

Confirmation

Leo Keller,

Brd. of

Game

Honorable Governor Tony Knowles
State of Alaska, Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 110001
Juneau, AK 99811-0001

Dear Governor Knowles.

I would like to volunteer to serve on the Board of Game. I am 50 years old and have lived in Alaska since April of 1981, in the community of Cordova from 1981 to 1986 and now in Anchorage. I offer the following summary of my involvement with wildlife harvesting and management for your consideration.

I have hunted in Alaska almost every year since I could walk and accompany my father. As a teenager in Arizona, I trapped coyote, bobcat and fox to supplement our family's income. I have been successful hunting with archery equipment as well as a gun. I always depended on game meat for sustenance and have taken moose, sheep, caribou, deer and black bear here in Alaska. My hunt last season was for caribou near Dillingham, but I have hunted in Southeast Alaska, the Interior, the Arctic, the Alaska Peninsula and Central Alaska. In addition to my personal hunting, I assisted my brother and another close friend in the taking of a brown bear and I am constantly helping friends determine where to hunt and how to prepare for hunting in various regions of Alaska.

My formal education includes a Bachelor of Science degree in forest land management from Northern Arizona University. This curriculum taught me the interrelationships of vegetation management and manipulation as it affects wildlife and other resources. An informal education (self-taught) in wildlife photography has provided me an in depth understanding of how wildlife depend on and use their habitat.

My current job is a Real Estate Specialist for the Chugach National Forest. My primary duties are to monitor land conveyances to the state and Natives to ensure easements are retained to provide public access to public lands. I have also been the coordinator for the Chugach National Forest Rural Community Assistance program providing grants to assist in use of natural resources to develop or support businesses in rural communities.

Following the Owsichek decision, which eliminated the exclusive guide system in Alaska, I represented the US Forest Service to the Outfitter Guide Board and Commercial Services Board while they were developing a new system under which guides could operate. Along with other federal representatives, I provided information on how state regulations could be coordinated with federal management. This process resulted in the current system enabling guides to be registered in a maximum of 3 guide use areas at any one time.

Earlier in my career as a Forester, I designed habitat manipulation projects to increase forage for deer and elk. I have also assisted biologists in population surveys and capacity analysis for wildlife. As a Forester in charge of recreation management, I know how important sound wildlife management is to the public, for both consumptive and non-consumptive users.

As wildlife photographers, my wife and I have had the opportunity to see and photograph events rarely observed. These events include interactions of predator and prey that have given me a good understanding of how each depends upon the other. Some of these have been used by biologists to convey their message of what is required for sound wildlife management. However, the income we have received from photography has primarily come from selling prints to tourists, and now screen savers to corporate clients.

In 1985, I served on the Cordova Fish and Game Advisory Committee. My most recent involvement in management of wildlife in Alaska has centered on efforts to raise recognition of unique and valuable wildlife resources. My wife and I were leaders in the process to establish the McNeil River Refuge, closing the Refuge to brown bear hunting. We are currently involved in efforts to protect the Toklat wolves when they leave Denali National Park. I have assisted the Department of Fish and Game by serving on the Stakeholders Group to revise the management and permit system for the McNeil River brown bear viewing program. I have submitted proposals to the Board of Game for the management of the McNeil River program and for the protection of the Toklat wolves.

I serve as Chairman of the Board of Friends of McNeil River. I also serve as a member of the Board of Directors of the Alaska Chapter, American Society of Media Photographers. In addition, I am also a member of the North American Nature Photography Association, the premier organization for professional wildlife photographers worldwide, where I serve as the Chairman of the Advocacy Committee, which deals with issues impacting photographers, both regionally and nationally.

It would be an honor to serve you, the Legislature and the people of Alaska by becoming a member of the Board of Game.

Sincerely,



LEO KEELER
P.O. Box 190647
Anchorage, AK 99519

Work Phone - 271-2547

WHY ARE WE KILLING ALASKA'S WOLVES?

Please Join The Alaska Wildlife Alliance...

