

HB

127

Debra Higgins

From: Will Vandergriff [Will_Vandergriff@legis.state.ak.us]
Sent: Saturday, March 10, 2007 12:09 PM
To: prdistribution
Subject: PR - Seaton Applauds Board of Game Decision to Disallow Brown Bear Hunt in Kamishak Special Use Area
Attachments: PR - Seaton Applauds BoG Decision on Kamishak Bear Hunt.doc

MEDIATE RELEASE: March 10, 2007

CONTACT: Will Vandergriff, 907-465-5446
House Majority Press Secretary

Seaton Applauds Board of Game Decision to Disallow Brown Bear Hunt in Kamishak Special Use Area

(Juneau) – Representative Paul Seaton (R Homer) applauded the recent Board of Game decision to ban bear hunting in the Kamishak Special Use Area. Seaton is the sponsor of HB 127, legislation that would add the lands of the Kamishak Special Use Area to the McNeil River Game Sanctuary.

“The Board has listened to the public, and has made the right decision,” Seaton said. “My legislation was introduced to accomplish the goal of increasing brown bear protection, and I am pleased that the bears that use the McNeil River Sanctuary area will be afforded this protection.”

Introduced prior to the Board of Game meeting, HB 127 provided critical momentum to the public opposition of the hunt.

“I believe the board took into account that if they did not prohibit this ill-conceived hunt from taking place, HB 127 would ride a wave of public support to the Governor’s desk, and the area in question would become part of the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary, effectively cutting off all hunting activities there,” Seaton said.

The bears of the McNeil River area support a popular bear viewing industry that injects millions of dollars into the economy of Southcentral Alaska each summer.

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REPRESENTATIVE PAUL SEATON

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ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE House District 35

Memorandum

Date: February 16th, 2007
To: House Resources Co-Chairman Craig Johnson
From: Representative Paul Seaton
Re: HB 127 Bill Hearing Request

I respectfully request a hearing for HB 127 at your earliest possible convenience. HB 127 includes two parcels of land in the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary. These two parcels are currently managed by the Department of Natural Resources as the Kamishak Special Use Area. Brown bear hunting has been prohibited in the Special Use Area for over two decades. In 2005 the Board of Game opened the Special Use Area to a brown bear hunt in the summer of 2007. By including the Special Use Area in the Sanctuary a bear hunt will be precluded. This will help protect McNeil and Katmai bear populations and in turn, the multi-million dollar bear viewing industry that has developed around them.

FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA
2007 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Fiscal Note Number: _____
 Bill Version: HB127-DFG-SF-02-22-07
 () Publish Date: _____

Revision Date/Time (Note if correction): _____ Dept. Affected: ADFG
 Title McNeil River State Game Sanctuary RDU Sport Fisheries
 Component Research & Restoration
 Sponsor Representative Seaton
 Requester House Resources Committee Component No. 2854

Expenditures/Revenues (Thousands of Dollars)

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

OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013
Personal Services	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Travel	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Contractual	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Supplies	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Equipment	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Land & Structures	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Grants & Claims	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Miscellaneous	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
TOTAL OPERATING	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

CAPITAL EXPENDITURES	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
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CHANGE IN REVENUES ()	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
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FUND SOURCE (Thousands of Dollars)

FUND SOURCE	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013
1002 Federal Receipts	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1003 GF Match	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1004 GF	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1005 GF/Program Receipts	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1037 GF/Mental Health	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Other (Specify Type--Do not abbreviate)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
TOTAL	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Estimate of any current year (FY2007) cost: 0.0

Mark this box (X) if funding for this bill is included in the Governor's FY 2008 budget proposal:

POSITIONS

POSITIONS	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013
Full-time	0	0	0	0	0	0
Part-time	0	0	0	0	0	0
Temporary	0	0	0	0	0	0

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

This bill would expand the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary. If the bill is adopted, ADF&G would apply land use management practices, including permitting activities, currently employed in the Sanctuary to the lands added to the Sanctuary. ADF&G is able to comply with the provisions in this legislation without additional funding and/or staff.

Prepared by: Tom Brookover, Regional Supervisor
 Division: Sport Fisheries
 Approved by: Tom Lawson, Director
 Agency: Fish & Game

Phone 267-2150
 Date/Time 2/22/07, 11:00 AM
 Date _____

FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA
2007 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Fiscal Note Number: _____
 Bill Version: HB127-DFG-SF-02-22-07
 () Publish Date: _____

Revision Date/Time (Note if correction): _____ Dept. Affected: ADFG
 Title McNeil River State Game Sanctuary RDU Sport Fisheries
 Component Research & Restoration
 Sponsor Representative Seaton
 P. requester House Resources Committee Component No. 2854

Expenditures/Revenues (Thousands of Dollars)

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

OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013
Personal Services	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Travel	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Contractual	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Supplies	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Equipment	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Land & Structures	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Grants & Claims	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Miscellaneous	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
TOTAL OPERATING	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

CAPITAL EXPENDITURES	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
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CHANGE IN REVENUES ()	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
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FUND SOURCE (Thousands of Dollars)

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

Estimate of any current year (FY2007) cost: 0.0

Mark this box (X) if funding for this bill is included in the Governor's FY 2008 budget proposal:

POSITIONS

Full-time	0	0	0	0	0	0
Part-time	0	0	0	0	0	0
Temporary	0	0	0	0	0	0

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

This bill would expand the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary. If the bill is adopted, ADF&G would apply land use management practices, including permitting activities, currently employed in the Sanctuary to the lands added to the Sanctuary. ADF&G is able to comply with the provisions in this legislation without additional funding and/or staff.

Prepared by: Tom Brookover, Regional Supervisor Phone 267-2150
 Division Sport Fisheries Date/Time 2/22/07, 11:00 AM
 Approved by: Tom Lawson, Director Date _____
 Agency Fish & Game

FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA
2007 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Fiscal Note Number: HB127-DNR-MLW-02-21-07
 Bill Version: HB127
 () Publish Date: _____

Revision Date/Time (Note if correction): _____ Dept. Affected: Natural Resources
 Title: McNeil River State Game Sanctuary RDU: Resource Development
 Component: Director's Office/ML&W
 Sponsor: Rep. Seaton
 Requester: House Res. Component No.: 2440

Expenditures/Revenues (Thousands of Dollars)

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

OPERATING EXPENDITURES	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013
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 (multiple)	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
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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						
1155 Timber Receipts						
TOTAL	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Estimate of any current year (FY2007) cost: 0.0

Check this box (X) if funding for this bill is included in the Governor's FY 2008 budget proposal:

POSITIONS

Full-time						
Part-time						
Temporary						

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

HB 127 proposes to add approximately 144 square miles (92,160 acres) of state land, water and tidelands to the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary. The area contains no significant mineral deposits and is considered to have only moderate mineral potential.

The addition of these lands to the sanctuary will not significantly increase Mining, Land & Water's responsibilities and thus would have no fiscal impact to the department.

Prepared by: Dick Mylius, Acting Director Phone: 269-8600
 Division: Mining, Land and Water Date/Time: 2/21/2007
 Approved by: Tom Irwin, Commissioner Date: 2/21/2007
 Agency: Natural Resources

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REPRESENTATIVE PAUL SEATON DISTRICT 35

SPONSOR STATEMENT HB 127

HB 127 supports the important tourist industry of bear viewing by incorporating parts of the Kamishak Special Use Area (SUA) into the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary. Brown bear hunting has been prohibited in the SUA for over two decades. In 2005, the Board of Game opened portions of the SUA to a brown bear hunt in 2007. This action was taken despite the opposition of hundreds of Alaskans, numerous Alaskan tourism industry groups, and against the recommendation of the Alaska Department of Fish & Game.

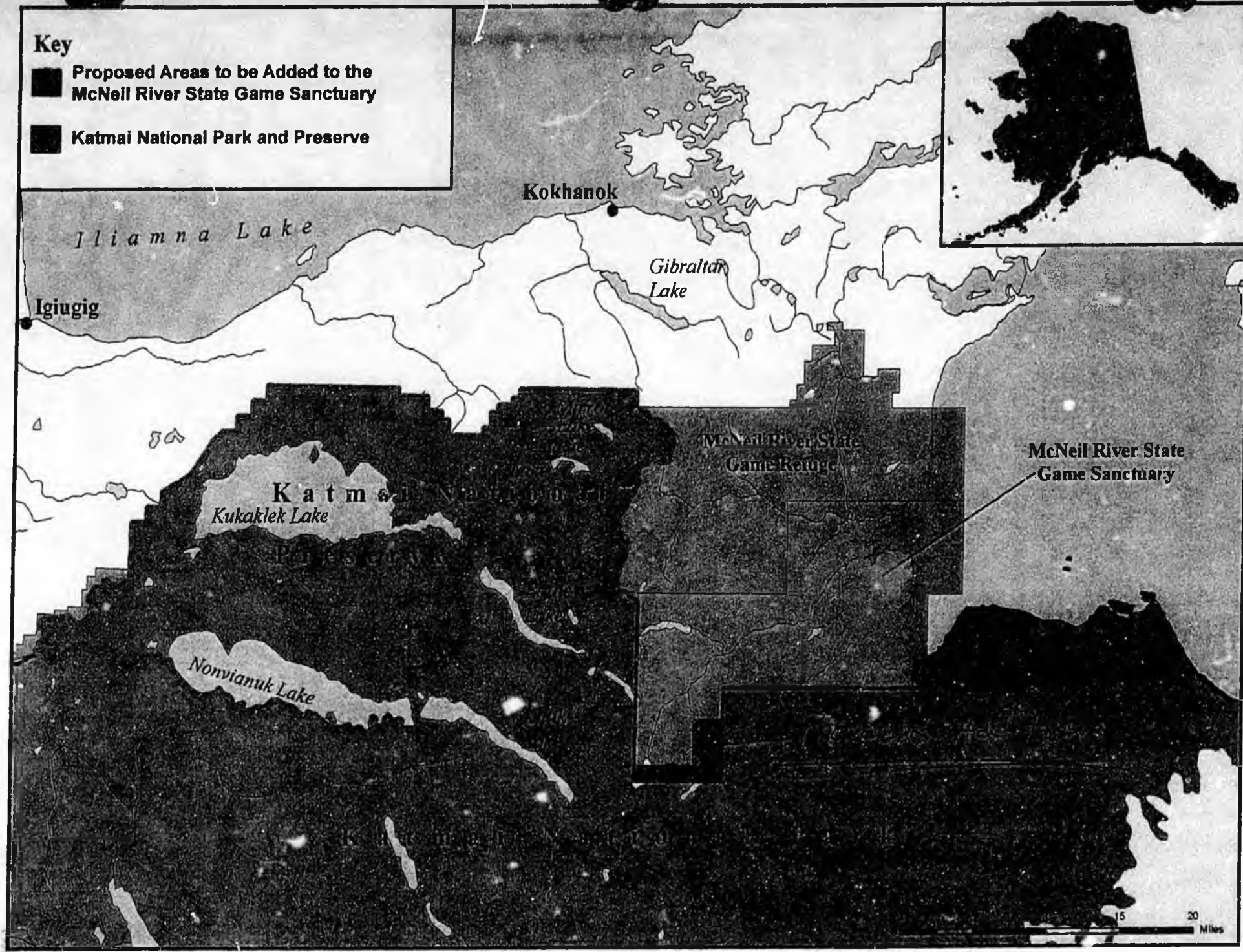
ADF&G has identified a serious decline in bear populations in the McNeil River area, due in part to years of poor chum salmon runs and liberalized bear hunting seasons in Game Management Unit 9B to the north and west of the Sanctuary. A bear hunt in the SUA would put further stress on these bear populations upon which the visitor industry relies. Including this area in the Sanctuary will disallow such a hunt.

Bear viewing in the McNeil River and Katmai areas has become an enormous economic engine for Southcentral Alaska. Statistics from 2004 indicate that approximately 11,523 people participated in bear viewing in the McNeil/Katmai area. An Institute of Social and Economic Research study conducted in 2005 determined that bear viewers on average spent \$2,828 per person. The annual economic value to Southcentral alone is estimated at over \$32 million.

HB 127 will have minimal impacts on current use patterns in the area. This bill does not affect commercial fishing around the Kamishak Bay coastline. Sport fishing lodges and guides that bring clients to the SUA do so on the Kamishak River which is within the current boundary of the Sanctuary and therefore they are already required to have Sanctuary permits. According to ADF&G, the SUA has seen minimal hunting activity in the past 30 years. Hunters have reported taking only four moose and one caribou in the SUA since 1976. The Department of Natural Resources has identified no mineral prospects or claims in the SUA.

Key

-  Proposed Areas to be Added to the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary
-  Katmai National Park and Preserve



**AS 16.20.160 – EXISTING
MCNEIL RIVER
SANCTUARY LANGUAGE**

Sec. 16.20.160. McNeil River State Game Sanctuary.

The following state-owned land and water, including the tidelands but exclusive of marine water and submerged land, lying within the parcels described in this subsection is established as the McNeil River State Game sanctuary:

Township 12 South, Range 29 West, Seward Meridian

Sections 1 - 36

Township 12 South, Range 30 West, Seward Meridian

Sections 1 - 36

Township 13 South, Range 29 West, Seward Meridian

Sections 5 - 8

Sections 17 - 20

Sections 29 - 32

Township 13 South, Range 30 West, Seward Meridian

Sections 1 - 36

Township 13 South, Range 31 West, Seward Meridian

Sections 1 - 36

Township 13 South, Range 32 West, Seward Meridian

Sections 1 - 36

Township 14 South, Range 32 West, Seward Meridian

Sections 1 - 12

Sections 15 - 22

Sections 27 - 30.

Sec. 16.20.162. Purpose; regulations.

(a) The McNeil River State Game Sanctuary is established to

(1) provide permanent protection for brown bear and other fish and wildlife populations and their habitats, so that these resources may be preserved for scientific, aesthetic, and educational purposes;

(2) manage human use and activities in a way that is compatible with (1) of this subsection and to maintain and enhance the unique bear viewing opportunities within the sanctuary; and

(3) provide opportunities that are compatible with (1) of this subsection for wildlife viewing, fisheries enhancement, and fishing, for temporary safe anchorage, and for other activities.

(b) Hunting and trapping within the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary are prohibited.

(c) The department and the Department of Natural Resources

(1) may not enter into sales of land within the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary;

(2) may enter into leases within the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary if the commissioner finds that activity conducted under the lease is compatible with the purposes for which the sanctuary is established;

(3) may not accept transfer of state selected land from the federal government, or conveyance of other land, within the sanctuary if the land is subject to

(A) a lease, easement, or other right to operate or maintain a private facility on the land or to conduct a private enterprise on the land; or

(B) a continuing trespass by an unauthorized private facility or private enterprise.

(d) The McNeil River State Game Sanctuary is closed to mineral entry under AS 38.05.185 - 38.05.275.

(e) The boards may adopt regulations governing access, entry, development, construction, fishing, and other uses and activities affecting the natural habitat, fish and wildlife, and public use of the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary.

(f) The commissioner shall prepare a report and notify the legislature of its availability by January 30 of each year on

(1) the status of the brown bears and other fish and wildlife resources within the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary; and

(2) the effects of fishing and fishery enhancement activity on these resources.

DNR VERIFICATION ON ABSENCE OF MINING ACTIVITY IN AREA

-----Original Message-----

From: Kerwin Krause [mailto:kerwin_krause@dnr.state.ak.us]
Sent: Friday, December 15, 2006 2:32 PM
To: Rep. Paul Seaton
Cc: Dick Mylius
Subject: Additions to McNeil River State Game Refuge

Paul,

Yesterday you contacted me concerning your sponsoring legislation to add two areas to the McNeil River State Game Refuge. You had several questions concerning mineral orders: 1. You wanted to know if there were any mineral closing orders in these areas; and 2. you wanted to know if it would be possible for DNR to issue a mineral closing order in these areas prior to any new legislation being enacted for these areas. Based on our discussion, I marked the two areas you were interested in on the attached map. The areas you inquired about are shown in the dark outlined areas on the attached map in Township 14 South, Range 32 West; and Townships 13 South, Ranges 27-29 West. The acreage for these two areas totals about 1,250 acres. There are no mineral orders or mineral closing orders in these areas at the present time. There are no known (published) mineral prospects in these areas either. Because there are no known prospects, it is unlikely the mining industry will be staking any mining claims in these areas. As a result of this information, I do not think that you need to worry about claims being located in these areas. As you know, DNR could not issue a mineral closing order for this purpose since it exceeds 640 acres unless the legislature approved it. As a result, the areas couldn't be closed to mineral entry until the legislature acted on it. Because of the acreage limitation and the fact that there are no claims or prospects in the areas, I don't think you need to worry about claims being staked even once the bill was introduced until it was enacted. Hope this helps.

