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Alaska State Legislature

Committee Membership

Senate Finance
Senate Resources
Senate Rules
Legislative Budget & Audit



Senator John Torgerson

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SB 265: Designating the Moose as the Land Mammal Sponsor Statement

I was privileged to be contacted last fall by community members who were interested in designating a state land mammal. They had researched the matter and found that while a marine mammal had been designated, we had not officially designated a land mammal. Their intention was to involve the students of Kalifornsky Beach Elementary School with the project from its origin to its completion.

The students conducted research on the various mammals in Alaska, including discussion with a wildlife biologist. They have studied the impact each mammal has had on Alaska's culture and history. They met with members of Soldotna High School's government class, who acted as legislative committee members so the elementary students could practice their presentations.

In December, the students held a primary election, complete with campaign posters done as an art class project. The primary election resulted in a short list of four finalists - the moose, wolf, brown bear, and wolverine. On January 23, 1998, the general election was held and the winner was the moose.

The students will follow this bill, tracking it through the legislative process in both the Senate and the House. They will be involved in public opinion messages and letters of support for the bill. They will ask for the support of the local governments on the Kenai Peninsula.

I am confident of their ability to promote their selection of the moose as Alaska's land mammal, and encourage your support for this measure.

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

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September 3, 1997

The Honorable John Torgerson
Alaska State Legislature
145 Main St., Loop; Ste. 226
Kenai, AK 99611

RECEIVED

SEP 09 1997

Dear Senator Torgerson:

I am responding to your August 22 letter regarding the interest Kalifornsky Beach Elementary School students have in naming a state mammal. I agree this is a worthy and educational opportunity for the students.

Alaska currently does not have a state mammal, although the bowhead whale was adopted by the legislature as the state marine mammal in 1983. To my knowledge, there has not been a request to name a state land mammal. As Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, I would support naming any native mammal as Alaska's state mammal.

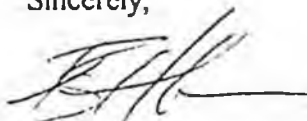
The department has literature that would be useful to the students in choosing a candidate for state mammal. The "Alaska Wildlife Notebook Series" includes a description and life history of most mammals native to Alaska. The entire series of more than thirty mammals, plus birds, fish, shellfish, and amphibians costs \$12.50 by mail. The students can find selected pages of the "Alaska Wildlife Notebook Series" on the Division of Wildlife Conservation web page at:

<http://www.state.ak.us/adfg/wildlife/wildmain.htm>.

Free brochures about many of Alaska's game mammals and a free booklet about endangered species in Alaska are also available. The students can receive any of this material and request more specific information by contacting Doreen Parker McNeill, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Wildlife Conservation, P.O. Box 25526, Juneau, AK 99802.

The exercise in proposing a state mammal is an excellent way to educate Alaska's youth about their wildlife resources, and I wish them every success in their endeavor.

Sincerely,



Frank Rue
Commissioner

Kids rally behind moose

The Associated Press

KENAI—Moose mania has hit the Kalifornsky Beach Elementary School in Soldotna, where students are pushing to have the big, hairy creatures named as the state's official land mammal.

The project was the brainchild of parent volunteer Shannon West. She noticed that the state had an official marine mammal, the bowhead whale, adopted in 1983. But it had no official land mammal.

If the state didn't have one, she wanted to know, could the

children suggest one? She discussed the matter last year with first-grade teacher Terri Carter, who encouraged her to pursue the matter.

They contacted Sen. John Torgerson, R-Kasilof, and he offered to help with the project. This fall, he visited the school and discussed the nomination with students. He intends to introduce a resolution this session to designate the moose as official land mammal.

Since the project got started, See MOOSE, Page A-7

Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, Monday, January 26, 1998

MOOSE

Continued from Page A-1
students have studied Alaska's wildlife biology to determine which animal should be honored, culminating with a vote Friday. The moose won handily with 230 votes, outdistancing the wolf (97 votes), brown bear (57) and wolverine (28).

During the second semester the students will follow the resolution through the legislative process to learn how government works. Students also will have an opportunity to testify, via teleconference, to legislative committees in Juneau.

"I wish every school could do something like this," Torgerson said. "Those kids will have learned so much by the time they are done."

The nomination may be controversial, as different regions of the state are expected to promote their own favorite animals. The students will have to do a good job presenting their case, he said.

The students have been marshaling facts all year.

To pick a nominee, they studied Alaska's native mammals in detail, considering their distribution throughout the state, use by humans and significance to history, culture and religion.

Biologist Ted Spraker from the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge visited the school to talk about the animals and answer student questions. Dan Halverson's government class from



Associated Press

MAMMAL VOTES—Students at Kalifornsky Beach Elementary School in Soldotna vote Friday to nominate the moose as the state's official land mammal. The school's mascot, the caribou at right, was eliminated in earlier "primary" voting.