Thursday, March 2nd * 6:30-8:30 pm

Egan Center, Downtown Anchorage

RALLY: Opposing Wolf Control (Begins promptly at 6:30 p.m.)

PANEL DISCUSSION:

Moderator and Wolf Biologist, Dr. Paul Joslin

25-year Moose Biologist, Dr. Vic Van Ballenberghe

Tourism Representative, Sarah Leonard

Alaska Board of Game Member, Leo Keeler

The Next Generation, 8-year old James Holleman

The Law and the People, Attorney Mike Grisham

SLIDE SHOW

by professional wildlife photographers Dorothy and Leo Keeler

WE NEED YOUR HELP TO STOP BAD WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT. WILDLIFE IS FOR ALL ALASKANS!

Alaska's Board of Game wants wolf control now! Show up and say no!!

For more information, call 277-0897

The Alaska Wildlife Alliance

P.O. Box 202022

Anchorage, AK 99520

(907) 277-0897

(907) 277-7423

mailto:awa@alaska.net <mailto:awa@alaska.net>

http://www.akwildlife.org/ <http://www.akwildlife.org/>

www.awimages.com

****TOKLAT WOLF SPECIAL TUESDAY, NOV. 2nd ON CBS NEWS ****
from the web site

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****TOKLAT WOLF SPECIAL TUESDAY, NOV. 2nd ON CBS NEWS ****

On Tuesday, November 2nd, CBS Evening News with Dan Rather featured the Toklat Wolves of Denali National Park, Alaska in a special segment of "Eye on America." Stay tuned... we expect them to do a followup story during the March Board of Game meeting.

The Toklat wolves are the most famous, most viewed, most photographed, first and longest studied group of wild wolves in the world.

Trapping season began November 1st, and it is our hope that people from all over the world will join us in seeking full legal protection for this special family of wolves.

(Please read the following six paragraphs, then go to our partner's site ([The Alaska Wildlife Alliance](#)) to send a free electronic postcard to voice your support for protecting the Wolves of Denali National Park. You can also help the Toklat wolves by purchasing a "[Wolves of Denali](#)" screensaver. You'll have a daily reminder of how special these wolves are, PLUS, 50% of the profits of the sale will go to The Alaska Wildlife Alliance. The proceeds will fund programs that protect the future of these very special wolves.

Thank you again for caring! My husband and I are professional wildlife photographers who are working with The Alaska Wildlife Alliance to try and save 10 of the rarest creatures on earth... the Toklat pack of wolves in Denali National Park, Alaska. This group of 10 wolves (only 2 adults, 4 yearlings, and 4 puppies from this year) is like no other. Like the McNeil River bears, they are totally habituated to humans and regularly walk next to bus loads of tourists, hikers, and photographers. They are currently being hunted and trapped as they follow their primary food source... a caribou herd that winters just outside of Denali National Park.

We are involved because we seem to have "wolf karma", and over the last ten years, have taken one of the largest collections of photographs of these wolves on earth. We have photos of pack members trotting next to buses and hikers, adorable photos of 6 week old puppies, several sequences involving two different bears and a wolf feeding on the same carcass, one sequence of the alpha male jumping over a carcass and dunking another wolf in a river, and the most amazing thing of all... this June, not once, not twice, but on 3 different days, we had a wild wolf walk within 5 feet of us **AS WE SAT ON THE SIDE OF THE ROAD**. Imagine a wild wolf approaching you at **EYE LEVEL**.

We have tried the standard route of testifying before the Alaska Board of Game to give

the pack protection throughout its entire range, but were denied for political reasons. Alaska is a state where reason does not always prevail. A former governor was quoted on national T.V. as saying "You can't let nature run wild", and we have a current legislature lead by predator control supporters.

We hope to put pressure on our stalemated Alaskan political officials, and have the interested land managers work together to protect these wolves within their entire home range. The officials currently insist on managing the Denali wolf population as a whole, and ignore the international value of the watchable wildlife traits that are being passed on in this specific pack of wolves.

