retired. I am dealing with it again because I have a strong belief that our resources are very important to all of us residents. I believe that our fish and wildlife should first feed us before we share them with outsiders. When we do allow non-residents to partake in the harvest of our resources they should be following our rules and respecting our ways. They should pay for the privilege as we pay as non-residents in other states.

This bill will not change the residency status of current Alaskans. They may retire and become snowbirds. As long as they maintain their requirements for the PFD, they remain residents. They may leave the state for 180 days and remain residents. They may leave for even longer periods if they meet the requirements found in AS 43.23.008. There will be no cost to the state.

There should be no grey area when it comes to residency. We may not be able to force people to act ethically, but we can charge those who unethically play the system.

Please move this bill on and give our Wildlife Troopers, prosecutors and the courts an easier and quicker way to prosecute those who cheat the system. Not only will we be protecting our resources,

but we will also be bringing in hundreds of thousands of dollars into the state ADF&G coffers. We can use it.

Thank you.

Colonel David Egelston (retired)
New York State Environmental Conservation Police

[REDACTED]
Thorne Bay, AK 99919
[REDACTED]

Thank you for the opportunity to tell my story.

I was originally born and raised in southern Utah. When I was about 15, a man who was friends with my father at the time asked if he could take me to Alaska for the summer. It was an opportunity of a lifetime for me. This man brought me to Alaska and had me help him build a house. He also took me fishing a few times that summer. I developed a relationship with this man and I also developed a love for Alaska. He brought me back to Alaska multiple Summers starting the summer of 2000.

This man makes his living putting on multi-day equestrian events. He holds multiple events every year. He always offered dinners at the end of every day at these events usually the last day of an event he will offer Alaskan halibut or salmon. He always made sure to let everybody know that this was fish that he caught himself.

This man has maintained an Alaska residency for well over 25 years now. Never once has he spent more than 3 months in the state of Alaska. He has all his vehicles registered in Alaska and almost none of them have ever even been in the state of Alaska. I no longer associate myself with this man for many reasons.

I'm not an avid fisherman. I didn't know what the regulations and rules were for fishing. I have now lived full time on Prince of Wales Island for over 4 years now. Over the last 4 years, I have learned a lot about fishing and hunting.

Several years ago it finally dawned on me what this man was doing. He was sport fishing as a resident and he was bringing kids like me and friends to Alaska every single summer to go fishing.

I wasn't big into eating fish so I never questioned where my fish was going. In hindsight, I never put a single fish that I caught over all of those years in my own freezer, it was always in his.

Looking back on it, this man has hauled a lot of fish down to the lower 48 and sold it for a profit.

This is my personal experience. I have been on both ends in regards to where this man caught his fish and where he sold it and I have seen it with my own eyes. From what I can tell, he is definitely not the exception to the rule.

It is clear as day to me now that people and corporations from all over the world are taking advantage of Alaska's weak regulations.

Alaska's resources are being plundered via loopholes.

I ask that you act on this bill and take steps towards closing some of these loopholes.

Sincerely Joseph M Johnson.

Hello,

My name is Kurt Whitehead. I started working in Alaska as a fly fishing guide for a remote lodge in Bristol Bay, June of 1995 shortly after graduating from the University of Wyoming.

I moved to Alaska full time in 2000 and later to Sitka in 2004 and finally to Klawock in 2008.

My wife, Trina Nation, and I own and operate Treasure Hunter Lodge which offers fully guided charter fishing trips and fully guided black bear hunts. We have operated off the dock in the Klawock harbor since 2007.

I am also the Secretary for the East Prince of Wales Advisory, the Klawock Advisory Committee and the Craig Advisory Committee.

Senate Bill 171 originally started in the East Prince of Wales Advisory Committee meeting on Dec. 13, 2018. The East PoW AC represents the communities of Kasaan, Whale Pass, Coffman Cove, Hollis and Thorne Bay.

I am the only full time hunting guide/outfitter that lives on PoW so I figured I better be involved.

