

SB

155

ALASKA STATE SENATE



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Senator Ralph Seekins
District D

SB 155 Sponsor Statement

Senate Bill 155 alters language within Section 16.05.783 of the Alaska Statutes relating to the Regulation of Fish and Game. These alterations provide the Fish and Game Board and Commissioner with necessary tools in the management of game populations throughout the state.

The first alteration clarifies Legislative intent with respect to airborne predator control programs. The second alteration provides for game population objectives to be taken into consideration in determining whether or not a predator control program should be implemented.

As an example, if the minimum game population objective is met, but the harvest level is not, a management decision—under current law—cannot be made even if it is determined that predators are limiting the game population. The second alteration allows the Board to use both prey *and* game population objectives when making a determination with respect to the use of a predator control program.

Senate Bill 155 makes changes that will allow the Fish and Game Board as well as the Commissioner to better manage wildlife by *balancing* predator and game populations based on the best science available.

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MARC LESTER / Anchorage Daily News

rough trees while browsing near Middle Rock Road and Midden Way in the Stuckagain Heights neighborhood Friday. A calf also wandered

Proposed cuts in education meet House opposition

Schools priority,
the alternative?

BY ERHAM
NEWS

Gov. Frank Murkowski's funding for schools is double in the state House. Speaker Pete Kott, R-Eagle, Monday that he expects strong support in the Legislature to keep the \$20 million grants and student bus-
venernor wants cut.

"I think there is enough importance put on K-12 education that most of the members I am talking to are going to be supportive of keeping it" in the budget, Kott said.

The House education budget subcommittee, a mix of Democrats and Republicans, recommends that lawmakers reject the proposed cuts, which would hit Learning Opportunity Grants and pupil transportation by about \$10 million each.

The cuts would be devastating to

See Page B-3, CUTS



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Bill 'a tool' to manage wolves

By JOEL GAY
Anchorage Daily News

Sen. Ralph Seekins has introduced a bill to make it easier for the state to use aircraft while conducting wolf-kill programs.

The move comes amid renewed proposals to reduce predator numbers in the upper Susitna Valley, in the Nelchina Basin and around McGrath.

Critics called Senate Bill 155 an attempt to override science and popular opinion.

"It's terrible," said Paul Joslin, conservation biologist with the Alaska Wildlife Alliance.

See Page B-2, WOLVES

Proposers to underwrite a spending spree



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age Service Area bond, Proposition 4, will cost \$25.60 per \$100,000 almost entirely because of its size: \$39.95 million. Proposition 7, the \$4.99 million parks and recreation bond, will cost only \$3.38.

The same cost differential occurs in the school bonds. Proposition 9, \$41.79 million worth of mainly school repairs, will cost \$9.97 per \$100,000. Proposition 10, \$42 million for a new administration building, will cost \$10.48, the difference being operations and maintenance charges. Proposition 11, \$125.54 million to build and renovate schools, will cost \$33.16. That's because Proposition 11 is larger, and it carries operations and maintenance price tag of \$2.4 million a year.

Okay, that was a blizzard of numbers. What do they all mean?

Simply that city and School District officials are asking us to underwrite a spending spree. Should we?

That depends in part on what you think of the specifics of each bond. Do you think Girdwood needs a new li-

brary? Proposition 3 would build it. The bonds would also buy the land and pay for the of a new library in Eagle River, and remodel the Loussac.

But voters don't often make up their minds like that. We rarely know the specifics of these bond packages. Instead, some of us cast our votes based on how we feel about the type of spending involved. If you are for libraries, you'll vote for Proposition 3.

There's some sense to this. The fact is, the specifics aren't sure things; money from bonds doesn't have to be spent on the promised projects. It usually is, but it doesn't have to be.

And the city isn't exactly overwhelming voters with information. Take Proposition 4. The information offered is a list of more than 50 projects with a typical entry reading, "Bayshore Drive surface rehab - 100th to Marathon Circle — design." How necessary is this project? Unless you drive that section of Bayshore, you'll never know. How much of the \$39.95 million does it cost? No way to tell.

So you're left to vote on whether you think street and drainage improvements are important, or whether you think the public works staff knows what it is doing.

Or you can vote based on your general sense of whether enough public money is being spent on road and drainage projects. My sense is that it is. Trying to build and maintain enough paved streets to handle the traffic in a northern city that relies entirely on the automobile and rests substantially on wetlands is a losing proposition. We'll never have a complete set of nicely paved roads. The question is, what level of cracks and potholes are you willing to live with?

Or you can vote on your reaction to how much money the city already takes out of your pocket, and how much more it wants this time. You've got the numbers. You can do the math.

■ Mike Doogan's opinion column appears each Tuesday, Friday and Sunday. Reach him at 257-4350 or midoogan@adn.com.