Kerwin

ADF&G ON CURRENT USE OF KAMISHAK SUA

Louie Flora

From: Joe Meehan [joe_meehan@fishgaw
Sent: Friday, January 26, 2007 4:41 PM
To: Louie Flora
Cc: Fink, Mark; Lem Butler
Subject: FW: survey results

Attachments: KSUA Moose Hunters.xls; Douglas_River.xls; Map.Bear.Movements.JPG

Louie –

As you can see from the attached file, annual anglers days at the Douglas River (in the Kamishak Special Use Area) ranged from 8 to 38 between 1989 and 2002 (no reported use from 2003 to 2005). The response rate was pretty low and these figures are estimates based on the response rate. Regardless, use is likely pretty low compared to other streams in the region. Sport fishing is an allowed activity in the sanctuary so this won't be affected by expanding the sanctuary. However, if the sanctuary is expanded, we will need to address access permits in this area. I would envision an internal and/or public review on how to manage visitor access permits in this area if the sanctuary is expanded.

As for hunting in the Kamishak Special Use Area, our area biologist (Lem Butler) reviewed harvest reports from 1976 to 2006. During this 31-year period, 13 hunters reported taking only 4 moose in this area. During this same period 1 caribou was reported taken, and 9 beaver, 1 otter and 4 wolves were trapped here (in 1985 and 1986, presumably during the winter of 85/86). This is pretty low use for both hunting and trapping. As I mentioned in my previous email, if the sanctuary is expanded with the existing language, hunting and trapping would be prohibited in this area.

One additional item I've attached to this email is a map showing movements of 4 brown bears from a GPS radio collar study that was conducted at the Douglas River in 2003 and 2004. As the map shows, these 4 bears moved between the Douglas River and the sanctuary. The other 8 bears that were collared at the Douglas River did not show the same movements. Just to give you an idea of use at the Douglas River, the researchers stated that they frequently saw as many as 50 bears at one time during spring as they fed in the coastal sedge flats at Douglas River.

If photos of this area would be any help, I can probably drum up a few. And let me know if you need anything else.

*Joe Meehan, Program Coordinator
Lands and Refuge Program
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Division of Wildlife Conservation
333 Raspberry Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99511*

tel: (907) 267-2281
fax: (907) 267-2433
joe_meehan@fishgame.state.ak.us
ADF&G on the web at www.wildlife.alaska.gov

Number of hunters that reported hunting moose in the KSUA

Written discription of hunt location is not in the harvest database. Correct coding has not been confirmed.

YEAR	9C - UCU			Total	Harvest	9C - UCU	Geographic Description
	0101	0200	0201				
1976				0	0		
1977				0	0		
1978				0	0		
1979				0	0		
1980				0	0		
1981				0	0		
1982				0	0		
1983				0	0	0101	Kamishak River Drainage
1984			1	1	0	0200	Douglas River Drainage
1985				0	0	0201	Douglas River Drainage
1988			1	1	0		
1989				0	0		
1990				0	0		
1991				0	0		
1992				0	0		
1995				0	0		
1996				0	0		
1997			2	2	0		
1998		1	4	5	3		
1999			1	1	0		
2000			1	1	1		
2001		1	1	2	0		
2002				0	0		
2003				0	0		
2005				0	0		
2006				0	0		

Average	1
80's	0
90's	1
00's	1



ALASKA DEPT. OF FISH & GAME: DOUGLAS BROWN BEAR RESEARCH

Representative GPS Location Data: ~ 15-minute intervals (2003/2004)

Please do not disseminate or use without permission.
Contact: Sean Farley, Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game
(907) 267-2203 e-mail: Sean.Farley@alaska.gov

McNeil River State
Game Refuge

McNeil River State
Game Sanctuary

All bears
collared here.

KATMAI NATIONAL PARK

- Bear #1 Female with 3 yearlings (11,805 locations)
- Bear #2 Male (9,049 locations)
- Bear #14 Female with 1 yearling (6,443 locations)
- Bear #15 Male (5,333 locations)

0 3 6 9 12 15
Miles



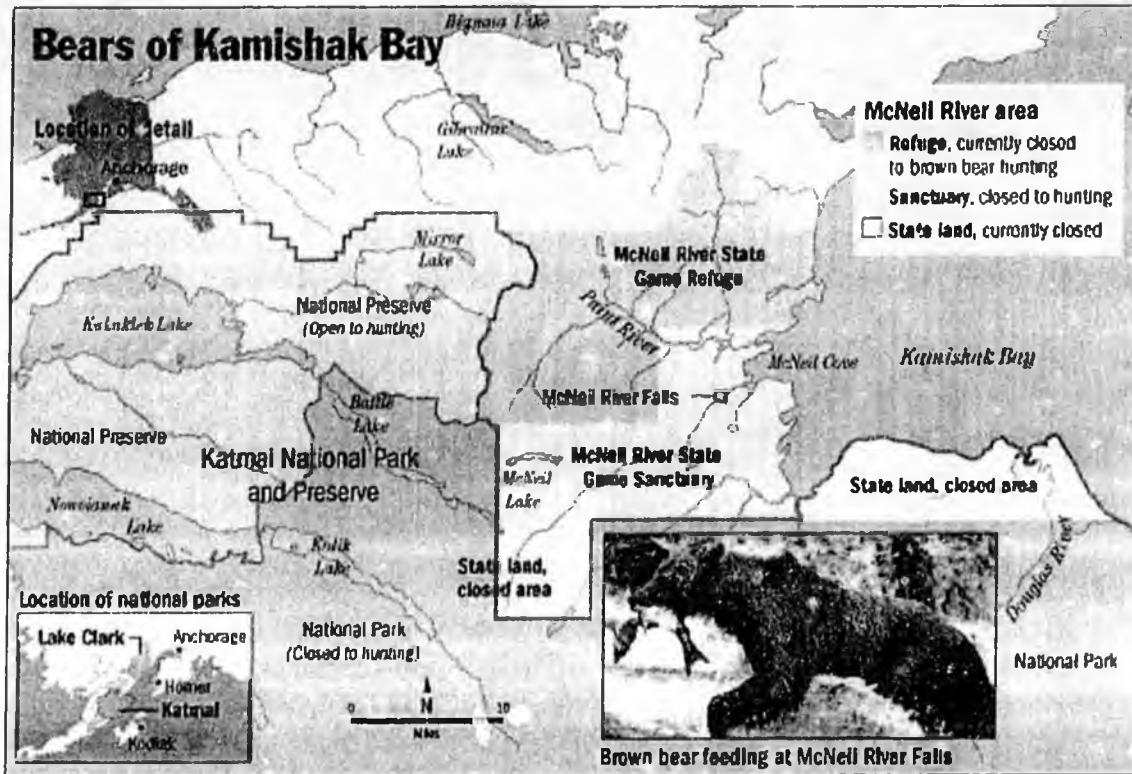
PRESS

Hunters show interest in bear refuges

(03/07/05)

State land around the Douglas River was closed to hunting 20 years ago because a land trade with the National Park Service was under discussion. But the trade never took place, and now the state Board of Game, which begins its spring meeting today, is considering opening the area again.

By TOM KIZZIA | Anchorage Daily News (Published: March 4, 2005)



RON ENOSTROM / Anchorage Daily News

HOMER -- Rod Arno remembers guiding bear hunters in the country south of Kamishak Bay. It was the only place in his career where he led a client to a coastal brown bear and then, the next day, returned with another client to shoot a second trophy feeding on the unsalvaged remains of the first one.

That state land around the Douglas River was closed to hunting 20 years ago because a land trade with the National Park Service was under discussion. But the trade never took place, and now the state Board of Game, which begins its spring meeting today, is considering opening the area again.

Arno, a hunting activist for the Alaska Outdoor Council, likes that idea. He's even more enthusiastic about reopening a state game refuge farther north, where bear hunting was closed in 1995. One reason for that particular closure was an enhanced salmon run on the Paint River was expected to create a magnet for bears. But the salmon project flopped.

"That threat is null and void now," says Arno. "So if there's ever an area to be looked at again, this would be a dandy."

Brown bear harvest in Katmai National Preserve

A portion of state game unit 9C



Source: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

FOR ENVIROPHOTOS / Anchorage Daily News

It may sound routine to review closed areas where conditions have changed -- especially with bear populations in the area looking healthy. But as the Game Board prepares to take a broad look at areas closed to hunting and trapping, a push by hunters for change in the two Kamishak Bay areas is drawing thousands of public comments. The reason: Sandwiched between those two areas is the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary, Alaska's world-famous bear viewing destination.

In 1995, the last time the McNeil River bears were a full-blown issue in front of the board, bear viewing advocates exerted tremendous national pressure to close the refuge to the north, arguing it would be unethical to hunt "tame" bears that had grown used to humans.

Today, the forces against hunting in the area appear even stronger. Bear viewing flights have become a big and fast-growing part of Alaska's tourism industry, with brown bears between Katmai and Lake Clark national parks providing the biggest growth.

MCNEIL RIVER BEARS DECLINE

What's more, the number of bears fishing at the crown jewel -- McNeil River falls -- has plunged in recent years, with declining runs of chum salmon suspected as the main culprit. At the same time, bear hunters in the 2003-'04 season killed twice as many bears in the national preserve west of McNeil as they had in previous seasons. If anything, bear viewing advocates say, it's time for more hunting restrictions in the area, not fewer.

"Why are the hunters doing it?" asks Chris Day, who flies about 1,000 tourists every summer with her Homer-based bear viewing company, Emerald Air. "It just seems ludicrous to me. It's like sticking a stick in a hornet's nest."

The answer, which should play out in public testimony before the board beginning today, has a lot to do with statewide concerns and trends. Hunting advocates say it's time to take a stand at McNeil River on the philosophical position that the same bear population can be ogled by tourists in one valley and shot by hunters in the next.

"Even though it's controversial, I find it a healthy debate as we look around the state," says Ron Somerville, a hunting community leader finishing a two-year term on the Game Board.

An important factor may be political timing. Game Board members appointed by Gov. Frank Murkowski have been highly sympathetic to predator control and other hunting priorities. Putting that political clout to the test at the 10-day meeting is likely to mean plenty of lunging, ear-flattening and other dominance displays familiar to past visitors to the McNeil River falls.

The bear-viewing industry is getting to be big business and will press for more hunting closures elsewhere, predicted board member Ted Spraker, a former state game biologist. He said the state's job is to keep bear populations healthy and often to separate viewers and hunters by seasons and areas. But it's not to ensure that old, large male bears sought by hunters are available for viewing, he said.

"What the viewing folks want is to go to where animals are not hunted at all," Spraker said.

Somerville said it's becoming a clash of two philosophies.

"The sanctuary was never intended to encompass the entire range of the bears. That's what it's become for some people," he said.

The McNeil River Sanctuary, where access is limited to state permit holders, is closed to hunting by law and will not be affected by the Game Board's deliberations. But the bears range 50 miles or more from the sanctuary's protection.

Arno sees another philosophical divide coming into play: between hunters who want to see healthy populations and viewers who become attached to individual bears.

"When I think of wildlife, I don't think of them in my anthropomorphic views of how they relate to my world," Arno said. "When I hunt, I think of relating to their world."

A COMPLICATED PICTURE

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game doesn't have information about how many hunters use the area now. Because the region is relatively accessible by plane from Anchorage and the Kenai Peninsula, it attracts both nonresidents hunting with guides and residents getting dropped off.

The two areas in question historically produced only a few brown bear kills every hunting season -- fewer than three on average around the Douglas River and three to six in the refuge around Paint River.

Not all hunters favor reopening the areas. Some, like guide Rob Hardy, say it would create unsporting opportunities. Hardy said the McNeil River effort is being pushed by "consumptive-use groups and the Second Amendment rights lobby" to regain some of the ground lost to hunting ever since the 1980 law created new national parks closed to hunters.

"For them, it's a no-brainer because the bear population is healthy," Hardy said.

Harvest numbers and other data -- such as the age of bears shot and the number of males - suggest that the region's overall bear population is stable, said Lem Butler, the state's wildlife biologist in King Salmon.

Even so, there are problems that complicate the picture for hunting advocates.

On Katmai National Preserve west of McNeil River, where hunting is allowed, bear harvest numbers spiked from 19 to 34 in the last of the every-other-year hunting cycles.

State biologists attribute the rise to a longer season, more hunting pressure and unusually large salmon runs into the lake's tributaries. Even though fewer bears are being shot elsewhere in the game management subunit, the sharp local increase is a concern, said Butler.

The Kukaklek Lake area in the preserve was also the scene last summer of suspected poaching, with seven bears found dead in the brushy tundra.

At the same time, the numbers of bears seen fishing at the McNeil River falls has plummeted. Only 78 recognizable bears stopped at the falls last year, the lowest number in 20 years and barely half the number from 1997, according to a new state report.

"It's time to sound the alarm," said Fish and Game's official 2004 McNeil River field report, noting that bear numbers have fallen below the threshold called for under the state's management plan.

Hunting outside the sanctuary may have contributed to the decline, along with poor chum runs, the state report said. The report said loss of wary bears would have little impact, but killing particular stars of the sanctuary, such as the cub-suckling "Teddy," would be "catastrophic."

BEAR WATCHERS TO TESTIFY

Public testimony, which begins Saturday in Anchorage, will include plenty of bear watchers. Karen Deatherage, the Defenders of Wildlife Alaska associate, said she has already turned in 6,000 written comments to the state. Opposition to expanded hunting has also been registered by several Fish and Game advisory committees and the Homer City Council.

Deatherage said a controversial idea like opening the McNeil River Game Refuge should come as a separate proposal from the public with advance notice, not as part of a general review of closed areas.

Fish and Game is taking a cautious approach. It is recommending that the board cut back October hunting in the Katmai Preserve, either with a shorter season or creation of a permit-only hunt. Elsewhere, the department supports the status quo, which would keep the state game refuge and other state-owned land in the area, including the inholding around Douglas River in Katmai National Park, closed to hunting.

Katmai National Park also supports shortening the state-managed hunting season on its preserve and keeping the other state areas closed to hunting. Park superintendent Joe

Fowler said hunting in the small reopened areas would have a significant impact on "unrivaled" bear-viewing uses in the surrounding closed areas.

Reporter Tom Kizzia can be reached at tkizzia@adn.com or in Homer at 907-235-4244.

Testimony before Alaska Board of Game begins today

- **THE MEETING:** The Alaska Board of Game will meet on Southcentral and Southwestern Alaska issues today through March 13 at the Coast International Inn, 3333 W. International Airport Road, Anchorage.
- **HOW TO TESTIFY:** Public testimony will begin today, following staff reports and run through the weekend. You can sign up to testify beginning at 8 a.m. today. The deadline to sign up won't be announced until this morning by board chairman Mike Fleagle. Call 1-800-764-8901 for updates.
- **THE AGENDA:** The board will consider a wide array of hunting and trapping proposals affecting the region. In addition to a review of all closed areas in the region, the board will face several high-profile issues,

including:

- Expanding (or cutting back) predator control programs aimed at reducing wolf populations;
- Hunting moose in the Anchorage Bowl;
- Developing a new system for allocating subsistence permits for the popular Nelchina caribou hunt; and
- Reopening areas adjacent to the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary for brown bear hunting or cutting back hunting on the nearby Katmai National Preserve.
- **FURTHER INFORMATION:** The tentative meeting agenda, details on proposals and Department of Fish and Game recommendations are available on the state Web site at www.boards.adfg.state.ak.us/gameinfo/index.php

Game Board gives McNeil grizzlies room to roam

(03/11/05)

Panel says hunting could be allowed on nearby state lands by 2007.