We urge you to contact Steve Martin, the Superintendent of Denali National Park and Governor Tony Knowles in support of protecting these wolves within their entire range (go to our partner's site (The Alaska Wildlife Alliance) to send a free electronic postcard to voice your support for protecting the Wolves of Denali National Park.). Please pass this information on to anyone you feel would be in a position to help us. And consider helping by giving this issue as much exposure as you have available. Trapping season began November 1st. The lives of 10 very special creatures depend on your help...

Our only enemy is apathy. We hope what you have seen and learned will convince you of your value in helping in this effort. Please don't turn away... We promise you...you will wake up in the morning feeling proud of what your involvement did for 10 of the rarest and most fascinating creatures on the planet.

REMEMBER.....YOU CAN HELP THE TOKLAT WOLVES IN THREE WAYS:

1) Please send a free electronic postcard to Governor Tony Knowles in support of the full protection of the Toklat wolves. Go to the web site of our partner, The Alaska Wildlife Alliance (<http://www.akwildlife.org/campaigns/toklat/epostcard.htm>), complete the short form and hit "send". It's quick and easy!

2) You can also help the Toklat wolves by purchasing a "Wolves of Denali" screensaver. Please go to: <http://www.awimages.com/DenaliWolfPreview.htm> to order a downloadable copy. You can enjoy your new screensaver immediately and have a daily reminder of how special these wolves are. PLUS, 50% of the profits of the sale will go to The Alaska Wildlife Alliance Toklat Wolf Fund, so you'll have the satisfaction of knowing you truly helped! The Toklat Wolf Fund has been set aside to fund programs that protect the future of these very special wolves.

3) Help us spread the word! It's fun and easy by sending a Free electronic postcard from our web site. Go to: <http://www.awimages.com/p5-index.html> and choose from several scenic or wildlife photos, fill in your message, address and send. You are welcome to send as many as you'd like, as often as you'd like!

Leo and I can't thank you enough for taking time to read this and helping at whatever level you feel comfortable. On behalf of the Toklat wolves, Bless your heart!

Most Sincerely,

Dorothy and Leo Keeler

To receive a copy of this article, send us an E-mail and request "send me CBS info".

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* Letters from Leo Keeler *

Anchorage Daily News

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Thursday, February 10, 2000 Page: B9 Section: Metro Edition: Final LETTERS TO PEOPLE

Time to weigh in on McGrath

McGrath moose dropped from 1,900 to 1,400 (26 percent decline), wolves from 164 to 56 (66 percent decline) and reports say nearby habitat will not support more moose. Have hunters "decreased?" No, they gather at McGrath to strategize.

Will the public support wolf control if someone just claims hardships? Are decision-makers asking basic questions like: Was 1,900 a natural peak? If wolf numbers naturally dropped 66 percent and moose dropped only 26 percent, are wolves really a problem? Nearby habitat cannot support more moose; what is different here? If hunters from outside the community take 50 percent of the moose, should only locals hunt here? Is this sound science?

Fish and Game got the Board of Game to pass wolf control to prevent moose decline in Unit 13. Their draft plan wants a change from 0.8 cows per mile to 1.0 per mile -- 20 percent increase, through aerial wolf harvest. Will support at McGrath lead to supporting this plan?

More than 20,000 people per year see the Toklat wolves of Denali. Will the board protect them from hunting and trapping? Will the McNeil River of wolves be lost to a saturation snare set?

Will the board decide each issue on its own merits? Is a wildlife board needed? Comments sent to the board by Feb. 18 will make a difference. Address: BOG Comments; Boards Support Section, P.O. Box 25526, Juneau, AK 99802-5526; Fax 907-465-6094.

-- Leo Keeler

Anchorage Daily News

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Tuesday, April 06, 1999 Page: B5 Section: Metro Edition: Final LETTERS TO PEOPLE

Wildlife not just for hunters

In his March 29 Compass article, Alaska Outdoor Council President Rod Arno asks the public to give up their last voice in wildlife management -- the ballot initiative. Mr. Arno says the Board of Game will listen and act for all Alaskans.