Soldotna High School visited and acted the role of legislative committee members so the elementary students could practice their presentations.

In December, the students held a primary election. As an art project, they made campaign posters and plastered the school hallways.

The primary narrowed the field to the four finalists.

The wolf faction staged a veri-

table media blitz before the primary, Wolf said. Some adults were worried that the children would choose the controversial canine and face a bumpy ride in the legislature, she said.

Now that the final tally is in, the school will shift gears from biology to government.

Students will issue public opinion messages and letters to support the senator's resolution and round up support by seeking

additional resolutions from the Soldotna City Council and Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly. With community support and Torgerson's sponsorship, the bill to make the moose Alaska's official state mammal may pass this session.

The school hopes to end the project with a grand finale if all goes well — an invitation to Gov. Knowles to visit the school and sign the resolution.

Peninsula Pen

Newsletter of the Kenai Peninsula Borough School District

November/December, 1997



K-Beach Elementary Leads The Search



You may know that the state bird is the Ptarmigan. You might have even heard that the state fish is the King Salmon, or that the state motto is *North to Alaska*. It's pretty unlikely that you would know that the state fossil is the Woolly Mammoth or that the state insect is the Dragonfly. Alaska has official representation in all of these categories and more; everything except a state land mammal. That is soon to change. Kalifornsky Beach Elementary School is in the process of selecting a land mammal to represent Alaska.

K-Beach Elementary parent, Shannon Kay West, discovered the missing component last year. Teacher, Terri Carter, encouraged West to investigate the topic and thus project began. The result has been an exciting, motivating and meaningful learning opportunity for the students at K-Beach Elementary School. A rare chance to question, research, form and defend an opinion on a real life issue, and possibly have the result become state law.

Senator John Torgerson made a special visit to K-Beach to meet with interested teachers and class representatives to work out a strategy for necessary steps in the process. Essentially the process involved: 1. Selecting an indigenous land mammal native to the state of Alaska. 2. Senator Torgerson would then submit the selected land mammal to the Legislature in the form of a bill. 3. Staff and students would follow the process and testify before the legislative committee via teleconference as the bill is considered for law. 4. The bill finally would be Governor Knowles signing the bill into law in a celebration at K-Beach Elementary School.

Classes began by researching the many possible land mammal candidates. Top considerations included: distribution throughout the state, food resource, historical and cultural significance, recreational value, and religious significance.

Recognizing that the first and most important teachers that students have are their parents, K-Beach staff most definitely wanted to involve families in the school project. Family surveys, encouraging conversation on the most unique, most culturally important, and the family's favorite land mammal, were completed and returned to school to be tallied and displayed in the school's entryway.

Students held classroom elections in late November. Dan Haverson's Soldotna High government classes volunteered to role play committee members so that students could practice justifying their decision. It was a wonderful example of cross-age interaction and prepared the elementary students for what it might be like when they testify by teleconference this spring. Students in grades 1-6 were involved in presenting and answering the tough questions of *why or why not* each mammal should be the school's selection.

Primary elections were held on December 4 to select the three final choices; the brown bear, the wolf and the moose. There will be debates and campaigning before the general election on January 9. The final choice will then be passed on to Senator Torgerson. Students will follow the process, issuing public opinion messages and letters in support of their legislation. The students also plan to draft resolutions with the city council and the borough assembly.

"Ultimately students will learn the really big lessons. They will become much more aware of this place we call home and the wildlife that we share it with. They will get a first hand look at the structure of government and the role of the individual in it. Most importantly they will see the significance of their choice and personal contribution. In the process they will be one step closer to becoming informed, future citizens." stated Terri Carter.

While the rest of the world goes on neither knowing nor caring that the state gem is jade, and that the state mineral is gold. Hundreds of children and their community will, hopefully, very soon be aware of the state land mammal and the learning and collaboration that helped determined it.

K-Beach students boost moose

Moose promoted as state's official mammal

By SHANA LOSHERUGH
Peninsula Clarion

Moose are big, hairy and all over the place, but are they worthy to represent Alaska as the state's official land mammal?

Students at Kalifornsky Beach Elementary School in Soldotna think so. Now they need to convince the state Legislature. The youngsters have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to pick the official critter, to join the roster with other state symbols such as the official mineral (gold) and official fish (king salmon).

Students in kindergarten through sixth grade worked throughout the first semester to pick which animal to nominate, culminating with a vote Friday. The moose won handily with 230 votes, outdistancing the wolf (97 votes), brown bear (57) and wolverine (28), the other three finalists. Now, the students will track their nomination through the Legislature towards official designation.

During the first semester, they studied Alaska's wildlife biology for the project; during the second semester they will learn how government works. Students also will have an opportunity to testify, via teleconference, to legislative com-

mittees in Juneau.