[\(Back to List\)](#)

By DOUG O'HARFA | Anchorage Daily News *(Published: March 11, 2005)*

The Alaska Board of Game decided Thursday that brown bears won't be hunted during the next two years on state lands adjacent to the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary, temporarily settling a grizzly-sized controversy that drew thousands of impassioned comments from across the country.

But the board took several steps that could allow people to kill the salmon-eating bruins on nearby lands as soon as 2007, including one decision that cocked a bear hunt and aimed it at the National Park Service.

As in: Do a land trade or the bear gets it.

The board approved a proposal by Naknek area hunters to open chunks of state land south and southeast of the sanctuary to bear hunting, effective July 1, 2007. Board member Ron Somerville of Juneau said it would be a way to push the federal agency to start talking again with the state about trading the land for certain Katmai National Park parcels closer to Naknek, a request important to hunters in that community.

Board member Ted Spraker of Soldotna challenged the many people who oppose bear hunting around the famous McNeil bear sanctuary to "put pressure on the Park Service" to approve the land trade.

The move surprised the Park Service and the state Department of Natural Resources -- the two agencies that would negotiate such a trade.

The state has no active proposals to trade that land, and staff is already swamped with other issues, such as the natural gas pipeline corridor, said DNR spokeswoman Nancy Welch.

The Park Service has talked with the state about the land between Katmai park and the McNeil sanctuary for two decades, and would be willing to talk again, Park Service spokesman John Quinley said.

But the Game Board didn't have to threaten a bear kill to get things rolling, he added.

"It's an interesting action to come from the game management board, to apparently take a high level of interest in how land exchanges are pursued," Quinley said. "We would have been willing to go back to the table with the state if the state had approached us and said, 'Let's see if we can make a deal.'"

The action came during seventh day of the board's spring meeting, which continues through Sunday with discussions about predator control, changes in hunting regulations and a proposal to hold a moose hunt in Chugach State Park above the Anchorage Hillside.

The McNeil River sanctuary, located across Cook Inlet from Homer, next to Katmai National Park and Preserve, is one of the best places in the world to watch brown bears. Photographs of big brownies standing in swirling rapids as they snatch chum salmon have become icons for Alaska's wildlife. Proposals that might have allowed people to

hunt these bears on state land generated a huge controversy.

State biologists presented information that showed that the same brown bears wander all over that area, including areas now open to hunting in the Katmai preserve and the land the board said it may open to hunting.

On Thursday morning, the board decided to leave the state game refuge north of the sanctuary closed to brown bear hunting. But the panel asked the Department of Fish and Game to work up a proposal that would allow bear hunting there and bring it to the board in March 2007.

Both Somerville and Spraker said they wanted the new proposal to be part of an overview of state management and conservation of those bears, and the clash of philosophies that's developed between bear viewing and bear harvest.

"There is no mutually exclusive conflict between viewing bears and hunting them -- if you view them as a population," Somerville said. Killing bears in a well-managed harvest is no "mortal sin."

Sport hunting advocate and guide Rod Arno said the board's move will give biologists time to show that the Katmai-McNeil bears remain healthy in number and can sustain a harvest on state land. "It's not going to hurt a bit," he said.

The board also rejected proposals to close or delay bear hunting in the Katmai preserve west of the sanctuary, saying conflicts between viewers and hunters could be tackled during the review in 2007.

Then the panel voted 5 to 2 to open state land south and southeast of the sanctuary to pressure the Park Service to trade.

Whether the board has the legal authority to participate in land trade negotiations was raised by board chairman Mike Fleagle, formerly of McGrath and now of Anchorage. And board member Ben Grussendorf of Sitka questioned whether the board was wise in appearing to endorse this particular trade.

Fleagle, a staunch supporter of hunting rights, also said that he thought the board should not be opening these areas to bear hunting.

"I'm fairly adamantly opposed to new closures," he said. But "I think we've established a longtime closure here that is depended upon by people who enjoy the bears. ... It's going to anger a lot of people for very little benefit, in my opinion."

Opponents of bear hunting openings in the area said they were relieved by the board's decision to keep the refuge closed, and floored by the vote to open areas to the south.

"We're happy that they didn't open the refuge and the sanctuary to hunting, but we're back to the same issue," said Karen Deatherage, with the local office of Defenders of Wildlife. "Why are they trying to fix something that's not broken?"

Wildlife activist Paul Joslin, a biologist for the conservation group Friends of McNeil River, said he's upset the

board continued to pursue the issue.

"The public voice has been very clear on this issue," he said. "And now they're trading bears' lives to get the Park Service to do things."

Daily News reporter Doug O'Harra can be reached at do'harra@adn.com.

For more on the Board of Game, visit [its Web site](#).

adn.com

Anchorage Daily News

Print Page

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McNeil bear hunt opposition grows**SANCTUARY: Board of Game opens nearby lands despite the declining population of tourist-pleasing bruins.**By MARY PEMBERTON
The Associated Press*(Published: February 12, 2007)*

For decades, Larry Aumiller led small groups of people into the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary to watch as the largest congregation of brown bears in the world feast on salmon in the summer.

The former sanctuary manager said he emotionally couldn't do it any longer after a decision by the Alaska Board of Game increased opportunities to hunt the bears. Aumiller moved to Montana.

"To be honest, it was so heartbreaking I just couldn't be around it," Aumiller said.

If nothing changes, state lands used by the bears near the 114,400-acre sanctuary in Southwest Alaska will be open to hunting as of July 1, clearing the way for a fall hunt.

Opponents say it's not sporting to hunt the McNeil River bears, which are accustomed to humans and routinely come to within 10 or 15 feet of small groups of bear viewers allowed into the sanctuary each summer. Supporters say the bears are fair game when they wander outside the sanctuary.

The Game Board, which is appointed by the governor to regulate hunting in Alaska, voted to open the state lands to brown bear hunting at the request of hunters.

McNeil, created by the state 40 years ago, is arguably the best place in the world to view brown bears. That's because two things make McNeil exceptional; how close the bears will safely come to humans and how many there are at the sanctuary.

As many as 144 individual bears have been observed at McNeil River with as many as 72 bears observed at one time at the falls, according to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, a state agency separate from the Game Board.

However, numbers have declined significantly since 1998, with 78 individual bears spotted at McNeil River in 2004 and 87 in 2005 -- well below the average of 104 going back to 1983.



Hunt opponents say it wouldn't be sporting to shoot McNeil River bears because they don't fear humans. Supporters contend bears are savvy when they leave the sanctuary and should be fair game. *(Photo by AL GRILLO / Associated Press archive 2004)*



Larry Aumiller, front, former McNeil River State Game Sanctuary manager, leads a group of bear watchers to the McNeil River falls in July 2004. Aumiller moved to Montana because of a decision that allows bear hunting on state lands near the sanctuary. Alaska has an estimated 35,000-45,000 brown bears. *(Photo by AL GRILLO / Associated Press archive 2004)*

The Department of Fish and Game says numbers now are dipping below the threshold where quality bear viewing may be affected.

Critics say if hunting increases it is just a matter of time before one of the recognizable bears -- the ones that have been named by staff members over the years -- is killed.

There's Teddy. She is so tolerant of humans she will nurse her cubs just 10 feet from the sanctuary's viewing platform next to the falls.

"A bear like Teddy is invaluable," Aumiller said. "She is so good, so tolerant. In a way, she's worth 10 other bears."

The seven-member Game Board is being asked to consider 10 proposals to either reverse its decision or reduce hunting pressure on the bears when they wander outside the sanctuary 250 miles southwest of Anchorage. The board is expected to take up the proposals in March.

Game Board chairman Ron Somerville can't speak for other board members, but offered some of his views on the sanctuary bears.

While he can understand people getting emotional over the issue, the sanctuary was created to protect bear viewing, not individual bears, he said.

"It was never designed to protect the bears wherever they wandered," said Somerville, a retired wildlife biologist and administrator with the Department of Fish and Game.

Besides, the state constitution requires that game be managed for the maximum benefit of Alaskans, he said. If the McNeil River sanctuary bears were allowed to undermine that, it would be inexcusable, he said.

The sanctuary was created four decades ago to protect bear viewing at the falls. In 1993, the McNeil River State Game Refuge was established to the north, providing the bears with another buffer of protection. To the south is Katmai National Park, where no hunting is allowed.

According to the Department of Fish and Game, the McNeil River bears range throughout the region, using both the Katmai National Preserve to the west and areas north of the sanctuary, both of which allow hunting.

Brown bear harvests in the area have been well above average since 1998. From July 2002-June 2004, 111 bears were killed, about twice the two-year harvest average since the sanctuary was created, according to Fish and Game.

Alaska has an estimated 35,000-45,000 brown bears.

The Alaska Professional Hunters Association Inc. proposes keeping the 95,000 acres of state land closed because of the bad publicity that could result by opening them, said executive director Bobby Fithian. As it is, the sanctuary bears get great publicity worldwide, he said.

"From our point of view, the allocation or opportunity to harvest a minimum number of bears is not worth the negative feedback," Fithian said.

Another proposal by bear viewing guide Dave Bachrach in Homer would keep the state lands closed and restrict the Game Board from considering reopening them for at least 10 years.

"Alaska has plenty of places where brown bears can be hunted without involving lands surrounding the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary," his proposal says.

Bachrach said when he flies he can see bear trails leading from the sanctuary to the state land along the coast. It is where some of the bears den for the winter.

"Those bears are world famous. Their numbers appear to be in decline," Bachrach said. "Until they know why, how can we open the back door and allow hunters in to kill some more?"

Rod Arno, executive director of the Alaska Outdoor Council, said his group favors the board's decision to open the lands to brown bear hunting.

"As long as these are state lands and a harvest of surplus of brown bears in the area, the Alaska Outdoor Council would support a regulated harvest of brown bears," he said.

But Arno said there is more to it than that. There are other reasons besides increased hunting for why there are fewer bears at McNeil. The bears are going to two other nearby creeks where there are more salmon, and more bears have moved into the preserve, he said.

Arno disputes the theory that the McNeil River bears are so used to humans it would be unsporting to hunt them. Once the bears leave the falls and venture outside the sanctuary, they are as wily as other bears, he said.

"Having guided there personally, I know that those bears that frequent the McNeil falls, once they are away from that site they are just as leery as any bear that I have guided," he said.

Not so, said Aumiller.

"We are exposing those bears to a danger that they have not been allowed to learn exists," he said. "I think that is wrong."

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PROP. 137 FROM MARCH 2005 BOARD OF GAME MEETING

PROPOSAL 137 - 5 AAC 92.510. Areas closed to hunting. Modify the regulation as follows:

Repeal paragraphs (a)(9)(C) dealing with GMU 9, as follows:

[THAT PORTION OF UNIT 9 EXTENDING SOUTH AND EAST OF MCNEIL RIVER STATE GAME SANCTUARY TO THE BOUNDARY OF KATMAI NATIONAL PARK AND PRESERVE, AND INCLUDING ANY STATE LAND WITHIN THE BOUNDARIES OF KATMAI NATIONAL PARK AND PERSERVE, IS CLOSED TO BROWN BEAR HUNTING;]

ISSUE: The Park Service was negotiating with the Naknek/Kvichak Advisory Committee and the State of Alaska, to trade state land (Unit 9A and 9C as described in C) for Park Service land (westernmost portion of Naknek Lake). Per the Park Service request, the Naknek/Kvichak Advisory Committee agreed to vote to close said state land to brown bear hunting with the understanding that efforts for the land swap would continue and they have not.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF NOTHING IS DONE? Nothing.

WILL THE QUALITY OF THE RESOURCE HARVESTED OR PRODUCTS PRODUCED BE IMPROVED? No.

WHO IS LIKELY TO BENEFIT? Hunters.

WHO IS LIKELY TO SUFFER? No one.

OTHER SOLUTIONS CONSIDERED?

PROPOSED BY: Naknek/Kvichak AC

(SW-05S-G-005)

FAVOR

Fairbanks AC (AC 15)

Alaska Outdoor Council (PC 262)

Karyn D. Rode (PC 173)

OPPOSE

Homer AC (AC 18)

Chris Nowakoski (PC 100)

Lucy Foster (PC 101)

Kirsten Foster (PC 102)

Charles T. Robbins (PC 103)

Barbara Robbins (PC 104)

William Storey (PC 105)

Jennifer P. Bozzini (PC 108)

Maria Helm Sinskey (PC 109)

Samuella A. Shoss (PC 110)

Michael Felber (PC 111)

Pam Thompson (PC 112)

Alana Monge (PC 113)

Regina N. Fiske (PC 114)

V. Gwen Weisner (PC 116)

Jerry Chawes (PC 117)

Animal Protection Institute (PC 118)

PROPOSAL 137 - Continued

Janet O'Brien (PC 120)
John & Deborah Pendergraft (PC 121)
Alexandra Cupial (PC 122)
Edgar Bailey & Nina Faust (PC 124)
Christina and Mark Constantini (PC 125)
Karen Hackenberg (PC 126)
Sarah Walker (PC 127)
Phillip A. Greenberg (PC 128)
Lydia Pattison (PC 129)
Sedgwick County Zoo (PC 130)
Norita D. Rivera (PC 131)
Anne Welch (PC 132)
Erin McCabe (PC 134) (and approximately 47 other
emailed comments to The Alaska Wildlife Alliance)
Chet Metcalf (PC 135)
Michael J. Welch (PC 137)
Lynne Nelson (PC 138)
Rachel Marsden (PC 141)
Dave Bachrach (PC 143)
Nathanael J. Paulson (PC 146) (and 36 other comments mailed together)
Marie Schulien (PC 147) (and 9 other comments mailed together)
Donna M. Cook (PC 148)
Priscilla Herben (PC 150)
Britt Ehrhardt (PC 151)
Kristine A. Schmidt (PC 152)
Audubon Alaska (PC 153)
Philip H. Fensterer III (PC 155)
Robert Pattison (PC 157)
Merrill Lowden (PC 158)
Mary Colucci Weinstein (PC 160)
Rusty Grimpe (PC 163)
Elise Snider (PC 164)
Owen K. Hughes (PC 165)
Dawn Y. Judson (PC 166)
Gart Curtis (PC 167)
Michelle R. Schireman (PC 168)
Center for Alaskan Coastal Studies (PC 169)
National Park Service-Katmai (PC 174)
Nancy York (PC 175)
Alaska Video Postcards (PC 176)
C. Susan Rose (PC 177)
Henriette Brasseur (PC 178)
Mary C. Woodward (PC 179)
Janet Lipner (PC 180)

PROPOSAL 137 - Continued

Gerri Tillett (PC 181)
Richard G. Sheehan (PC 182)
Laura & Joe Crapanzano (PC 184)
Marie A. Zaccaria (PC 185)
Thomas E. Meacham (PC 186)
Jacqueline Parish (PC 187)
Amanda Oulson (PC 188)
Alicia C. Shelley (PC 190)
Arthur Ogden Kimball (PC 191)
Thorn Smith (PC 192)
John Geeza and Julianna Switaj (PC 193)
Christopher S. Morin (PC 200)
Morgan McBride (PC 206)
Todd Hardesty (PC 209)
Alan & Mimi Moore (PC 210)
Cyrinda Hoffman (PC 211)
Art Greenwalt (PC 212)
Frank and Christine Doerr (PC 215)
Wendy Hughes (PC 216)
Jacqueline Musgrave (PC 217)
Joe Harvey (PC 218)
Shannan Morin (PC 219)
Anne Wieland (PC 220)
Klaudia Jo Klaudi (PC 240)
Claudio & Valanne Glooschenko (PC 241)
Bill Watkins (PC 242)
JoAnn Varner (PC 243)
Toni A. Stark (PC 245)
Devta Khalsa (PC 246)
Tima Priess (PC 247)
Alvin Leighton (PC 248)
Laura Stamm (PC 249)
Jennifer Tothe Payne (PC 250)
Bette Brock Rutan (PC 251)
April Warwick (PC 252)
Amy Peloza (PC 253)
John Gaguine (PC 254)
Claude DeWandelcer (PC 255)
Jan St. Peters (PC 256)
Spence Guerin (PC 257)
Marcia Denison (PC 258)
Undersigned Homer Businesses (PC259) (43 names listed)
Sierra Club Alaska Office (PC 260)
Richard Hahn (264)