At the November 1993 Game Board meeting a board member said, "If you don't hunt, we don't want to hear from you."

Nicole Whittington-Evans could not get confirmed to the board. She worked for an environmental organization.

Vic Van Ballenberghe, an expert moose biologist with years of field experience in Unit 13, would not commit himself to wolf control at any cost. He was not confirmed.

Any candidate that is not actively pro-hunting is blocked from confirmation by legislators that made recent confirmation hearings sound like the Spanish Inquisition.

The current board members appear more open to listening to the public, but are their decisions any different -- voting for same-day-airborne bear hunting?

Recent legislation requires the board to make a determination of best use of wildlife. I heard the board declare human consumption as highest use, just because lots of hunters use the area. Have any units been dedicated to other uses? Why not?

As a hunter, I say we must keep the ballot initiative process as it is. We also need to develop a "Wildlife Board" as a precursor to the Board of Game. Then wildlife management, not just hunting decisions, will be made for the benefit of all Alaskans, not just the 15 percent who hunt.

-- Leo Keeler

Anchorage Daily News

Saturday, May 09, 1998 Page: D10 Section: Metro Edition: Final LETTERS TO PEOPLE

Wildlife board needed

The first Alaska Legislature realized that the management of fish and game was extremely important to all Alaskans and the general public should have control of how it is used. The Board of Fish and Game was established to enable the public to have that control.

The grueling confirmation process for Dr. Vic Van Ballenberghe and Nicole Whittington-Evans showed that today's legislators do not want the public fully represented in wildlife management. The Legislature's attempted reversal of the requirement to bring boned meat out to prevent waste highlights the Legislature's lack of concern for local requests and use of local knowledge. The loss of past board chairman Larry Holmes, because he encouraged full public participation in the board process, demonstrates the Legislature's desire to serve only hunters.

Legislation is developing to assure an elite few control use of Alaska's wildlife. Senate Bill 262 bars the board from regulating hunting equipment or hunting from roadways, moving cars, helicopters or other motorized vehicles. House Bill 414 always puts hunting over nonconsumptive uses. House Bill 168 prevents restricting ATV use regardless if requested by a local community or the use is destroying land. Senate Bill 250 requires unrealistic harvest levels. Should highly mobile and highly mechanized hunters be able to control the Legislature, do anything, go anywhere?

The wolf initiative showed that the public can remain involved and in control. With the Legislature ignoring the general public, maybe we need a wildlife board, with elected members who have more power in wildlife matters than the Legislature.

Write your representative.

-- Leo Keeler

Anchorage Daily News

Sunday, May 18, 1997 Page: E3 Section: Forum Edition: Final LETTERS TO PEOPLE

Board must represent public

As a hunter, I was amazed when Sen. Bert Sharp's April 27 letter dictated a position for wildlife management. He doesn't even pretend to listen to the public. The 58 percent vote on the wolf issue was a cry for fair process. Who heard it? As with the tobacco tax and billboards, the public's complaints on wildlife issues are discounted because hunters are "paying the entire cost of game management." Oil dollars run Alaska, not oil companies.

"Teaming with Wildlife" is a national program to have wildlife viewers contribute financially. Why hasn't the Legislature and Alaska's hunting groups supported "Teaming"? Will the \$14.8 million it will generate for Alaska take away the hunters' control of Alaska's wildlife managers? What decisions will prevail when "Teaming" funds surpass "hunters'" funds?