WOLVES: Bill aims to empower wildlife managers

Continued from B-1

"The voters of Alaska passed ballot measures twice that said they didn't want to use aircraft for same-day airborne hunting of wolves. What Ralph Seekins has done is tried to reverse that."

Other people praised Seekins, a Fairbanks Republican, for giving wildlife managers another way to boost moose and caribou stocks. Regardless of how wolf control occurs and who does it, said McGrath resident and Board of Game member Mike Fleagle, "we'd like to see it done."

Many hunters and rural Alaskans blame wolves for reducing moose and caribou populations in some areas, which has limited subsistence and sport harvests. But attempts to establish wolf control programs have met strong resistance.

A successful tourism boycott in the early 1990s killed one. In 1996, voters banned land-and-shoot hunting. After the Alaska Legislature tinkered with the law in early 2000, voters approved another ballot measure that fall that reiterated their opposition to same-day airborne hunting.

Seekins' bill would not allow airborne sport hunting but would make it easier for the Fish and Game Department to pursue wolf control in approved areas.

The Legislature approve a predator control program in the mid-1990s. But the hurdles written into the law, and former-Gov. Tony Knowles' reluctance to approve wolf control, kept the regulations out of public view, said David James, the Department of Fish and Game's regional game supervisor in Fairbanks.

"It's not like somebody's trying to cook up something that's not already on the books," James said. The department has had authority to conduct airborne and land-and-shoot hunting, but only if certain criteria were met.

"If it all fits that template, bingo, the commis-

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Game Board member Fleagle and the Alaska Outdoor Council would prefer the hunting be left to the public.

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sioner can approve it."

Seekins said his measure would make it easier for game managers to put "intensive management" into practice by clarifying what he said are gray areas in the law. For example, the new language specifically permits "airborne or same-day airborne shooting." The existing bill authorizes "shooting from the air."

More important, Seekins said, SB 155 allows managers to make a pre-emptive strike against predators.

Under the existing law, the Board of Game can seek predator control only when the prey population — generally moose or caribou — has dropped below previously specified levels. His bill would allow predator control regardless of the prey population.

"It gives you a chance to manage without focusing on just one objective," such as the number of moose around McGrath or caribou around Nelchina, he said.

If the board approves a predator control plan for an area — it already has for all or parts of hunting units 13, 16 and 19 — and can convince the commissioner of Fish and Game that wolf numbers should be trimmed, the commissioner could authorize airborne shooting.

"It's not a philosophical game," Seekins said.

"It's the constitutional responsibility to manage for sustained yield. All we're saying is give managers a tool to let them manage. Don't tie their hands."

Who would do the shooting is still a question. Though the existing legislation requires the shooting be done by a state employee, "it might be smart to make it employee, agent or permittee," Seekins said.

The intent is to kill the predators "efficiently, effectively and professionally," he said. "My intent is not to turn loose a bunch of wild-eyed guys in a Super Cub."

Game Board member Fleagle and the Alaska Outdoor Council would prefer the hunting be left to the public, Fleagle said.

"If private citizens are given authority under the state, that's just fine," he said. "In reality, there's probably a lot of people who would pay to participate."

Opponents of wolf control say there must be better ways to put more moose into Alaskans' freezers than by shooting wolves from the air, Joslin said.

"What's really needed are better solutions than going after high-controversy stuff — like working to improve habitat."

He said he doubts state biologists have accurate population estimates in most areas, which makes any decision to kill wolves premature.

And a recent poll by Dittman Research Corp. of Alaska suggests that state residents still don't approve of airborne or land-and-shoot hunting, Joslin said.

"The Legislature ought to be aware their constituents will be very opposed to what they're doing," he said.

■ Daily News reporter Joel Gay can be reached at jgay@adn.com or at 257-4310.

STATE IN BRIEF

SELDOVIA

Kit plane crashes; pilot hu

Dennis Pollard, 44, was seriously injured Sunday when the home-built plane he was flying crashed on takeoff in Seldovia, according to the Federal Aviation Administration said.

The engine suddenly lost power about the size of a Super Cub, about 150 feet in the air, according to the Transportation Safety Board. The plane landed back on the runway in front of the investigator Clint Johnson said. The runway hard and the pilot suffered minor injuries, Johnson said.

He said Monday he spoke to Pollard, who had been admitted to Providence Alaska Medical Center.

—Anchora

JUNEAU

Ship passengers might pay

A bill calling for a \$100 head tax on ship passengers was introduced Monday in the Alaska House. Freshman Rep. Carl Gatto said he is sponsoring the bill because he wants to raise funds so the state doesn't have to spend on education.

The Department of Revenue estimates it could raise more than \$70 million a year from a projected 720,000 cruise ship visitors, Gatto said.

Gatto said the state constitution prohibits the state to be reimbursed for use of its resources. He said it's reasonable that tourists pay for the use of the state's resources since hunters and loggers pay to use state land and timber.