PROPOSAL 137 - Continued

Nancy Tankersley (PC 265)
Jennifer K. Wells (PC 274)
National Parks Conservation Association (PC 275)
Marilyn Berling (PC 276)
Danny McGovern (PC 277)
Kathryn Smith (PC 279)
Darren Doderer (PC 280)
Annika Bratton (PC 282)
Catherine Stepherone (PC 284)
Jacqueline Lynn (PC 288)
Robert Sabin (PC 290)
Mary C. Ray (PC 292) (and 6,062 other
emailed comments to Defenders of Wildlife)
Shannon Campbell (PC 293) (and 33 other
emailed comments to Defenders of Wildlife)
Paul Joslin (PC 294)
Larry Aumiller (PC 2)
Kati Loeffler (PC 4)
Janice Reed-Smith (PC 6)
Kathey Cleal-Brodman (PC 8)
Garth Illingworth (PC 11)
Wendy Illingworth (PC 12)
Heather Doncaster (PC 13)
Martha O'Rourke (PC 15)
Tom Gardiner (PC 16)
Charlotte Gardiner (PC 17)
John Daggett (PC 29)
Jamini & Robert Arcell (PC 30)
Scott Sway (PC 31)
Maria B. Meijer (PC 32)
AK Travel Industry Association (PC 34)
William K. Avery (PC 36)
Tabitha Graves (PC 37)
Larry Wood (PC 39)
Jonathon Bowden (PC 40)
Bryan J. Hile (PC 43)
Wendy Gardner (PC 44)
David Goldblatt (PC 45)
Douglas G. Sobey (PC 46)
Kelly Riley (PC 48)
Thomas Meachum (PC 49)
Veronica A. Greco (PC 50)
Karen Dulan (PC 53)
Ann Warren (PC 57)

PROPOSAL 137 - Continued

Andrea L. Tebolt (PC 59)
Lexie Cataldo (PC 60)
Susan Lewis (PC 61)
Roland Grove (PC 64)
Larry & Joyce Lewis (PC 65)
Heather Payne (PC 66)
Susan Prince (PC 67)
Michael Bret Hood (PC 68)
Lisa Tryon (PC 69)
Mollie Alstott (PC 70)
Judy & Richard Leicester (PC 72)
Tarn Ream (PC 74)
Von Braschler (PC 75)
Carol Jensen (PC 76)
Steven R. Tarola (PC 77)
Bill Sherwonit (PC 79)
Ethel Bochmann (PC 80)
Kirsten Flynn (PC 81)
AK Society of Outdoor & Nature Photographers (PC 82)
James Braswell (PC 84)
James Jacksons (PC 85)
Howard Maltby (PC 86)
Robert Pattison (PC 87)
Jonette Bronson (PC 89)
Jeff Proudfoot (PC 90)
Clarence Rode (PC 91)
Gail Karr (PC 92)
Donna Rode (PC 93)
David Boyer (PC 94)
Anderson Bradford (PC 99)
National Parks Service (PC 25)
Donna Ferraro (PC 295) (and 50 faxed comments
to the Homer Chamber of Commerce)

FINAL ACTION: Carries Fails Tabled No Action See Prop. # _____

ABSENT _____ **ABSTAIN** _____

DATE _____ **TIME** _____ **TAPE #** _____

ATT: BOG COMMENTS
ADF&G BOARDS SUPPORT SECTION
907 465 6094
February 18, 2005

RECEIVED

FEB 18 2005

BOARDS

COMMENT# 259
Page 1 of 3

DATE: February 18, 2005
TO: Alaska Department of Fish and Game - Juneau
FROM: Homer Chamber of Commerce
SUBJECT: Proposals # 129 and # 137

Number of Pages 51 Including Cover Sheet

Following are letters that were received at the Homer Chamber of Commerce from individuals concerning Proposals # 129 and #137.

Derotha Ferraro

Derotha Ferraro
Executive Director

RECEIVED
FEB 18 2005
BOARDS

COMMENT# 295

ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
BOARDS SUPPORT SECTION

We the undersigned Homer businesses are in OPPOSITION to BOG Proposals 129 and 137. Proposal 137 specifically targets 2 parcels of state land collectively known as Kamishak Special Use Area (these areas are embedded within Katmai National Park and McNeil River Sanctuary); Proposal 129 is a collective proposal to reconsider all hunting and trapping closures including McNeil River State Game Sanctuary and the two parcels of the Kamishak Special Use Area.

Bear viewing is a very important tourist draw for the town of Homer, millions of dollars of revenue are brought into our community each summer by wildlife viewing tourists who use Homer as a departure point for their bear viewing experiences. These tourists not only support the many air taxis and boats that offer bear viewing (who in turn provide jobs and purchase locally); but, more importantly they lodge, eat, halibut fish, kayak, shop and partake of many other activities while in the Homer area. It is said that every dollar spent circulates seven times within a community. Bear viewing is critical to Homer's economic diversity.

Opening hunting in or near McNeil and Katmai will significantly impact this valuable population of tolerant, human conditioned bears, diminishing the viewing experience and thereby impacting our businesses as people go elsewhere for their wildlife viewing experience.

EMERALD AIR SERVICE, INC
BELUGA AIR
NORTHWIND AVIATION
KACHEMAK BAY FLYING SERVICE, INC
MARITIME HELICOPTERS
SMOKEY BAY AIR, INC
AK ADVENTURES
KACHEMAK BAY WILDERNESS LODGE
LANDS END RESORT
HALLO BAY BEAR LODGE
SADIE COVE WILDERNESS LODGE
TUTKA BAY WILDERNESS LODGE
ACROSS THE BAY TENT AND BREAKFAST
HOMER FLOATPLANE LODGE
MAGIC CANYON RANCH
GARDEN HOUSE
ISLAND WATCH B & B
GRIZZLY CHARTERS
SILVER FOX CHARTERS
MAKO'S WATER TAXI
RAINBOW TOURS
BAY EXCURSIONS WATER TAXI & TOURS

RECEIVED

FEB 18 2005

BOARDS

COMMENT# 259

Page 2 of 3

TRUE NORTH KAYAK ADVENTURES

EAGLE EYE PHOTO & COMMUNICATIONS
SMOKEY BAY NATURAL FOODS
CAPTAINS COFFEE ROASTING COMPANY
FRESH SOURDOUGH EXPRESS BAKERY CAFÉ
PANARELLI'S CAFÉ & DELI
FLYING COLORS ART STUDIO
THE SURF SHACK
MCNAMARA CONSTRUCTION
NEXUS EDUCATIONAL SERVICES
ULMERS DRUG AND HARDWARE
HOMER BOOKSTORE
UPPER CUT
FISHERMANS FRIEND MARINE
STEVE TYROLOA CPA
WILD NORTH PHOTOS
ALASKA BEAR QUEST
SEEMORE WILDLIFE
WILDLIFE HD
HOMER BREWING COMPANY
PRATT MUSEUM

COMMENT# 259
page 3 of 3



February 10, 2005

Alaska Department of Fish & Game
Board Supports Section
P.O. Box 25526
Juneau Alaska 99502

RECEIVED

FEB 15 2005

BOARDS

Attn: Board of Game Comments

The Alaska Travel Industry Association (ATIA) represents nearly 1,000 tourism related businesses in Alaska. One of our objectives is to promote experiences that meet or exceed our visitor's expectations. Year after year, our research tells us that wildlife viewing is one of the 3 main reasons tourists tell us they visit Alaska. The ATIA has reviewed proposals for the March 2005 Board of Game meeting in Anchorage, Alaska and has the following comments.

In the current proposal packet before the Board of Game, proposals 129, 134 and 137 seek modifications to current regulations. ATIA's comments on these proposals are attached. ATIA's comments are made to help foster and enhance wildlife viewing opportunities in important tourism viewing areas.

Thank you for reviewing the attached comments. ATIA looks forward to working with the Board of Game in the future to assure healthy wildlife for visitors and Alaskan residents alike.

Sincerely,

Ron Peck
President & COO

COMMENT# **34**
page 1 of 2

Alaska Travel Industry Association
2600 Cordova Street, Suite 201
Anchorage, AK 99503
(907) 929-2842 n/f (907) 561-5727

REC=

FEB 15 2005

BOARDS

Alaska Travel Industry Association
Comments to the Board of Game March 2005 Meeting
February 10, 2005

Proposal 129: These 4 areas are currently closed to hunting except as noted:

- Portage Glacier Closed Area - Currently closed to all hunting of game except migratory fowl where hunting is permitted after September 1
- Seward Closed Area - Closed to the taking of big game, except black bear
- Russian River Closed Area - Closed to hunting during June and July
- McNeil River State Game Sanctuary, including area south and west to the Katmai National Park and Preserve - Closed to brown bear hunting

ATIA Recommendation: Maintain closures as currently defined for each of the 4 areas to encourage greater opportunities for wildlife viewing. Any hunting allowed (migratory birds and bears as noted above) should primarily be to maintain healthy, maximized populations of wildlife.

Proposal 134 - Proposal is to prohibit hunting within ¼ mile of residence or campground on Kenai Peninsula and lands south of Anchorage west of Prince William Sound to Seward

ATIA Recommendation: Support proposal to prohibit hunting within ¼ mile of residences or campgrounds in the area defined to encourage greater opportunities for wildlife viewing and promote safety of campers and Alaska residents.

Proposal 137 - Game Management Unit 9 - State Game Management Area from McNeil River to Katmai National Park currently closed to brown bear hunting.

ATIA Recommendation: Maintain closures as currently defined to encourage greater opportunities for wildlife viewing.

COMMENT# 34
page 2 of 2

February 17, 2005

Board Comments
Alaska Board of Game

RECEIVED
FEB 18 2005
BOARDS

Dear Chairman and Board Members:

I am writing to provide a summary of scientific information available regarding proposals 33, 34, 29, 30, 129, and 137, all of which refer to brown bear management in Units 9 and 15. I am a PhD candidate at Washington State University and have been studying brown bears for the past 8 years, the last 4 of which have been on the Kenai and Alaska Peninsulas. As part of my work I have spent a considerable amount of time compiling all available information on these populations. Though you are likely to be aware of some of the information I am including, I hoped that by summarizing this information it may aid you in applying the available scientific data to your management decisions.

For both the Kenai Peninsula and the areas of 9C & 9B discussed in proposals 29, 30, 129, & 137, I think it's important to recognize that we do not currently have accurate estimates of brown bear populations. Coming from an academic perspective, the current methods to generate bear numbers in these areas would not withstand scientific evaluation or peer review. Thus, these numbers should be viewed cautiously. In the Kamishak Special Use Area north of Katmai National Park, I am not aware of any population estimate that has ever been conducted in this area. The National Park Service is currently analyzing aerial line transect data which includes the Douglas River/Kamishak Special Use Area, but a population estimate is not currently available and will not be available for at least another year based on my inquiry. It is my understanding that Dick Sellers conducted an aerial line transect of the Katmai Preserve in 1999. Otherwise, estimates are extrapolated from Black Lake over 200 miles south of Douglas River. Population growth or decline for all of Unit 9 has primarily been based on Black Lake. With variation in consistency of salmon runs and human use throughout Unit 9, it is unlikely that Black Lake is representative of all areas. As for the Kenai, I'm certain Ted Spraker is well aware of the difficulty in obtaining an accurate estimate of the Kenai Bear population and the uncertainty with the existing estimate.

It is my understanding that with the Kenai population estimate of 250-300 bears (I think the to-date working estimate is 275) that sustainable harvest is suggested at 14-17 bears. Thus, suggested harvest levels in both proposals 33 and 34 would exceed that value. The Kenai Conservation Strategy developed in 2000 by a stakeholder group of Kenai residents suggests adhering to the sustainable harvest levels. Additionally, in November 1998, ADF&G identified Kenai Peninsula brown bears as a "Species of Special Concern" suggesting that the population is "vulnerable to a significant decline due to low numbers, restricted distribution, dependence on limited habitat resources, or sensitivity to environmental disturbance". The IBBST stated in 1999 that "a statistically defensible estimate is required for future harvest management" and additionally stated that "The Kenai brown bear population age structure is of major concern because the female age distribution is markedly different from that of a normal population. Few young females from 3-6 years of age have been found". I am not aware of any data that has been collected since 1999 that suggests that this situation has changed. Though I respect the public interest and desire to increase brown bear harvest on the Kenai, it seems risky given the lack of an accurate population estimate and the variety of threats to brown bears on the Kenai including DLP mortalities, unreported mortalities, and habitat encroachment via recreation and

COMMENT#

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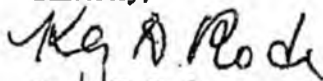
Page 1 of 5

development. I think utilizing information regarding human/bear encounters on the Kenai as an index of population growth or decline can provide false conclusions. Human activity continues to increase on the Kenai, and an increase in bear/human interactions could be a result of more people out and about on the Kenai, rather than a true increase in the bear population. Bear safety education and continued improvement of waste management could help substantially in reducing DLP's on the Kenai, which would be one way to improve the chances of having an annual harvest. Public misunderstanding of bear behavior appears to be involved with a number of DLPs each year. Being involved in public education programs in Homer, I was surprised at the lack of information local residents had regarding bear behavior and safety issues.

Lastly, I would like to provide data regarding bear movements and habitat use patterns in the Douglas River/Kamishak Special Use Area. However, I should precede this by addressing the land swap issue referred to in proposal 137. When I began my research in this area 3 years ago I inquired about the history of the special closure designation for brown bear hunting. In 1985 this area was closed to brown bear hunting due to it's proximity to both Katmai National Park and McNeil Sanctuary. Board members specifically stated that "we shouldn't allow a firing line to be established between what are arguable the two best places to view bears in the state". Though I knew the Park Service was interested in obtaining this area, I do not know the reason the land swap never occurred. However, the closure of this area by the Board does not mention a pending land swap as part of the closure validation. Attached is a map showing bear movements for 5 of 16 bears collared in my dissertation research within the Kamishak Special Use area surrounding Douglas River. Minimum convex polygon home ranges sizes averaged 520.38 +/- 477.7 km² for males and 160.24 +/- 315.0 for females. The female with 3 yearlings on the map had the largest home range of any bear of 1223.7 km². Two of the males had home ranges over 900 km². Daily travel distances averaged 10 km with both males and females traveling up to 40 km in a single day. Bears were collared from late May through mid-October in 2003 and 2004. Over half the bears migrated from Douglas River to either the Park, Preserve, or McNeil Sanctuary in mid-summer. During 800 hours of observation in 2003, bears approached observers within less than 150 meters on 231 occasions, or about once every 4 hours. Our observations suggest that these bears are mostly unafraid of people. I have also provided harvest data for Units 9B and 9C which illustrates the increased harvest in both these areas. In 1999, 2001, and 2003, harvest exceeded suggested sustainable levels and between 1998 and 2003 harvest doubled from the preceding 5 years.

I hope this information will be helpful in your decision-making process regarding brown bear management in Units 9 and 15. I appreciate your consideration of the available scientific information.