Sen. Sharp said that all have "unfettered opportunities to make their case before the board," even though past boards have stated that "if you don't hunt, I don't want to hear from you." Now that it appears the Board of Game may begin fulfilling its role as an autonomous group, efforts are being made to have only hunters on the board -- SB 22. If political pressure continues to make the board a puppet for hunters or for the Department of Fish and Game, why continue the charade? The Board of Game must separate itself from all interests, even Fish and Game, and represent only the public, or the process will fail and the public will vote to rebuild it another way. -- -- Leo Keeler

Anchorage Daily News

Tuesday, March 11, 1997 Page: B6 Section: Metro Edition: Final LETTERS TO PEOPLE

Wildlife belongs to everyone

As a hunter, can I say I own Alaska's wildlife? The Alaska Constitution reserves wildlife for all residents, not only the 15 percent who hunt. It requires wildlife to be available for maximum use and benefit of all people. Sen. Taylor has proposed a law requiring Game Board members to hold hunting licenses. Will that ensure wildlife resources are used to benefit all people and interests, or give hunters ownership of Alaska's wildlife?

Hunting takes a public resource for private use. Do license fees for that privilege go to a public fund, similar to oil revenues or timber harvest? No. Alaska Statute 16.05.130 limits use of hunting fees and taxes to programs that only benefit hunters. What would Alaska look like if oil companies demanded the same consideration? Extremist legislators even cut wildlife education programs, thus limiting kids' ability to learn enough about wildlife to make informed decisions.

Alaska representatives are leading a growing nationwide drive to establish a Pitman Robertson-type tax on items used for wildlife watching and outdoor recreation. Extremist groups like Alaska Outdoor Council are fighting to prevent the "Teaming With Wildlife initiative" from becoming law. They claim there are problems with it. Rather than work to solve the problems and benefit wildlife, they would rather kill it. Alaska could get \$14.5 million for wildlife management from "teaming." Extremists are aware those funds would take away their control of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

Shouldn't we be doing all we can to manage wildlife for everyone?

-- Leo Keeler

Anchorage Daily News

Friday, October 25, 1996 Page: B11 Section: Metro Edition: Final Bottom of Form 1 LETTERS TO PEOPLE

VOTE TO RESTORE TRUST

Alaska Outdoor Council is against the wolf initiative because it erodes existing public process. A process overly influenced by radical hunting lobbyists. That was demonstrated in the McNeil Refuge controversy, where 300 letters requested to stop bear hunting and only four wanted it to continue. In the face of such overwhelming odds, the board's vote was just 4-3 to close the hunt. Were the last-minute politics of Ruggles and Van Ballenberghe board appointments part of AOC's public process?

AOC says the initiative "promotes crisis management of wildlife." Initiative supporters say Fish and Game can control wolf populations when the commissioner says it is needed and land-and-shoot should not be an everyday practice.

AOC says current federal laws prohibit aerial shooting and wildlife harassment, and the initiative invites costly legal actions. Enforcement officers say they cannot enforce existing laws. Loopholes caused by state-approved practices make it difficult to enforce those laws. Existing laws also invite legal actions, what's so different?

Doug Pope, past Game Board member and initiative proponent, points out that the federal subsistence conflicts and the difficulties opening ANWR relate to lack of trust in Alaska's public process. The U.S. Congress set standards for subsistence management that Alaska has yet to fulfill. They control opening ANWR. Voting to stop land-and-shoot practices, except by Fish and Game or of legally trapped animals, will help restore confidence in Alaska's public involvement and our ability to manage resources responsibly.

-- Leo Keeler Anchorage.

Anchorage Daily News

Friday, April 19, 1996 Page: B9 Section: Metro Edition: Final LETTERS TO PEOPLE

Outdoor council not for Alaska

Alaska Outdoor Council is acting like the Freeman of Alaska. Their budget cut of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game now in legislation is just one example.

House Bill 77 (pushed by AOC to amend the Intensive Game Management Act) is on Gov. Knowles' desk for signing or vetoing. Fish and Game says HB 77 will devastate game management, both in total resource management and public support of hunting. To fulfill HB 77 mandates, caribou cows and calves will be shot, predators (including bears) will be maintained at low levels regardless of cost, scientific standards will be ignored and sustained yield will be defined by human desires, not natural abundance. Extremist leaders of AOC say because hunting fees support ADF&G that only hunting should be funded. Hunter surveys show average hunters are willing to have 20 percent of hunting fees go to support nonhunting activities. Currently, nonhunting programs are only 5 percent of the wildlife budget.