House Bill 207 was assigned to the House Committee on Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, and Finance committees.

—The As

MYSTROM: The former mayor wants to return to the good old days

Continued from B-1

The Wuerch administration has been too cozy with unions and too careless with taxpayers' money, Mystrom said. Under Wuerch's watch, the city

RICK MYSTROM

Birth date: January 2, 1944

Q. What political figure (current or his-

members in that district."

Mystrom said he thinks he usually tried to consult Assembly members.

"Maybe we didn't always go to the Assembly as diligently as we should

time in clashing with the most powerful and most powerful resenting Anchorage's police and firefighters.

"In the entire time

FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA
2003 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Fiscal Note Number: _____
 Bill Version: SB 155
 () Publish Date: _____

Revision Date/Time (Note if correction): _____ Dept. Affected: Fish and Game
 Title Relating to hunting on the same day BRU Wildlife Conservation
airborne Component Wildlife Conservation
 Sponsor Senator Seekins
 Requester Senate Judiciary Component No. 473

Expenditures/Revenues (Thousands of Dollars)

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below.

OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 2004	FY 2005	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009
Personal Services						
Travel						
Contractual						
Supplies						
Equipment						
Land & Structures						
Grants & Claims						
Miscellaneous						
TOTAL OPERATING	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

CAPITAL EXPENDITURES						
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CHANGE IN REVENUES ()						
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FUND SOURCE (Thousands of Dollars)

1002 Federal Receipts						
1003 GF Match						
1004 GF						
1005 GF/Program Receipts						
1037 GF/Mental Health						
Other (Specify Type--Do not abbreviate)						
TOTAL	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Estimate of any current year (FY2003) cost: 0.0
 Mark this box (X) if funding for this bill is included in the Governor's FY 2004 budget proposal:

POSITIONS

Full-time						
Part-time						
Temporary						

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

Prepared by: Matthew H. Robus, Acting Director Phone 465-4190
 Division: Wildlife Conservation Date/Time 3/30/03 1:23 PM
 Approved by: Kevin C. Duffy, Commissioner Date 3/30/2003
 Agency: Department of Fish and Game

23-LS0855\H
Utermohle
4/4/03

CS FOR SENATE BILL NO. 155()
IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA
TWENTY-THIRD LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION

BY

Offered:
Referred:

Sponsor(s): SENATOR SEEKINS

A BILL

FOR AN ACT ENTITLED

1 "An Act relating to hunting on the same day airborne; and providing for an effective
2 date."

3 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:

4 * Section 1. AS 16.05.783(a) is amended to read:

5 (a) A person may not shoot or assist in shooting a free-ranging wolf [,
6 WOLVERINE, FOX, OR LYNX] the same day that a person has been airborne.
7 However, the Board of Game may authorize a predator control program as part of a
8 game management plan that involves airborne or same day airborne shooting
9 [INVOLVING SHOOTING FROM THE AIR] if

10 [(1)] the department has testified to the board that the game
11 management [COMMISSIONER OF FISH AND GAME ACTING UNDER A
12 REQUEST FROM THE BOARD OF GAME MAKES WRITTEN FINDINGS
13 BASED ON PREY POPULATION] objectives set by the board have not been
14 achieved and [UNDER AS 16.05.255(g)] that

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(1) [(A)] predation is a cause for the failure to achieve the objectives set by the board [AN IMPORTANT FACTOR CONTRIBUTING TO A LOW OR DECLINING PREY POPULATION THAT IS INCONSISTENT WITH A GAME MANAGEMENT PROGRAM AUTHORIZED BY THE BOARD OF GAME], and that a reduction of predation can reasonably be expected to aid in the achievement of the objectives [RESULT IN AIDING AN INCREASE IN THE PREY POPULATION OR IN ARRESTING THE DECLINE OF THE PREY POPULATION]; or

(2) [(B)] a disease or parasite of a predator population

(A) [(i)] is threatening the normal biological condition of the predator population; or

(B) [(ii)] if left untreated, would spread to other populations[;

AND

(2) THE COMMISSIONER DETERMINES THAT AIRBORNE OR SAME DAY AIRBORNE SHOOTING IS NECESSARY TO ACCOMPLISH A GAME MANAGEMENT PROGRAM AUTHORIZED BY THE BOARD OF GAME].

* Sec. 2. AS 16.05.783 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

(e) When the Board of Game authorizes a predator control program that includes airborne or same day airborne shooting, the board shall establish predator reduction objectives and limits, methods and means to be employed, and who is authorized to participate in the program.

* Sec. 3. This Act takes effect immediately under AS 01.10.070(c).

CS HB 82(L&C)
Senate Judiciary Committee
April 4, 2003

1. Name: Ed Sniffen, Jr.
Affiliation: Assitant Attorney General
Fair Business Practices Section
Location: Anchorage Legislative Information Office