Sincerely,



Karyn D. Rode

PhD Candidate

Washington State University

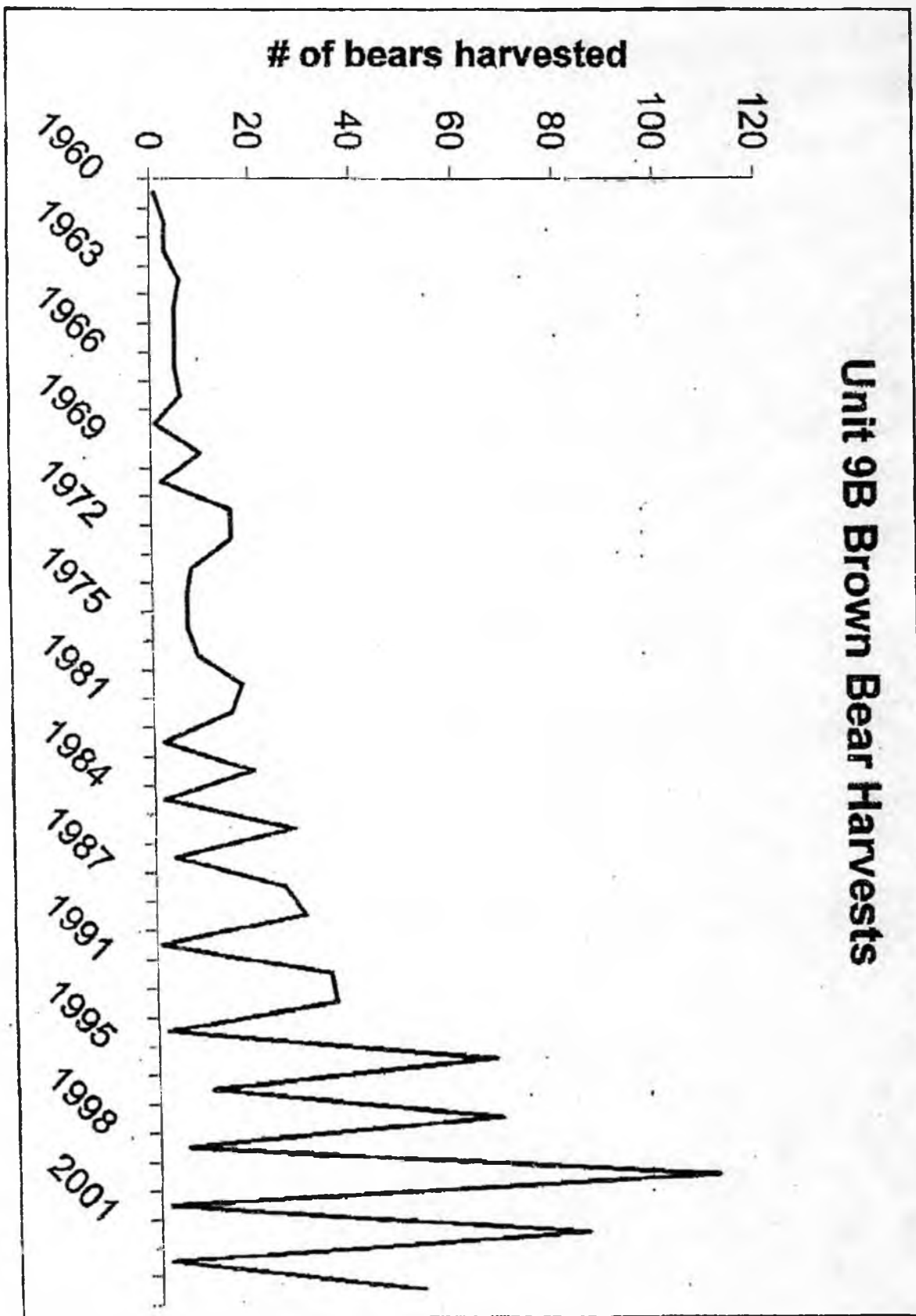
karynrode@hotmail.com

907-783-0027

COMMENT#

173

Page 2 of 5



Unit 9B Brown Bear Harvests

Submitted by Karyn D. Rede

ADF&G COMMENT ON PROP. 137

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal opens state lands south and east of McNeil State Game Sanctuary in Subunit 9C and state lands within the boundaries of Katmai National Park and Preserve to bear hunting.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: Take no Action

RATIONALE: See proposal 129.

PROPOSAL 138

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal recommends authorizing the use of ORVs and snowmachines to take wolves in Subunits 9C and 9E, provided that the motorized vehicle is not moving.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: No recommendation

RATIONALE: Unlawful methods of taking game are listed in 5 AAC 92.080. Based on the proposal's text, this proposal recommends adding Subunits 9C and 9E to 5 AAC 92.080(4)(D), which is an incremental change to the current legal method of motorized vehicle use. The wolf population in Unit 9 is healthy and likely increasing. Wolf harvests vary annually with weather conditions, but are typically minimal. Authorization of this method of taking wolves is not likely to reduce the wolf population in the area.

PROPOSAL 139

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: This proposal would prohibit trapping within ¼ mile of roads and residences in Subunit 9C and require that a sign be placed near the road to mark traps and trap lines.

DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: Do not adopt

RATIONALE: This is a conflict between user groups and a public safety issue. Pet owners want to run dogs on trails or near their houses without restraints, and each year dogs are caught in traps or snares. Dog owners have expressed concern about traps set along the road and trail systems. It is hard to predict how large of an impact this closure would have on trapping in Subunit 9C. Lack of proper snow conditions and frequent warm temperatures limit the use of snowmachines and ORVs in this area. As a result, the ¼ mile closure would likely reduce the overall trapping effort and fur harvest. Requiring signs at the trail heads or common access points would make pet owners aware of trapping activity, but will likely result in signs being posted at the head of all trails extending ¼ mile off the road system.

PROPOSAL 140

EFFECT OF THE PROPOSAL: Amend the Sourdough Controlled Use Area restriction to allow the use of ORVs to hunt small game.


DEPARTMENT RECOMMENDATION: Do not adopt

RATIONALE: See staff comments in proposal 129. The Sourdough Controlled Use Area is small, only 92 mi², however it lies along the Richardson Highway in an area that the Nelchina Caribou Herd migrates through consistently each year. Non-motorized areas are important to many hunters, and this is the only non-motorized area that can consistently be hunted for caribou year after year in Unit 13. More than half of this controlled use area lies within BLM managed lands that are open to federal subsistence regulations. In most years the state Tier I caribou season runs through the end of March; the federal caribou hunting season runs through the end of March every year.

Law enforcement in this area would be very difficult if the area were opened to snowmachines for hunting small game, but not caribou. Even though this controlled use area has a general non-motorized hunting restriction, ORVs are allowed on designated trails allowing some access to the area using snowmachine. While hunters are required to keep their vehicles on the trails, they can leave their vehicle on a trail, and pursue small game on foot. Also, vehicles are only controlled west of the Richardson Highway and can be used east of the highway.

PROPOSAL 141

ADF&G RATIONALE ON PROP. 137 COMMENT

<p>The McNeil River State Game Refuge is closed to brown bear hunting.</p>	<p>The lands closed to bear hunting by this regulation represent 571 mi² of state lands adjacent to one of the most well known brown bear sanctuaries in the world. The refuge was closed to bear hunting in 1995 in response to continued opposition to a drawing hunt in the area. The Department recommends no changes to the McNeil Refuge restrictions at this time. However, the Board may want to consider moving this closure to "areas closed to hunting" 5AAC 92.510.</p>	<p>Status quo</p>
<p>Unit 9C</p>		
<p>state lands south and east of McNeil State Game Sanctuary in the northeast corner of Subunit 9C and on any state lands within the boundaries of Katmai National Park and Preserve</p>	<p>The lands closed to bear hunting by this regulation represent 87 mi² of state lands surrounded by the world's two most well known brown bear sanctuaries that were established by the state and federal governments to protect bear populations. The value of these areas to wildlife viewers stem from the fact that the brown bear population is not hunted. Because this is not one contiguous area, some lands that are closed by this regulation are small areas with poorly defined borders and are largely inaccessible.</p>	<p>Status quo</p> 
<p>Current Language: that portion of Unit 9 extending south and east of McNeil River State Game Sanctuary to the boundary of Katmai National Park and Preserve, and including any state land within the boundaries of Katmai National Park and Preserve, is closed to brown bear hunting;</p>		
<p>Unit 10</p>		
<p>Canada Goose hunting closure in Unit 10</p>	<p>This closure is redundant with the seasons and bag limits listed under 5 AAC 85.065(a)(4)(E) and should be removed to allow future regulations to provide hunting opportunity for Canada Geese in Unit 10. The Unit 10 Canada Goose closure was established to protect the Aleutian Canada Goose when it was listed as an endangered species. The Aleutian Canada Goose was de-listed in 2002 and is currently above the management objectives for population size. The Pacific Flyway Council is under political pressure to slow population growth and is willing to consider opening a season in Unit 10.</p>	<p>Amend to eliminate Closed Area</p>
<p>Current Language: Unit 10, except Unimak Island, is closed to the taking of Canada Geese;</p>		
<p>Unit 10</p>		

LANGUAGE ALLOWING BEAR HUNT ADOPTED 2005

5 AAC 92.510. Areas closed to hunting

(9) Unit 9:

(A) in Unit 9, the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary and contiguous tidelands are closed to hunting;

(B) repealed 7/1/2003;

(C) through June 30, 2007, that portion of Unit 9 extending south and east of McNeil River State Game Sanctuary to the boundary of Katmai National Park and Preserve, and including any state land within the boundaries of Katmai National Park and Preserve, is closed to brown bear hunting;

From: doug hill [deeryard2001@yahoo.com]
Sent: Sunday, February 18, 2007 12:17 AM
To: Rep. Paul Seaton
Subject: HB 127 - Thank You - From an Alaskan Resident and Hunter

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Blue

Representative Seaton,

Thank you very much for introducing HB 127 - "An Act amending the boundaries of the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary."
Thank you also for your foresight and thoughtful comments regarding the future of the McNeil River State Bear Sanctuary.

I am a hunter and I do not support hunting of bears in the Kamishak Special Use Area

Doug Hill
PO Box 220236
Anchorage, Alaska 99522
907-348-8519
deeryard2001@yahoo.com

Don't get soaked. Take a quick peak at the forecast with the Yahoo! Search weather shortcut.
http://tools.search.yahoo.com/shortcuts/#loc_weather

DATE: February 15, 2007

TO: Representative Paul Seaton

FROM: Duane Howe
41640 Gladys Ct
Homer, AK 99603

SUB: HB 127 to add the Kamishak Special Use Area to the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary

Thank you for sponsoring HB 127. I hope the bill will pass and be signed into law without delay. I see no need to change the management plan for brown bears in the McNeil River State Game Refuge and Sanctuary and Kamishak Special Use Area. The situation seems to call for maintaining at least as much protection as has been afforded the bears for the last 20 years, since their numbers seem to be near their lowest levels during that period of time.

The Fish & Game Department has recommended leaving the hunting ban in place as have the Homer Fish & Game Advisory Committee and the professional guides of Alaska. It makes no sense to me to kill bears that are providing education and entertainment for hundreds of people annually, not to mention many times the revenue for the local economies than the bears would provide as dead trophy animals.

Alaska may be the last frontier where hunting is part of the culture, but it doesn't have to be the last place where values other than those offered by the blood sports are appreciated and supported. The area involved represents a tiny fraction of the bear country in Alaska. Keeping it off limits for hunting will not cause a hardship for anyone and will doubtlessly avoid an embarrassment for the state of Alaska.

Please continue your efforts for HB 127.



Cc Gatto, Craig, Kohring, Roses, Wilson, Edgmon, Guttenberg, Kawasaki

FAX

To:

Date: February 16, 2007

To: House Resources and Finance Committee
Representative Paul Seaton

From: Karen Case
P O Box 27944
Fresno, CA 93729

RE: HB 127

I am writing to ask that you support **HB 127**.

Adding the Kamishak Special Use Area to the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary (a National Natural Landmark) will help to maintain a quality visitor/wildlife viewing experience, which translates into millions of tourism dollars. This revenue will benefit the local economy of Homer, the Kenai Peninsula Borough, and particularly the State of Alaska.

To safeguard the declining bear population at McNeil River, and not jeopardize the successful bear-viewing program to an area that has been closed to hunting for over 20 years, I strongly urge you to **support HB 127**.

Thank you.

From: Catherine & Erik [cark1@worldnet.att.net]
Sent: Friday, November 17, 2006 7:46 AM
To: Rep. Paul Seaton
Subject: McNeil River Bears
Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Red

Dear Representative Seaton,

Alaska is getting very bad national attention for the Game Board's plan to allow hunting of human-habituated bears around the McNeil River Sanctuary, and rightfully so. It is very hard to understand how they could possibly justify it, but since they seem to be intent on the plan it makes sense to head them off and prevent future mistakes legislatively. We urge you to introduce legislation to increase the size of the sanctuary by adding state land.

Thank you,

Catherine Cassidy
Erik Huebsch
PO Box 599
Kasilof, AK 99610
262-6189

From: finnicum@tds.net
Sent: Saturday, November 18, 2006 5:08 AM
To: Rep. Paul Seaton
Subject: McNeil River Sanctuary

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Red

Dear Rep. Seaton;

I am writing to you with great concern over a threatened part of Alaska.

I urge you to introduce legislation that will add state lands to the McNeil River sanctuary. These lands should be protected in perpetuity from any activities including hunting that might interfere with the world class bear viewing opportunities in the area. The economic value of ecotourism far exceeds, in contrast, the value of killing bears that have become habituated to humans.

I think you will find that helping to conserve the natural splendor of Alaska's beautiful outdoors will be far more economically viable for the state by bringing in more "eco" tourists.

Please help to save the McNeil River habituated bears from a horrible "trick". They have come to trust humans, and violating that trust is wrong. Please introduce this legislation that will help these majestic symbols of Alaska.

You are in my prayers as you make decisions to protect America's gem, Alaska.

Thank you and God Bless you,

Lisa Pack Finn, um
6921 Mobile Road
Blue Ridge, GA 30513
706-632-7716

"If all the beasts were gone, man would die from loneliness of spirit, for what happens to the beast happens to the man."

--Chief Seattle

From: Mark Dickson [Marksd@gci.net]
Sent: Saturday, November 18, 2006 9:29 AM
To: Rep. Paul Seaton
Subject: Bear Hunting
Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Red

Dear Rep. Seaton;

I urge you to introduce legislation that will add state lands to the McNeil River sanctuary. These lands should be protected in perpetuity from any activities including Brown Bear hunting that might interfere with the world class bear viewing opportunities that has developed in the area in recent years. The economic value of ecotourism far exceeds, in contrast, the value of bear hunting.

Thank you,

Mark Dickson

*58987 Deitz Lane
Homer, Ak. 235-6878*

From: Alaskan Affair [patriciacue@acsalaska.net]
Sent: Saturday, November 18, 2006 1:01 PM
To: Rep. Paul Seaton
Subject: Legislation
Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Red

Dear Representative Seaton,

I have visited the McNeil River Bear Sanctuary and found a unique place where bears live in an environment free from human interference. In this place, humans are reminded of the beauty of nature.

I am writing to ask you to introduce legislation to add additional acreage to the sanctuary which will ultimately prohibit hunting of the McNeil/Katmai bears. The bears and the habitat provide our state and our country with a resource that goes beyond that which hunting will provide. As our world becomes ever more crowded and wildlife pushed aside in the name of development, we have the opportunity to create a perpetual ecosystem that is the envy of the world.

Thank you for your consideration. I will continue working toward with effort with other legislators and look forward to your response.

Patricia Cue
PO Box 143
Homer, AK 99603
235-2495

From: Nceiland@aol.com
Sent: Friday, November 24, 2006 8:16 PM
To: Rep. Paul Seaton
Subject: RE: McNeil River Sanctuary
Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Red

Dear Rep. Seaton;

I urge you to introduce legislation that will add state lands to the McNeil River sanctuary. These lands should be protected in perpetuity from any activities including hunting that might interfere with the world class bear viewing opportunities in the area. The economic value of ecotourism far exceeds, in contrast, the value of killing bears that have become habituated to humans.

Thank you,

***Nita Eiland
5203 Eighth Street
Zephyrhills FL 33542
nceiland@aol.com***

From: Wesley Hill [psychhill@yahoo.com]
Sent: Thursday, November 30, 2006 11:08 AM
To: Rep. Paul Seaton
Subject: adding lands to the McNeil River Sanctuary

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Red

Dear Rep. Seaton;

I urge you to introduce legislation to add state lands to the McNeil River sanctuary. The McNeil River Sanctuary and the new lands should be protected in perpetuity from any activities including hunting that might interfere with the world class bear viewing opportunities in the area. The economic value of ecotourism far exceeds, in contrast, the value of killing bears that have become habituated to humans.