The project was the brainchild of parent volunteer Shannon West. She noticed that the state had an official marine mammal, the bowhead whale, adopted in 1983. But it had no official land mammal.

If the state didn't have one, she wanted to know, could the children suggest one?

She discussed the matter last year with first-grade teacher Terri Carter, who encouraged her to pursue the matter.

They contacted Sen. John Torgerson, R-Kasilof, and he offered to help with the project. This fall, he visited the school and discussed the nomination with students. He intends to introduce a resolution this session to make the K-Beach nomination the official state symbol.

"I wish every school could do something like this," Torgerson said. "Those kids will have learned so much by the time they are done."

The nomination may be controversial, as different regions of the state will promote their own favorite animals. The students will have to do a good job presenting their case, he said.

The students have been marshaling facts all year.

To pick a nominee, they studied Alaska's native mammals in detail,

Beach will shift gears from biology to government.

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nity support and Torgerson's sponsorship, the bill to make the moose Alaska's official state mammal may pass this session.

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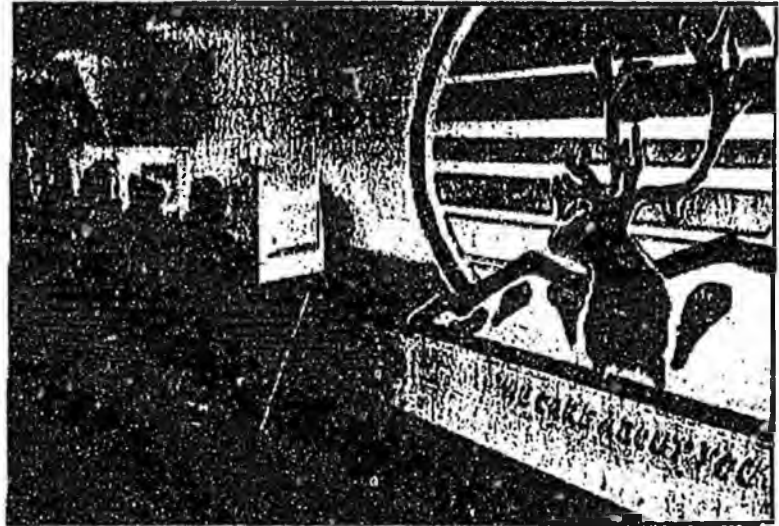


Photo by M. Scott Moon

Students from Irma Peterson's second grade class at Kalifornsky Beach Elementary vote for their candidate for the state's mammal. The school's mascot, the caribou, did not make the primary.

considering their distribution throughout the state, use by humans and significance to history, culture and religion.

The school involved families in the process, too. Teachers encouraged students to discuss the nomination and mammals at home. Students surveyed their parents, tallied the results and displayed them in the school foyer.

Biologist Ted Spraker from the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge visited the school to talk about the animals and answer student questions. Dan Halverson's govern-

ment class from Soldotna High School visited and acted the role of legislative committee members so the elementary students could practice their presentations.

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See MOOSE, back page

Sunday Jan 25.

...Moose

Continued from page A-1

dren would chose the controversial canine and face a bumpy ride in the legislature, she said.

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To Whom it may concern.

The following is a brief synopsis of the steps the students, teachers and parents have taken in their project to determine the official state mammal:

KALIFORNSKY BEACH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
STATE MAMMAL PROJECT

- LATE SPRING:
'87 First grade teacher Terri Carter and parent Shannon West discussed the possibility of proposing a mammal for the official state mammal as a class/school project.
- AUGUST: Shannon West contacted Senator Torgerson seeking sponsorship of a bill to name the official state mammal. He was excited about the project and decided to contact Fish and Game Commissioner Frank Rue to verify that the state did not have a state mammal.
- SEPTEMBER: Commissioner Rue responded supporting the mammal project. (See copy of letter attached.)
- OCTOBER 7: Senator Torgerson visited K-Beach Elementary and spoke to student representatives regarding the selection and legislative process.
- OCT./NOV.: Research
- NOVEMBER 26: Individual Classroom Vote
- DECEMBER 2: Classes testify before mock Natural Resource Committee consisting of a So-Hi government class.
- DECEMBER 3: Family Survey results tallied and posted.
- DECEMBER 4: Primary Election: Wolf - 102, Moose - 30, Brown Bear - 43, Wolverine - 43.
- DEC./JAN.: Research, discussion, debates
- JAN. 5 - 9: Ted Spreker of ADF&G gives each class a presentation on the final 4 mammals.
- JANUARY 23: General Election: Moose - 230, Wolf - 97, Brown Bear - 57, Wolverine - 28. Senator Torgerson contacted with the student's choice. Bill to be given number thursday Jan. 29.
- LATE JANUARY: Borough Assembly and City Council contacted. Resolutions requested in support of SB 265.
- FUTURE: Track Legislation. Students prepare to testify before local and state governmental bodies.