During legislative hearings on board appointments, AOC asked members to protest Vic Van Ballenberghe and Ann Ruggles. A Kenai member did, without checking, then apologized to Van Ballenberghe. How many others are blindly following this freeman band?

People and businesses are dropping AOC membership and support. As a hunter, I think that is the best thing they can do for Alaska and sound game management. Everyone will benefit if they and others write their legislators, Gov. Tony Knowles, or simply call your Legislative Information Office and leave a 50-word public opinion message supporting Knowles' board nominees and denouncing AOC's legislation.

-- Leo Keeler Anchorage

Anchorage Daily News

Thursday, August 03, 1995 Page: B8 Section: Metro Edition: Final LETTERS TO PEOPLE

Go hunt bears somewhere else

James Marchini wrote that the recent flood of hunting applications for the area including McNeil River State Game Refuge convinced him to apply next time, in revenge. Others are seeking ways to guarantee three bears are killed each year.

These people look at the McNeil River viewing program and just see a lot of bears. Would they look at the Mona Lisa and just see another painting? Would they care if they destroyed either one?

Many ethical hunters, like permit winner Bruce Baker, applied for the hunt to protect McNeil bears. A past Game Board member applied to protect McNeil bears. They all stood up for ethical hunters everywhere and said this hunt should be stopped. Like Safari Club or Ducks Unlimited, they were willing to act to end unethical hunts.

Some say the hunt is for different bears. They use data from the 1960-1970s tagging program, when most bears were harvested from the Katmai area, now a park. They do not acknowledge the shift in hunting pressure. They ignore recent Fish and Game biologists' reports of McNeil-like tolerance of bears in the hunting area. One bear calmly walked within 15 feet of the biologists.

You can vote to allow four hunters to hunt human-tolerant bears, or vote to close the area to hunting and have these four would-be hunters join the other 8,000 ethical bear hunters elsewhere in the state. Write to the Board of Game, P.O. Box 25526, Juneau, 99802-5526.

-- Leo Keeler

Anchorage Daily News

Tuesday, May 23, 1995 Page: B7 Section: Metro Edition: Final LETTERS TO PEOPLE

Hunting McNeil bears unethical

Dick Bishop, of Alaska Outdoor Council, stated that hunting of McNeil River bears is a question of values. Friends of McNeil River questions the hunting of these specific bears, not the hunting of bears in other areas or even hunting moose or caribou in the McNeil River Brown Bear Refuge. The value of McNeil bears and personal values or ethics of hunting these human-tolerant bears are the only issues.

To Friends, the bears that visit McNeil River Sanctuary are more valuable for viewing than for hunting. These bears are so tolerant of humans that they feed or even nurse their cubs within 50 feet, or closer, to humans, which makes hunting them unethical. We are asking those who agree with us to apply for permits

to hunt and, if drawn, to stay home. Permits can be picked up any place hunting/fishing licenses are sold; apply for hunt numbers 341 and 351.

Past efforts of Friends and the hundreds of letters from the public did not convince the Board of Game as to how strongly the public desires that these bears not be hunted. Instead, the board fulfilled the desires of AOC and the few hunters who do feel hunting these bears is ethical or true fair chase. I wonder if anyone who hunts the refuge will proudly tell his friends where he killed the bear. Especially, if his friends know that the McNeil River bears will let people walk right up to them.

Leo Keeler

Anchorage Daily News

Monday, September 27, 1993 Page: B8 Section: Metro Edition: Final LETTERS TO PEOPLE

Hunts at McNeil not 'fair chase'

Rod Arno's Sept. 2 letter complained about my efforts to close the McNeil River Refuge to brown bear hunting. Mr. Arno signed the letter as president of the Alaska Outdoor Council. I wonder if the ethical standards of AOC, and affiliated clubs, support hunting the McNeil River bears.