Thank you,

Wesley Hill and Debbie Evensen
PO Box 1092
Homer, Alaska 99603

907-235-8900

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Access over 1 million songs.
<http://music.yahoo.com/unlimited>

From: Keith Hicks [ghicks3@woh.rr.com]
Sent: Saturday, December 09, 2006 4:07 PM
To: Rep. Paul Seaton
Subject: McNeil River Sanctuary Lands
Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Green

Dear Representative Seaton:

I am urging you introduce legislation that will add state lands to the McNeil River Sanctuary, to protect the bears from being hunted.

I first learned about the bears of McNeil River Sanctuary from the National Geographic Grizzly Wildcam this past summer, through a partnership with Pratt Museum and the National Park Service. It was outstanding! I learned so much about bear behavior, coping in their environment, struggling to live. It's real; I was looking at it, seeing them in "real-time" with nothing glossed over. The wildcam makes bear and other wildlife issues a reality. Although I do not reside in your district, I feel that we all must be good stewards. If we don't do things right now, we will not have the chance to correct it down the line.

Please, I strongly urge you bring forward Frank Mullen's proposal to add more state land to the Sanctuary, and stop any proposed hunting in that geographic area. His information that has been presented to us and that he has shared with you previously makes a great deal of sense and deserves great and open discussion. Your position in the Legislature gives you the capability to do that. Thank you for your time to read this and I hope to act positively on the request.

Respectfully,
Keith Hicks
Ohio

All Email checked by Norton AntiVirus

From: Karen Case [spiritdriven@sbcglobal.net]
Sent: Saturday, December 09, 2006 6:00 PM
To: Rep. Paul Seaton
Subject: McNeil River Sanctuary...
Attachments: Katamai map large.JPG

Dear Representative Seaton:

I am urging you introduce legislation that will add state lands to the McNeil River Sanctuary, to protect the bears from being hunted.

I first learned about the bears of McNeil River Sanctuary from the National Geographic Grizzly Wildcam this past summer, through a partnership with Pratt Museum and the National Park Service. It was outstanding! I learned so much about bear behavior, coping in their environment, struggling to live. It's real; I was looking at it, seeing them in "real-time" with nothing glossed over. The wildcam makes bear and other wildlife issues a reality. This is your responsibility Rep. Seaton. We all must be good stewards. If we don't do things right now, we will not have the chance to correct it down the line.

Please, I strongly urge you bring forward Frank Mullen's proposal to add more state land to the Sanctuary, and stop any proposed hunting in that geographic area.

Respectfully,
Karen Case
Fresno, California
USA
spiritdriven@sbcglobal.net

From: RAdki1841@aol.com [mailto:RAdki1841@aol.com]
Sent: Saturday, December 09, 2006 6:54 PM
To: Rep. Paul Seaton; Ian Laing; Louie Flora; Katie Shows
Cc: RAdki1841@aol.com
Subject: Adding state lands to the McNeil River Sanctuary

Dear Representative Seaton,

I am urging you introduce legislation that will add state lands to the McNeil River Sanctuary, to protect the bears from being hunted.

I first learned about the bears of McNeil River Sanctuary from the National Geographic Grizzly Wildcam this past summer, through a partnership with Pratt Museum and the National Park Service. It was outstanding! I learned so much about bear behavior, coping in their environment, struggling to live. It's real; I was looking at it, seeing them in "real-time" with nothing glossed over. The wildcam makes bear and other wildlife issues a reality. This is your responsibility Rep. Seaton. We all must be good stewards. If we don't do things right now, we will not have the chance to correct it down the line.

Please, I strongly urge you bring forward Frank Mullen's proposal to add more state land to the Sanctuary, and stop any proposed hunting in that geographic area.

The world is watching you! Please do the right thing. Protect the bears. Stop any proposed hunting in this area.

Respectfully,
Rosemary C. Adkisson
1841 Country Club Drive
High Point, NC 27262
336-889-7975



From: barbara@avcreations.net
Sent: Saturday, December 09, 2006 8:06 PM
To: Rep. Paul Seaton

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Green

Dear Representative Seaton:

I am urging you introduce legislation that will add state lands to the McNeil River Sanctuary, to protect the bears from being hunted.

I first learned about the bears of McNeil River Sanctuary from the National Geographic Grizzly Wildcam this past summer, through a partnership with Pratt Museum and the National Park Service. It was outstanding! I learned so much about bear behavior, coping in their environment, struggling to live. It's real; I was looking at it, seeing them in "real-time" with nothing glossed over. The wildcam makes bear and other wildlife issues a reality. This is your responsibility Rep. Seaton. We all must be good stewards. If we don't do things right now, we will not have the chance to correct it down the line. Please, I strongly urge you bring forward Frank Mullen's proposal to add more state land to the Sanctuary, and stop any proposed hunting in that geographic area.

Respectfully,
Barbara C. Nicholson
912 Burnham Court
Glenview IL 60025-4140

From: Sylvia-Gaertner [Sylvia-Gaertner@gmx.de]
Sent: Monday, December 11, 2006 3:48 AM
To: Rep. Paul Seaton
Subject: Bear hunting

Dear Representative Seaton:

I am urging you introduce legislation that will add state lands to the McNeil River Sanctuary, to protect the bears from being hunted.

I first learned about the bears of McNeil River Sanctuary from the National Geographic Grizzly Wildcam this past summer, through a partnership with Pratt Museum and the National Park Service. It was outstanding! I learned so much about bear behavior, coping in their environment, struggling to live. It's real; I was looking at it, seeing them in "real-time" with nothing glossed over. The wildcam makes bear and other wildlife issues a reality. This is your responsibility Rep. Seaton. We all must be good stewards. If we don't do things right now, we will not have the chance to correct it down the line.

Please, I strongly urge you bring forward Frank Mullen's proposal to add more state land to the Sanctuary, and stop any proposed hunting in that geographic area.

Respectfully,

Sylvia Gaertner

E-Mail : Sylvia-Gaertner@gmx.de

From: Parisa S. [p_sarandi@yahoo.com]
Sent: Thursday, December 14, 2006 6:02 PM
To: Rep. Paul Seaton
Subject: Bear action Alert

Dear Representative Seaton:

I am urging you introduce legislation that will add state lands to the McNeil River Sanctuary, to protect the bears from being hunted.

I first learned about the bears of McNeil River Sanctuary from the National Geographic Grizzly Wildcam this past summer, through a partnership with Pratt Museum and the National Park Service. It was outstanding! I learned so much about bear behavior, coping in their environment, struggling to live. It's real; I was looking at it, seeing them in "real-time" with nothing glossed over. The wildcam makes bear and other wildlife issues a reality. This is your responsibility Rep. Seaton. We all must be good stewards. If we don't do things right now, we will not have the chance to correct it down the line. Please, I strongly urge you bring forward Frank Mullen's proposal to add more state land to the Sanctuary, and stop any proposed hunting in that geographic area.

Respectfully,

Everyone is raving about [the all-new Yahoo! Mail beta](#).

From: Rep. Paul Seaton
Sent: Tuesday, January 23, 2007 4:31 PM
To: Louie Flora
Subject: FW:

-----Original Message-----

From: Elizabeth Wasserman [mailto:homingin@yahoo.com]
Sent: Wednesday, December 06, 2006 5:51 AM
To: Rep. Paul Seaton
Subject:

Dear Rep. Seaton;

It appears the only way to truly protect the bears that use the McNeil River area is to increase the size of the Sanctuary, where they are protected from hunting. I really appreciate Frank Mullen bringing forward a proposal to add more state land to the Sanctuary. We are looking to you to lead the way in this effort.

I urge you to introduce legislation that will add state lands to the McNeil River sanctuary. These lands should be protected in perpetuity from any activities including hunting that might interfere with the world class bear viewing opportunities in the area. The economic value of ecotourism far exceeds, in contrast, the value of killing bears that have become habituated to humans.

Even more important to me than ecotourism opportunities is maintaining healthy populations of brown bears, a keystone species in this coastal ecosystem. Alaskan brown/grizzly bears are a merely a remnant of the great bear population that once extended through the western United States all the way down to Mexico.

You are in a position to help protect these animals and their ecosystems. Please help.

Thank you,

Elizabeth Wasserman

Elizabeth Wasserman
PO Box 1422
Anchor Point, AK
99556
(907) 235-1543 home
(907) 235-7903 work
homingin@yahoo.com

Need a quick answer? Get one in minutes from people who know.
Ask your question on www.Answers.yahoo.com

From: Earthview02@aol.com
Sent: Monday, December 11, 2006 7:04 AM
To: Rep. Paul Seaton
Subject: Please add land to the McNeil River Sanctuary
Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Blue

Dear Representative Seaton,

I am writing to urge you to support the addition of more land to the McNeil River Sanctuary. I first became aware of the sanctuary last year through the National Geographic live webcam site that brought the bears into my life and now I am forever touched and changed by the experience of watching them fish, lie around, and raise their young in their habitat. We humans have so much land; please give more to the grizzlies, true natives of Alaska.

Thank you so much,
Hillary Maurer
West Branch, Iowa

From: finnicum@tds.net
Sent: Monday, December 11, 2006 7:21 AM
To: Rep. Paul Seaton
Subject: McNeil River Sanctuary

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Blue

Dear Representative Seaton:

I am writing you with great concern about one of Alaska's treasures, the McNeil River Sanctuary and the brown bears that inhabit it.

I urge you introduce legislation that will add state lands to the McNeil River Sanctuary, to protect the bears from being hunted.

I believe that the hunting the bears at McNeil River Sanctuary is the same as shooting fish in a barrel. These are animals that are used to close proximity of human beings and see humans as no danger. It is unthinkable to consider killing these "habituated" creatures.

I first learned about the bears of McNeil River Sanctuary from the National Geographic Grizzly Wildcam this past summer, through a partnership with Pratt Museum and the National Park Service. It was outstanding! I learned so much about bear behavior, coping in their environment, struggling to live. It's real; I was looking at it, seeing them in "real-time" with nothing glossed over. The wildcam makes bear and other wildlife issues a reality. This is your responsibility Rep. Seaton. We all must be good stewards. If we don't do things right now, we will not have the chance to correct it down the line.

Please, I strongly urge you bring forward Frank Mullen's proposal to add more state land to the Sanctuary, and stop any proposed hunting in that geographic area.

Thank you for your time in reading this email.

You are in my prayers as you make these decisions. God bless you.

Respectfully,

Lisa Pack Finnicum
6921 Mobile Road
Blue Ridge, GA 30513
706-632-7716

"If all the beasts were gone, man would die from loneliness of spirit, for what happens to the beast happens to the man."

--Chief Seattle

From: Rep. Paul Seaton
Sent: Tuesday, January 23, 2007 5:41 PM
To: Louie Flora
Subject: FW: McNeil

From: Eileen Mullen [mailto:emullen2003@yahoo.com]
Sent: Thursday, December 14, 2006 1:18 PM
To: Rep. Paul Seaton
Subject: McNeil

Dear Paut,

I really appreciate that you are making an effort to protect the McNeil Bears from being hunted.

As a person in the tourist industry, it is only logical that we keep the wild life we have for the pleasure and knowledge of everybody. Much of the Homer economy depends on having live bears to view.

Have a happy holiday. And hello to Tina

Sincerely,

Eileen

From: AK Adventures [dave@akadventures.us]
Sent: Monday, February 12, 2007 2:55 PM
To: Rep. Paul Seaton
Subject: HB 127 - McNeil River Sanctuary legislation

Dear Paul,

Thank you for your introduction of this important piece of legislation. Great timing too since it was the front page story in the Anchorage Daily News today. Please let me know if there is anything I can do help your efforts to get this legislation passed. I'm planning write to the House Resources and Finance Committee members and I will also testify by phone to the committee.

Additionally, I will testifying at the Anchorage Board of Game (BOG) meeting in March regarding my own proposal to close the Kamishak Special Use area to brown bear hunting, so if there is anything I can do for you or your staff while I'm at the BOG meeting please let me know.

Sincerely,

Dave Bachrach

AK Adventures
PO Box 2828
Homer, AK 99603
Phone: 907.235.1805
Fax: 907.235.1886
www.goseebears.com

From: Bill Conley [conley1@gci.net]
Sent: Wednesday, February 14, 2007 2:52 PM
To: Rep. Paul Seaton; Rep. Craig Johnson; Rep. Carl Gatto; Sen. Charlie Huggins

Gentlemen

I am concerned about Game Board Chairman Ron Somerville opening brown bear hunting in the area of McNeil River.

His excuse being the State Constitution requires that game be managed for the maximum benefit of all Alaskans.

I would question his discernment as to whether the number of hunters who would fly to this area will outnumber the number of photographers. Other than the obvious hunting permit fees, what will be the most financial compensation to the locals.

Personally, I do not find it very sporting to casually walk up to an animal, that has been accustomed to humans, to bag a trophy. Seems like an avid sportsman would want more competition.

Please encourage Mr. Sommerville to close the area for hunting, and for Mr. Seaton's bill to be passed prior to July.

Thank You. Bill Conley, Valdez, Ak.

From: seasidefarm [seaside@xyz.net]
Sent: Wednesday, February 14, 2007 8:04 PM
To: Rep. Paul Seaton
Subject: HB 127

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Yellow

Dear Paul---I am strongly in favor of this bill. Please do all you can to have it pass.
Thank you. Mossy Kilcher

From: Mary Jane Shows
Sent: Thursday, February 15, 2007 10:11 AM
To: Louie Flora
Subject: FW: New Pom:HB 127 Mcneil River State Game Sanctuary

-----Original Message-----

From: POMS@legis.state.ak.us [mailto:POMS@legis.state.ak.us]
Sent: Thursday, February 15, 2007 10:06 AM
To: Mary Jane Shows
Subject: New Pom:HB 127 Mcneil River State Game Sanctuary

Roberta Highland
Po Box 2460

Homer 99603-2460,

I strongly support HB 127. This bill helps protect the world famous bears of McNeil River. These bears travel hundreds of miles and it's imperative we separate the hunters and these habituated bears. This bill is a very sensible solution to the controversy between hunters and wildlife viewers.

From: Mary Jane Shows
Sent: Thursday, February 15, 2007 3:15 PM
To: Louie Flora
Subject: FW: New Pom:HB 127 Mcneil River State Game Sanctuary

-----Original Message-----

From: POMS@legis.state.ak.us [mailto:POMS@legis.state.ak.us]
Sent: Thursday, February 15, 2007 2:10 PM
To: Mary Jane Shows
Subject: New Pom:HB 127 Mcneil River State Game Sanctuary

Robert Archibald
Po Box 2460

Homer 99603-2460,

This legislation should be enacted. The small allowed minority has now become the loud majority. This area generates more revenue for the state and its citizens as a bear viewing venue and natural bear habitat. Declining bear population and habitat demands protection now and for future generations.

From: barbara@avcreations.net
Sent: Thursday, February 15, 2007 4:49 PM
To: Rep. Carl Gatto; Rep. Craig Johnson; Rep. Vic Kohring; Rep. Bob Roses; Rep. Paul Seaton;
Rep. Peggy Wilson; Rep. Bryce Edgmon; Rep. David Guttenberg; Rep. Scott Kawasaki
Subject: Please Support HB 127

Dear Representatives,

I am writing to ask you to please support legislation HB 127, to add some parcels of land to the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary.

Last summer, I learned of the National Geographic BearCam at McNeil falls, and spent much time watching the bears fish and interact with one another. The bears have learned over the years that humans are not a threat to them - at least, they haven't been - in this area. So these "trusting" bears will be at even greater risk if hunters are permitted in the area. This is not "sport".

This is good for Alaska (the human part) as well: Adding the Kamishak Special Use area to the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary will help to maintain a quality visitor/wildlife viewing experience, which translates into millions of tourism dollars. This revenue will benefit the local economy of Homer, the Kenai Peninsula Borough and particularly the State of Alaska.