At that December meeting, the roughly 15 members in attendance agreed that the number one issue on PoW was Seasonal Residents.

At the last SE AK Board of Fish cycle, the East PoW

AC submitted proposals to change the definition of the word "domicile" as well as a proposal to increase the requirements to purchase a resident hunting fishing, trapping license.

The BoF correctly ruled that both of these would take a statute change.

On Feb. 1 and 2, 2023, I flew to Juneau on my own dime and met with 24 different legislators and/or aides drumming up support for this issue and Senator Bjorkman has graciously sponsored SB171.

Along the way, I bought the public license data from ADFG of every hunting/fishing/trapping/commercial license so we could cross reference the Seasonal Residents in our communities that we thought were purchasing resident licenses just so they could increase their harvest, participate in personal use and/or subsistence fisheries and in general cheat the locals and state out of its fish, resources and money. With this file, we identified many of these "residents".

In Ketchikan, AK there are multiple "residents" using the same address for their Alaskan "domicile" but it is really a private mail box forwarding business in the Plaza Mall.

In Craig, AK one of them shipped 842lbs of frozen fish to his real home in the lower 48 at the end of a summer. He entertained a steady stream of friends in the process. He has been doing this for years and we see him on the water nearly every day in the summer.

In the Klawock harbor there is an individual that "lives" on his boat, has claimed residency for 25+ years and comes up for a few weeks every year with "friends" to catch as many fish as possible and return as little as possible back to the community. You have an in depth letter about him in your files. He is one of many.

Yesterday, I spoke with the Klawock City Administrator about Seasonal Residents and we discussed all the properties in town that have their utilities turned on only during the summer.

Many Seasonal Residents also hunt in AK and pay \$0 for their licenses and tags. The state is missing a windfall of money on license fees and big game locking tag fees as well as missing federal matching funds of 3 to 1 from both the Dingell-Johnson Sport Fish Restoration Act and the Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act. Both of these Federal Excise taxes give money to ADFG and is the largest contributor to the ADFG budget. For example, the \$100 annual Sportfishing non-resident license is matched with \$300 from the above mentioned Federal Excise tax so the total is \$400 towards ADFG's budget. PR/DJ funds are ADFG's main supplier of their budget.

Seasonal Residents are the main reason ADFG recently passed regulations prohibiting crabbing in front of the communities of Klawock and Whale Pass during the last BoF cycle and another area will be proposed in front of Thorne Bay at the future BoF cycle.

In Coffman Cove, 102 of the 197, that's 52% of the residents are Seasonal Residents!

Many of them return with a new batch of "friends" every week and whack and stack fish. Some of them even launch and haul their entire boat out of the water every single day so the rest of people on the dock can't see the fish. Who does that? Illegal guides certainly do it.

The definition of illegal guiding is being "compensated" for your services. This doesn't mean a monetary transaction has to take place, but this is often the case.

If the "friend" pays for more than 50% of the food, fuel, bait, etc. for a trip, it is illegal guiding.

If the "friend" leaves you a tent after the hunt, it is illegal guiding.

If the "friend" barter anything for a fishing/hunting trip, it is illegal guiding.

Many Seasonal Residents fall into this category either knowingly or unknowingly.

Many of them trade a fishing trip for a business dealing or straight up for cash.

Many of the Seasonal Residents also take advantage of the Permanent ID license once they reach 60 years of age so they are not paying the state a single nickel for their hunting/fishing/trapping license.

Seasonal Residents that purchase non-resident licenses are not the issue.

Non-resident clients legally hunting, trapping or fishing with guides are not the issue.

Passage of this bill will make the residency requirements easier to comprehend and enforce, decrease illegal guiding, increase funding to the state, leave more fish/game in the water and on the land for true year-round residents and in general, improve our lives, our communities and our state.

Prince of Wales and all of Alaska sincerely appreciates your help on this important issue.

Thank you very much!

Kurt Whitehead

Treasure Hunter Lodge LLC

[REDACTED]

Klawock, AK 99925

[REDACTED]