How can it be "fair chase" to hunt bears that have been taught for decades that people will not harm them? Hunting the McNeil River bears is not "fair chase," no matter where they are encountered. McNeil bears don't know the boundaries of the sanctuary that protects them. Traveling three miles north to the McNeil River Brown Bear Refuge is easy for a bear. The Paint River fish ladder will draw more bears into the refuge where they will be hunted. Hunters will shoot at, injure or otherwise harm more bears than shown on harvest reports.

On Nov. 5, the Board of Game will address hunting in the McNeil River Refuge. Will they change their last decision allowing hunters to kill three McNeil bears? Will they ban brown bear hunting in the refuge and decrease the statewide harvest from 1,200 to 1,197, a 0.0025 percent reduction? Aren't the McNeil bears worth this small reduction?

As a hunter, I feel the value of the McNeil River viewing program is worth much more than the killing of three bears. If you feel the McNeil River Brown Bear Refuge should be closed to hunting, write to the Board of Game in Juneau.

Leo Keeler

Anchorage Daily News

Tuesday, August 17, 1993 Page: E8 Section: Metro Edition: Final LETTERS TO PEOPLE

McNeil bears aren't fair game

Do Alaskans consider hunting the McNeil River brown bears ethical hunting? The president of Alaska Outdoor Council said in his letter to the editor of July 22 that "hunters will share the McNeil River State Refuge lands with wildlife viewers." I hope he does not think Alaskans want to watch bears accustomed to people walking up to shoot pictures of them be shot with rifles instead.

Some try to say that when the bears leave McNeil Falls they are again afraid of people. However, biologists have seen and recognized these individual bears in other areas and found the bears still demonstrate their

habituated nature. I have hunted brown bears for many years and will continue to do so as long as I am sure it is a "fair chase" type of hunt. Hunting the McNeil River is not very sporting or "fair chase."

Everyone is worried about what Bruce Babbitt's impression of Alaska and Alaskans will be and how his visit may influence future decisions. I hope that Babbitt and the Game Board see that not all hunters want things made easy for them, that Alaskans recognize and protect world-class resources such as the bear viewing at McNeil River and that we will make wise decisions that protect our unique resources.

Let Babbitt know your opinion and write the Board of Game, Box 25526, Juneau 99802, asking them to close the McNeil River Brown Bear Refuge to bear hunting.

Leo Keeler

Anchorage Daily News

Wednesday, July 14, 1993 Page: B7 Section: Metro Edition: Final LETTERS TO PEOPLE
Consider all uses of wildlife

The Alaska Outdoor Council is urging Fish and Game to forgo management practices that lead to habituation of brown bears.

Coincidentally, the president of AOC runs a bear-hunting guide business on lands surrounding the McNeil River Brown Bear Sanctuary. AOC is beginning to lobby the Board of Game before they address closing the McNeil River Brown Bear Refuge to bear hunting in November.

Does AOC represent all outdoor interests as they say? Will ADF&G and the Board of Game recognize AOC's single-minded objective to fight any restriction on hunting and fishing, and not support other uses of state resources? If enough of the public voice their desires, maybe the Alaska Board of Game will consider nonconsumptive uses of wildlife.

During last year's controversy over McNeil River, Alaska residents and bear biologists identified the public enjoyment, economic value, scientific and educational usefulness of bear viewing. The new book "River of Bears" describes the history of development and value of bear viewing at McNeil River. A statement in the book "The only thing in life humans really need to worry about is ignorance and prejudice" appears to describe the major problem related to bear viewing and AOC's position.

Some will assume I am an animal rights activist without bothering to learn I hunt each year and guided my brother on a successful brown bear hunt last year. Others will be more open-minded and voice their views to the Board of Game before its November meeting.