So I request that you support HB 127, as citizens of Alaska, the US, and the world. We humans need to take some responsibility for "brother bear".

Thank you for your support,

Barbara Nicholson
912 Burnham Court
Glenview, IL 60025-4140
847-998-1527
barbara@avcreations.net

From: lapatton@kc.rr.com
Sent: Friday, February 16, 2007 10:58 AM
To: Rep. Paul Seaton
Subject: McNeil River Sanctuary

February 16, 2007

Dear Representative:

I am writing in regards to the bears at the McNeil River Sanctuary. I am very concerned about proposed hunting regulations that would allow bears that wander into adjoining areas to be killed.

Although these bears seem to be doing well, the number of bears at McNeil River has declined significantly since 1998. Sanctuary managers have identified a level where further depletion of the bears could affect the quality of the bear-viewing program. I understand that trophy hunting is a source of revenue to your great State, but it will also cause a further decline in the number of bears at the Sanctuary, another source of revenue.

While the Alaska Department of Fish and Game has recommended a "Status quo" in this area, the Homer Fish and Game Advisory Committee has voted twice to keep the area closed to hunting. Since the area has been closed to brown bear hunting for over 20 years it seems prudent to let it remain so for the protection of the animals who have little fear of humans and the destruction they can cause.

To maintain a quality visitor/wildlife viewing experience, and to generate millions of dollars in tourism, I believe it is essential to add the Kamishak Special Use Area to the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary. Not only will the revenue benefit the economy of the Great State of Alaska, it will benefit the Kenai Peninsula Borough and the local economy of Homer.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Lynne Patton, concerned citizen and animal lover
2301 Maple Avenue
Leavenworth, KS 66048
(316) 841-9548

From: Leo & Dorothy Keeler [info@akwildlife.com]
Sent: Friday, February 16, 2007 10:59 AM
To: Rep. Paul Seaton; Katie Shows; Louie Flora; Ian Laing
Subject: McNeil River Legislation
Importance: High

Dear Representative Seaton,

As past leaders of Friends of McNeil River, we want to THANK and applaud you for introducing legislation that will help to protect McNeil River bear viewing. McNeil is a world renowned site and your efforts will benefit millions of people. We are sure you are aware of many of the past debates and fights over McNeil, but we want to provide you a summary of our history in hopes it helps you fight your legislative battles. We also propose a solution that will provide more hunting opportunity overall, yet better protect the bears.

During the 8 years I served as President of FOMR, (1992 – 2000) we under took numerous battles. Those against us tried to use statements that we were trying to protect every bear every place it went in order to mislead people from the real objective, manage for bear viewing opportunity. The Paint River Fish Ladder controversy pointed out the need to establish a no "BEAR" hunting area around the McNeil River Sanctuary. Since the Kamashak Special Management Area and Katmai Park provided no bear hunting to the west of McNeil, the McNeil River Refuge centered on Paint River was established to the north and east.

Unfortunately, the legislation for the Refuge did not close it to bear hunting and we had years of fighting the Board of Game before they did so. It took national pressure with CBS News and others focusing on poor hunting practices in order to get them to close the Refuge to bear hunting. Now, the opening of the Kamashak Special Management lands to bear hunting has re-ignited those debates. We have been in contact with Jerry Bowen, a correspondent with CBS News and understand that he will cover and air a piece on McNeil the weekend the BOG begins its meeting.

Those against closing the Refuge to bear hunting tried to present the issue as "Anti-Hunting", and would not talk about wildlife viewers having different values and needs. We never asked to stop all hunting, only bear hunting. We accept the potential bear deaths that may be caused because of bears getting into a moose hunter's camp. We also do not expect that every place a McNeil bear goes will be closed to hunting. But we can not accept the opening of areas previously closed as in the best interest of "ALL ALASKANS."

I think many in the Alaska Outdoor Council will always try to present wildlife viewers as "Anti-Hunters" because that is a rallying cry. In fact, AOC passed a resolution to fight against establishing any new wildlife viewing areas as they fear, and rightly so, that as wildlife viewing at a sight increases, there will be reductions in hunting opportunity. (We can provide you with a copy of it, if you need.) But Alaska is a large State with a growing population that demands more and different uses of its resources. Hunting will never be banned in Alaska, nor should it be, and the loss of a few acres here and there as special wildlife viewing places are recognized will be applauded by the majority of people.

I fear that if the legislation to add the Kamashak lands to the Sanctuary is successful, that the next battle will be to open the Refuge. Since the Paint River fish ladder has not operated, wildlife viewing

opponents will say there is no need for the Refuge.

May I suggest a way that your proposed legislation could stop all battles and retain as much hunting opportunity as possible? I believe that if the Kamashak lands were added to the Refuge, and the Refuge closed to bear hunting, and only bear hunting, by legislation, everyone would benefit. It would show the Legislature's acknowledgement of both hunter's feelings and wildlife viewers needs. This would acknowledge the wisdom, and acceptance, of past actions that closed the Kamashak and the Refuge lands closed for more than 10 years.

We sincerely appreciate all your efforts and are willing to help in any way we can. Please let us know if there is any additional information or assistance we can provide.

Sincerely,

Leo & Dorothy Keeler

From: meg hahr [meg_hahr@hotmail.com]
Sent: Friday, February 16, 2007 12:13 PM
To: Rep. Carl Gatto; Rep. Craig Johnson; Rep. Vic Kohring; Rep. Bob Roses; Rep. Paul Seaton;
Rep. Peggy Wilson; Rep. Bryce Edgmon; Rep. David Guttenberg; Rep. Scott Kawasaki
Subject: Please support HB 127!

Please support HB 127 to safeguard the McNeil River bears. I am very concerned by the Board of Game's decision to allow hunting of brown bears in the Kamishak Special Use area. Please consider these reasons for supporting HB 127:

- The number of bears at McNeil River has declined significantly since 1998 and has fallen below the level identified by sanctuary managers where it may affect the quality of the bear-viewing program.
- This area has been closed to brown bear hunting for over 20 years.
- Opening this area to trophy hunting could cause further decline in the number of bears at the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary (A National Natural Landmark).
- The Homer Fish and Game Advisory Committee has voted twice to support keeping this area closed to hunting.
- The Alaska Department of Fish and Game has recommended "Status Quo" for this area.
- Adding the Kamishak Special Use area to the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary will help to maintain a quality visitor/wildlife viewing experience, which translates into millions of tourism dollars. This revenue will benefit the local economy of Homer, the Kenai Peninsula Borough and particularly the State of Alaska.

Thank you for securing the future of McNeil River bears through your support of HB 127!

Meg Hahr
33783 Wolf Trail Lane
Seward, AK 99664

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<http://shopping.msn.com/default/shp/?ptnrid=37,ptnrdata=24102&tcode=T001MSN20A0701>

From: Karen Case [spiritdriven@sbcglobal.net]
Sent: Friday, February 16, 2007 2:34 PM
To: Louie Flora
Subject: House Resources and Finance Committee: Support HB 127...

Date: February 16, 2007

To: House Resources and Finance Committee
Representative Paul Seaton

From: Karen Case
P O Box 27944
Fresno, CA 93729

RE: HB 127

I am writing to ask that you support **HB 127**.

Adding the Kamishak Special Use Area to the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary (a National Natural Landmark) will help to maintain a quality visitor/wildlife viewing experience, which translates into millions of tourism dollars. This revenue will benefit the local economy of Homer, the Kenai Peninsula Borough, and particularly the State of Alaska.

To safeguard the declining bear population at McNeil River, and not jeopardize the successful bear-viewing program to an area that has been closed to hunting for over 20 years, I strongly urge you to **support HB 127**.

Thank you.

From: POMS@legis.state.ak.us
Sent: Friday, February 16, 2007 2:59 PM
To: Mary Jane Shows
Subject: New Pom:HB 127 Mcneil River State Game Sanctuary

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Yellow

Mairiis Kilcher
40904 Seaside Farm Rd

Homer 99603-9460,

As a lifelong Alaskan I strongly support HB 127 to ensure our unique world famous multi-million dollar bear viewing industry.

From: Brenda Boisvert [bmboisvert@dccnet.com]
Sent: Friday, February 16, 2007 3:16 PM
To: Rep. Paul Seaton
Subject: RE: HB 127

Date: 16th February 2007

To: House Resources and Finance Committee

From: Mrs. Brenda Bolsvert

1698 Duncan Drive

Delta, BC. V4L 1S2

Canada.

RE: HB 127

I am writing to ask that you support HB 127.

Adding the Kamishak Special Use Area to the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary (a National Natural Landmark) will help to maintain a quality visitor/wildlife viewing experience, which translates into millions of tourism dollars. This revenue will benefit the local economy of Homer, the Kenai Peninsula Borough, and particularly the State of Alaska.

To safeguard the declining bear population at McNeil River, and not jeopardize the successful bear-viewing program to an area that has been closed to hunting for over 20 years, I strongly urge you to support HB 127.

Thank you.

From: POMS@legis.state.ak.us
Sent: Thursday, February 15, 2007 2:10 PM
To: Mary Jane Shows
Subject: New Pom:HB 127 Mcneil River State Game Sanctuary

Robert Archibald
Po Box 2460

Homer 99603-2460,

This legislation should be enacted. The small allowed minority has now become the loud majority. This area generates more revenue for the state and its citizens as a bear viewing venue and natural bear habitat. Declining bear population and habitat demands protection now and for future generations.

From: Sylvia-Gaertner [Sylvia-Gaertner@gmx.de]
Sent: Saturday, February 17, 2007 12:54 AM
Tc: Rep. Paul Seaton
Subjcct: HB 127

Dear Representative Paul Seaton,

am writing to ask that you support HB 127.

Adding the Kamishak Special Use Area to the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary (a National Natural Landmark) will help to maintain a quality visitor/wildlife viewing experience, which translates into millions of tourism dollars. This revenue will benefit the local economy of Homer, the Kenai Peninsula Borough, and particularly the State of Alaska.

To safeguard the declining bear population at McNeil River, and not jeopardize the successful bear-viewing program to an area that has been closed to hunting for over 20 years, I strongly urge you to support HB 127.

Thank you.

Respectfully,

**Sylvia Gaertner
Tremsbuettel / Germany**

E-Mail : Sylvia-Gaertner@gmx.de

From: Mike O'Meara [momeara@prattmuseum.org]
Sent: Saturday, February 17, 2007 3:12 PM
To: Rep. Carl Gatto; Rep. Craig Johnson; Rep. Vic Kohring; Rep. Bob Roses; Rep. Paul Seaton; Rep. Peggy Wilson; Rep. Bryce L. Johnson; Rep. David Guttenberg; Rep. Scott Kawasaki
Subject: Support HB 127
Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Blue

Dear House Resources and Finance Committee Members:

First I would like to express my thanks to Representative Seaton for introducing HB 127 and to the rest of you for considering this bill in committee. I want to urge your support for this important piece of legislation.

Adding the Kamishak Special Use Area to the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary makes sense. Alaska Department of Fish and Game biologists recommend maintaining the present no hunting status. The Homer Fish and Game Advisory council has voted to keep the area closed to hunting on two different occasions. In recent years, public testimony before the Alaska Board of Game has been overwhelmingly against additional hunting openings near the Sanctuary.

You probably know as well as I that the number of bears frequenting McNeil River and northern Katmai NPP have been diminishing for the last two decades. If the Kamishak Special Use Area is open to bear hunting it will certainly exacerbate this decline. These bears are a major attraction for visitors to our state and, through the growing bear viewing industry, an important part of the economy for the lower Kenai Peninsula. Many of my friends and neighbors earn a living for their families by serving this growing recreational audience.

The world renowned success of the McNeil River Sanctuary bear viewing program has served as a powerful counterweight to the bad publicity Alaska often receives over some of our other resource management programs. Allowing hunting of what many Alaskans and most of the rest of the world view as "tame bears" can only reflect badly on those of us who try to be ethical hunters and the state government in general.

Please support passage of HB 127.

Best regards,

Mike O'Meara
P.O. box 361
Homer, Alaska 99603

From: RYAN GRIFFIN [nevadagriffin@sbcglobal.net]
Sent: Saturday, February 17, 2007 7:29 PM
To: Rep. Paul Seaton
Subject: McNeil River State Game Sanctuary
Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Red
Attachments: 3489876714-AlaskaRyanGrizz.jpg

Dear Rep Paul Seaton,

As a visitor to the state of Alaska, contributor to your "tourist economy," and a strong supporter of bear viewing tours (have used Homer's Bald Mountain Air services), I'd like to share my "thanks" for introducing a bill into the Legislature to stop the opening of state lands next to the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary to hunting.

As I have plans to continue visiting your state, your bill would help enable the amazing brown bears of Katmai to continue to making priceless memories for generations to come, and in my case, most specifically for my children.

Best Regards,
Ryan Griffin
Reno, Nevada

From: thomas klein [bushpilotom@mac.com]
Sent: Sunday, February 18, 2007 10:14 AM
To: Rep. Paul Seaton
Subject: McNeil River

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Blue

Dear Mr. Seaton

I recently learned of your support of McNeil river and the possibility of protecting the 95000 acres surrounding the sanctuary that might be open to hunting.

I urge you to introduce your bill and give full protection to the bears of McNeil River. I would also like to see a reorganization of the game board and try to get a more diverse group of individuals appointed.

I am in the process of drafting a letter to get out to outside newspapers to make people outside Alaska aware of the threat to the sanctuary.

Thank you. Sincerely, Thomas R. Klein PC Box 791 Talkeetna,
Ak. 99676

e mail bushpilotom@yahoo.com

From: Michael Hawfield [hawfield@horizonsatellite.com]
Sent: Sunday, February 18, 2007 11:34 AM
To: Rep. Paul Seaton; Rep. Carl Gatto; Rep. Craig Johnson; Rep. Bob Roses; Rep. Vic Kohring; Rep. Peggy Wilson; Rep. Bryce Edgmon; Rep. David Guttenberg; Rep_Scott_Kawaski@legis.state.ak.us
Subject: *****SPAM***** Support HB 127
Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Blue

I am writing to urge you to support HB 127, a bill that has long-term importance for the economic, wilderness, and ethical health of our state. Like you, I am very aware that:

- The area has been closed to brown bear hunting for over 20 years
- The number of bears at McNeil River Brown Bear Sanctuary has declined significantly since 1998 and this has a severe impact on the quality of bear-viewing in the area, a fully renewable and economically important part life in the Cook Inlet region.
- Opening the area to further hunting will only exacerbate the decline of bear populations, harm a vastly larger economic sector of our economy, and deeply hurt the reputation of our state and its citizens.
- Important citizen advisory boards all recommend no additional bear hunting in this area.
- Enhancing this region as a sustainable, renewable economic resource based on bear-viewing rather than bear harvesting has nothing but the greatest benefit for all Alaskans.

Thank you for all your support and, again, I urge you to support HB 127.

Michael Hawfield
Homer

From: lin golden [lagolden@telus.net]
Sent: Sunday, February 18, 2007 7:39 PM
To: Rep. Paul Seaton
Subject: Support HB 127

Dear Rep. Paul Seaton,

I want to thank you very deeply for bringing forward HB 127. I have sent you a previous e-mail asking you to help save the McNeil River bears from hunting in the Kamishak Special Use Area. I have now asked the other legislatures to support HB 127. The following is what I sent them, but thank you once again.

I am writing to you to ask you to support HB 127. I am very concerned about the brown bears who are acclimatized to humans at the Mc Neil River Sanctuary and who use the Kamishak Special Reserve Area, being targetted for hunting. As I understand it, their numbers are in decline already from hunting elsewhere and possibly environmental factors. Hunting them can only add to the decline! These bears use the Kamishak Special Use Area for travel to and from Mc Neil River Sanctuary and are used to human beings being a non-threatening force. It is unethical to turn around and allow them to be hunted.

