

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

RESOURCES COMMITTEE



SEN. CLICK BISHOP
Co-Chair
State Capitol, Room 504
Juneau, AK 99801-1182
(907) 465-2327

SEN. CATHY GIESSEL
Co-Chair
State Capitol, Room 427
Juneau, AK 99801-1182
(907) 465-4843

Sen. Bill Wielechowski, Vice-Chair
Sen. Matt Claman
Sen. Forrest Dunbar
Sen. Scott Kawasaki
Sen. James Kaufman

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 8

Nat'l Park Service; Hunting in Preserves

SPONSOR STATEMENT

Senate Joint Resolution 8 disapproves of the proposed rule by the National Park Service that would limit certain hunting practices and close all predator hunts in national preserves. This resolution is an unambiguous statement of policy that wildlife management should remain under state authority, as recognized by federal law, and ratified by the people of Alaska in the statehood compact. This resolution also is clear that proposed rule is contrary to the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) and the Alaska Statehood Act. SJR 8 urges the National Park Service to withdraw the proposed rule and affirms state management primacy recognized within the 2020 national preserves rule.

The proposed rule superficially is understood as closing certain “sport hunting” practices. The state of Alaska does not define any hunts as “sport hunts.” Even if the 2023 rule goes into effect the National Park Service will not actually ban any of the “sport hunting” practices (ie. bear baiting). They will only close those hunts to non-federally qualified hunters, even if those non-federally qualified users have cultural ties to those methods and means. Bear baiting, bear denning and taking swimming caribou will continue to be allowed on National Park Service lands for federally qualified users only. It is important to note that these discriminatory closures are not a response to population declines, even the Park Service admits the wildlife populations in question are being managed by the state sustainably.

The proposed rule reaches well beyond the closure of certain methods and means. The proposed rule incorporates a vast preemption of state wildlife management by closing ALL predator hunts to non-federally qualified users. This blanket preemption nullifies wildlife management writ-large and will cause a cascade of effects that will ultimately threaten food security in communities that rely wildlife National Preserves for subsistence. The proposed rule justifies closing predator hunts and keeping food animal hunts open against the backdrop of “natural diversity.”

All Alaskan hunting methods and means and seasons that are approved by the Alaska Board of Game require a robust public process with significant input from biologists, residents, and other stakeholders. The Board of Game must consider customary traditional harvests and hunting practices, crucial to continuing Alaska’s cultural heritage. This rule overreaches Alaska’s public process by discriminately closing customary and traditional Alaskan harvests. This rule has significant cultural implications but also limits the state’s ability to manage its wildlife populations, including the maintenance of healthy predator populations.

The state has successfully managed wildlife on both state and federal land in Alaska since the United States Department of the Interior transferred to the state management authority in 1959. The 2023 proposed rule by the National Park Service works counter to the Alaska statehood act and puts Alaska back in the role of a Territory.

Senate Joint Resolution 8 is a necessary step to safeguard the state’s constitutional mandate and its longstanding wildlife management responsibilities. The National Park Service should withdraw the proposed rule and work collaboratively with the state to find a solution that is based on sound science and recognizes the state’s authority to manage its wildlife populations.