Leo Keeler

Anchorage Daily News

Sunday, August 18, 1991 Page: E4 Section: Forum Edition: Final LETTERS TO PEOPLE
Save McNeil River sanctuary

The Army Corps of Engineers completed an analysis of the Paint River fish ladder in 1988. It stated the bears at McNeil River would be impacted, but did not say how. It did not address how the habits of the bears, or the viewing opportunities at McNeil River would change. Impact to McNeil River's designation as

a National Landmark was not evaluated. Also, managing the small fish return of McNeil River mixed with the 1,500,000 fish return for Paint River was not discussed.

A lawsuit questioning these and other issues was filed against the Corps. That prompted fishing interests to lobby for and obtain legislation addressing McNeil River Sanctuary. The new legislation allows bear hunting, uncontrolled land use and offers little protection for the bears. The fishermen were responsible for a ransom clause in the legislation. The legislation does not become effective until fish use the ladder. This new attempt to get the suit dropped failed. The lawsuit is still pending.

Recently, the Army Corps of Engineers announced its intention to address the issue of the McNeil River bears again. Still hoping to get the lawsuit dropped?

They ask interested people to comment to the Corps of Engineers, Alaska District, Regulatory Branch, P.O. Box 898, Anchorage 99506-0098, referencing project SPN 91-4, by Aug. 31. If enough people comment, the Corps will understand the value of McNeil River and do a thorough analysis. They should ensure that this world-renowned placed not be ruined forever.

Leo Keeler

Board of Directors

Chairman of the Board: Leo Keeler



I have participated with Friends of McNeil River since the first formalized meeting at Tony Dawson's home in 1990. I currently work as a land law specialist for the Chugach National Forest. My background includes a BS degree in Forest Land Management and professional experience developing unique recreation opportunities on public lands within the National Forests where I have been employed.

I first visited McNeil River in 1986 and recognized it as the site of the most significant human-wildlife interaction that occurs in the United States. I also recognized its significance as proof to the world that humans and wild, potentially dangerous animals, can co-exist.

In 1990, the Paint River fish ladder brought to light the likelihood that this interaction was at risk due to development or politically driven management objectives. Along with the other members of Friends of McNeil River (FOMR), I felt the only way to insure that McNeil was not changed on a whim, was to have legal statutes or regulations passed. Since 1990, I have worked with FOMR members toward that end-- the establishment of the McNeil River Refuge. Because the legislation that established the refuge left it open to hunting, my wife Dorothy and I led a campaign to close the area to bear hunting. The efforts of that campaign drew national attention and were aired twice on CBS News "Eye On America". It also was shown throughout Europe and featured in Europe's version of National Geographic.

I feel that it is now time to gain a better understanding of the needs of the bears and their interactions with humans and to share that information. I hope that FOMR can be a major influence in that effort. Through sharing lessons learned at McNeil, bear management can be better coordinated with human activity.

First Vice President: Tony Dawson



Photographer, writer and bush pilot, Tony Dawson is a 20-year resident of Alaska. Born in Washington state, he earned Zoology and Veterinary Medicine degrees at Washington State University, practiced in Idaho for two years, then moved to Alaska in 1975. For three years, he flew in Alaskan "bush" communities attending pets and sled dogs, and served two stints as Chief Veterinarian for the Iditarod Sled Dog Race.

Tony began photographing nature as a college hobby, and soon published his work in national magazines. Eventually, photography and writing became a profession. A past Field Editor at *Alaska Magazine*, and now a full-time freelancer, his publication list includes *Life*, *Newsweek*, *Time*, *Audubon*, *Outside*, *Wilderness*, *Sierra*, *National Wildlife*, *National Geographic WORLD*, *Outdoor Life* plus books from the National Geographic Society, National Wildlife Federation, Simon & Schuster and others.

Tony flies his Piper Super Cub across Alaska and has traveled widely while lecturing Holland America cruise passengers. Concerned about environmental issues, he was assigned to photograph the Exxon Valdez oil spill for *Audubon*, and is now documenting the beauty of the threatened Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Tony first visited McNeil Sanctuary in 1977, and has returned seven times. In 1990, he was a founding member of Friends of McNeil River. As a board member and spokesman, he wrote articles defending the