Alaska has a unique and important chance to help save a vulnerable and beautiful population of brown bears. Through viewing these bears on wild-cams people world wide have had an opportunity to see something extremely rare and wonderful. I personally know of people in Japan, Netherlands, England, Canada, and Germany who share delight in this wonder and I know through the internet, many tens of thousands of people are concerned about these bears. Alaska should be a shining example to the world now, in how to conserve something unique, special and deeply loved. I have spoken to many people about Alaska as a result of viewing these bears and for the first time have considered Alaska as a destination to plan on. I know tourism dollars will benefit the economy of Alaska, Homer, the Kenai Peninsula borough far more than hunting and killing bears for trophy will. As the power of the internet has made the bears so popular and Alaska like a place to tour for so many more people, so will the power of the internet affect negatively tourism and millions of dollars if Alaska is seen as not respecting and protecting these brown bears. News of the wild cam went around the world on T.V. news and the internet like wild fire and so would, and has, negative news about the brown bears.

The Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game has recommended status quo for the Kamishak Special Use Area. The Homer Fish and Game Advisory Committee has twice voted to support keeping the Kamishak Special Use Area closed to hunting. Hunting organizations are opposed to this form of hunting and don't want the negative publicity hunting these bears would bring. Most of Alaska is open to hunting. Why does this area have to be as well?

Therefore I plead with you to support Representative Seaton's HB 127.

Thank you,

Linda Golden

2/20/2007

4306 Macaulay Rd.
Black Creek, B.C.
V9J 1E1 Canada
lagolden@telus.net

Sybille Castro
P.O.Box 1849
Kenai Alaska 99611

Dear Mr. Paul Seaton

02//19/2007

Thank you for supporting the protection of the areas surrounding the McNeil River Bear Sanctuary. I have been actively writing letters to the authorities but I am afraid they do not care.

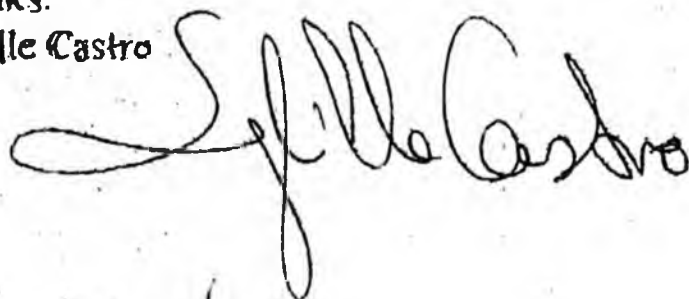
Your bill to be introduced to the legislature and supported by hundreds of Alaskans can change this.

Thank you so much for having the guts and fortitude to help protect the bears and the sanctuary, as well as a very beloved tourist industry that not only helps the economy but fosters further education about bears and environmental protection in tourist's hearts as they return to their home land filled with wonder and love for our beloved Alaska.

God Bless you and.

Thanks.

Sybille Castro



Copies attached!

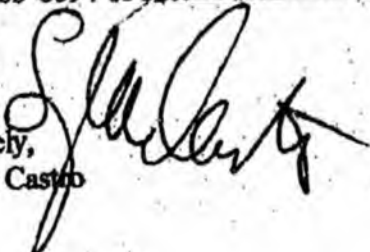
Sybille Castro
P.O.Box 1849
Kenai Alaska 99611
907 776 3637

24 August 2006

To: Letters to the Editor

Thank you for being a great newspaper and any articles about bears are always well received. As a bear enthusiast and photographer I am concerned about the following. The Board of Game will soon be voting on a very controversial subject, mainly opening bear hunting on Douglas Head, a peninsula southeast of the sanctuary and another area encompassing the Paint River watershed, north of the Sanctuary. Alaska has plenty of places where bears can be hunted, it simply DOES NOT have to involve land surrounding the McNeil River Sanctuary. Its betraying the trust of these resident bears that have for decades given viewing pleasure to humans, for photography, for study, for closeness to their raw beauty and wild power. The same bears trust humans not to inflict harm upon them, but in fall and spring, the same bears could be hunted down, shot and killed if they happen to migrate to these close-by areas. It will change bear behavior and the dynamics of McNeil River Sanctuary. While we still have bears in our magnificent State, let's work to protect them. The bear symbolizes Alaska's wilderness and serves as indicator species, whose well-being serves as a measure of our ecosystem's health. Help protect the bears and give your voice, write or fax to Dept of Fish and Game, P.O.Box 115526, Juneau, AK 99811, fax (907)465-6094 or submit comments to www.boards.adfg.state.ak.us.

Sincerely,
Sybille Castro



Sybilie Castro
P.O.Box 1849
Kenai, Alaska 99611

Department of Fish and Game
Deputy Commissioner of Wildlife
Wayne Regelin
P.O.Box 115 26
Juneau, Alaska 99811-5526

9 Aug 2006

Dear Mr. Campbell,

This is in response to Dept of Fish and Game proposals to open bear hunting immediately north of the McNeil River State Game Refuge as well as bear hunting which will open Oct 2007 on state land at Cape Douglas between Katmai National Park and McNeil River State Game Sanctuary. This is ONLY ONE MILE from McNeil Falls where bears fish and when hunting begins the state will be encouraging bears to accept and trust humans at the sanctuary in the summer, and then exposing the same bears to hunters that will kill them in spring and the fall. This is betrayal and abuse of Alaska's most wonderful wildlife resource. Now its time to protect the bears at McNeil River since their numbers have dropped to more than half in the last 7 years.

The presence of this native predator is an important component of wilderness character. The public visits and recreates in these special areas in large part to experience the natural interconnected web of life found only in these unique areas. The proposed nearby hunting of the bears would degrade wilderness character, decrease bear populations, change bear behavior that might endanger public safety and most of all it simply and clearly betrays the trust the bears have developed over several decades towards humans in this area, humans that come to photograph and study them.

The brown bear has come to symbolize North America's shrinking wilderness, an indicator species, one whose well-being serves as a measure of an ecosystem's health. To thrive and survive the brown bear needs vast expanses of land where human impact is minimal and although Alaska's population of brown bears is basically secure there is emphasis on threats to the species. Most of the lower 48 problems are waiting on Alaska's doorstep.

Hunting so close to these sanctuaries poses a long term incremental change to not only the environment of these bears but will change their behavior and attitude and bear viewing in this area will become dangerous and the world will have lost another place where peaceful opportunities to take bear pictures were taken for granted.

Protection of bears and bear habitat in the above described adjoining areas to bear sanctuaries MUST come before the privilege of hunting in this fine State of Alaska! Hunting is not a right but a privilege after resource management has been accomplished by the Dept of Fish and Game.

The proposed changes drastically erode current substantive protections of bears living and migrating in the McNeil River Sanctuary, a great wilderness resource for bear viewers and bear lovers around the world, and should be rejected. Moreover, given the broad nature of this proposal and the differences to the current rule, a thorough environmental analysis with full public input and participation is necessary.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on these issues so close to my heart, and issues affecting our greatest resource, the brown bear!

Sincerely,

Sybille Castro
Bear Photographer/Enthusiast

Copy furnished:
Governor Frank Murkowski
Dept of Fish and Game, Commissioner McKie Campbell
John Toppenberg, Alaska Wildlife Alliance

STATE OF ALASKA

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

FRANK H. MURKOWSKI
GOVERNOR

P.O. BOX 115526
JUNEAU, AK 99811-5526
PHONE: (907) 465-4100
FAX: (907) 465-2332

August 17, 2006

Sybille Castro
P.O. Box 1849
Kenai, AK 99611

Dear Ms. Castro:

Thank you for writing to express your concerns regarding bear hunting near the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary. I agree that viewing bears at McNeil River is a world-class experience; it is one I have personally enjoyed, and is one of Alaska's greatest attractions. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) manages fish and wildlife throughout the state including the McNeil Sanctuary and the adjacent McNeil River State Game Refuge, however, it is the Board of Game, a group of seven citizens, that adopts hunting regulations in response to proposals generated by citizens, ADF&G, or the Board itself.

I want to emphasize that no one has proposed or is considering allowing hunting in the McNeil Sanctuary. Nonetheless, the proposals for hunting bears in watersheds adjacent to the McNeil sanctuary is clearly a controversial subject, and it is one I am receiving a lot of mail about. Brown bear hunting has been allowed in some areas in the vicinity of McNeil River since before statehood. In 2005, during its last meeting on this subject, the Board of Game adopted a proposal for the fall 2007 hunting season to open brown bear hunting on Douglas Head, a peninsula southeast of the sanctuary. The Board also expressed its intent to consider bear hunting in the refuge during the upcoming spring 2007 meeting. The refuge is not the area the McNeil River runs through, but a separate area encompassing the Paint River watershed, north of the sanctuary. Hunting of species other than brown bear is, and always has been, allowed in the refuge.

The Board of Game will have additional meetings prior to the October 2007 hunting season, and will have an opportunity to review additional information regarding bear hunting in these areas. The spring 2007 meeting will be held March 2-12, 2007 in Anchorage. Written comments can be sent to P.O. Box 115526, Juneau, AK 99811-5526, or faxed to (907) 465-6094. For further information on the board process, including deadlines for submitting comments, visit the website at: www.boards.adfg.state.ak.us.

The department supports public involvement as an essential element of Alaska's fish and game regulatory processes. Under state law, the Board of Game has the authority to pass regulations to conserve and develop Alaska's wildlife resources. Similarly, the Alaska Department of Fish and

Game has the authority and responsibility to manage state game sanctuaries and refuges. Public input is always an important factor during these decision making processes.

Thank you for your interest in the conservation and management of Alaska's wildlife.

Sincerely,



McKie Campbell
Commissioner

Allowable uses in 4 types of state lands in the vicinity of the McNeil River area

USES	WHERE ALLOWED			
	General State Land	Kamishak Special Use Area	McNeil River State Game Refuge	McNeil River State Game Sanctuary
hunting, except bear hunting	yes	yes	yes	NO
bear hunting	yes	NO ¹	NO ¹	NO
trapping	yes	yes	yes	NO
sport fishing	yes	yes	yes	yes
commercial fishing	yes	yes	yes	yes
hiking	yes	yes	yes	yes
commercial camping	yes	yes ²	yes	yes
non-commercial camping	yes	yes	yes	yes
wildlife viewing	yes	yes	yes	yes
fisheries enhancement	yes	yes	yes	yes
off-road vehicle use	yes	yes	NO ³	NO ⁴
mining	yes	yes	yes	NO
oil and gas	yes	yes	yes	yes
material extraction	yes	yes	yes	yes
timber harvest	yes	yes	yes	yes
grazing	yes	yes	NO ⁴	NO ⁴
boating	yes	yes	yes	yes
commercial facilities	yes	yes	yes	yes
roads, docks, pipelines, utility lines	yes	yes	yes ⁵	NO ⁴
land sale	yes	yes	NO	NO
land lease	yes	yes	yes	yes

¹ Board of Game closure

² Limited to Kamishak River, guides only; no clients overnight

³ By MRSGR and Sanctuary management plan, except permitted snowmachine use for trapping

⁴ By MRSGR and Sanctuary management plan

⁵ Temporary road only for life of project

Bear viewers in the Lake Clark and Katmai region in 2006

Brooks River area (Katmai National Park)	15,204
Katmai National Park coast	4,504
Katmai National Preserve	861
Lake Clark National Park coast	1,289
Lake Clark National Park (non-coastal sites)	84
Wolverine Creek (Redoubt Bay Critical Habitat Area)	9,500 (estimate - final figs. not available)
McNeil River State Game Sanctuary and Refuge	233
Other Alaska Peninsula sites	121

TOTAL 31,796

Notes:

- these data include self reporting figures from NPS commercial operators, ADF&G surveys, and ADF&G monitoring. These likely represent a minimum number of people engaged in bear viewing activities in this region.
- these data include visitors whose activities included exclusively bear-viewing and those bear-viewing in combination (or incidental to) other activities (e.g. many visitor's primary pursuit was sport fishing but also viewed bears when the opportunity arose).
- these data include both commercially guided and private visitors.
- these figures are from the Lake Clark and Katmai region and include Katmai National Park and Preserve, Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, McNeil River State Game Sanctuary and Refuge, Redoubt Bay Critical Habitat Area, and other federal, state and private lands surrounding these sites.

Compiled by:
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February 2007

USES	General State Land	Kamishak Special Use Area CURRENTLY ALLOWED	McNeil Refuge	Sanctuary
hunting	yes	yes	yes	NO
bear hunting	yes	NO*	NO*	NO
trapping	yes	yes	yes	NO
sport fishing	yes	yes	yes	yes
commercial fishing	yes	yes	yes	yes
hiking	yes	yes	yes	yes
commercial camping	yes	yes****	yes	yes
non-commercial camping	yes	yes	yes	yes
wildlife viewing	yes	yes	yes	yes
fisheries enhancement	yes	yes	yes	yes
off-road vehicle use	yes	yes	NO**	NO**
mining	yes	yes	yes	NO
oil and gas	yes	yes	yes	yes
material extraction	yes	yes	yes	yes
timber harvest	yes	yes	yes	yes
grazing	yes	yes	NO**	NO**
boating	yes	yes	yes	yes
commercial facilities	yes	yes	yes	yes
roads, docks, pipelines, utility lines	yes	yes	yes***	NO**
land sale	yes	yes	NO	NO
land lease	yes	yes	yes	yes

* Board of Game closure

** By MRSGR and Sanctuary management plan

***temporary road only for life of project

****limited to Kamishak River, guides only; no clients overnight

**STATUS OF
BROWN BEARS AND
OTHER NATURAL RESOURCES IN THE
McNEIL RIVER STATE GAME SANCTUARY AND REFUGE
IN 2006**

ANNUAL REPORT TO
THE ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Submitted by: Denby S. Lloyd, Commissioner

Prepared by: Lands and Refuges Program
Division of Wildlife Conservation
Alaska Department of Fish and Game

January 2007

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The McNeil River State Game Sanctuary and State Game Refuge were created by the Alaska State Legislature in 1967 and 1991, respectively. The *sanctuary* was established primarily to provide permanent protection for brown bears and other fish and wildlife populations and their habitats and to maintain and enhance the unique bear-viewing opportunities within the sanctuary. The *refuge* was established for similar reasons and human use in the refuge is managed to maintain and enhance the bear-viewing opportunities within the adjoining sanctuary.

The sanctuary supports the largest gathering of brown bears in the world as they congregate to feed on migrating salmon. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game operates a world-renowned bear-viewing and photography program in the sanctuary at McNeil River and nearby Mikfik Creek. This report provides a summary of the status of brown bears and other fish and wildlife resources within the sanctuary and refuge, the effects of fishing and fishery enhancement activities on these resources, land status and management issues, and known public use.

As many as 144 individual bears have been observed along McNeil River during summer and as many as 72 bears have been seen at one time at McNeil River Falls, the primary bear gathering and viewing location. While the number of bears at McNeil River has increased over the past two years, it had declined significantly since 1998 and remains well below the level identified by sanctuary managers necessary to maintain the quality of the bear-viewing program.

One factor likely contributing to the decline is the long-term trend of low chum salmon returns to McNeil River. Chum salmon escapement in 2006 achieved the established range for the second consecutive season but only the fifth time in the past 17 seasons. Compounding the low salmon escapement in McNeil River, nearby systems have experienced relatively good returns of chum and sockeye salmon over the past seven seasons, which potentially drew bears away from the McNeil River system in search of a more abundant food source; however, these relationships are not well understood. Also not well understood are the effects of the brown bear harvest outside the sanctuary on bear use at McNeil River. Harvest levels have increased above historic levels since the 1999 regulatory year.

The bear-viewing program at McNeil River again attracted people from around the world in 2006 and 783 people applied for the 185 regular permits and 57 standby permits selected by lottery. During 2006, 183 people participated in the sanctuary's bear-viewing program, which included lottery winners and Special Access Permit holders. The permit program generated \$67,450 in 2006 that was deposited into the state's Fish and Game Fund.

Land use permits were issued to several commercial sport-fishing guides for camps and boat storage on the Kamishak River, for a commercial bear viewing camp on Chenik Lake, for a Department sponsored archeological survey of the McNeil River camp area, and several other research and monitoring programs.

I. INTRODUCTION

McNeil River, located in southwestern Alaska (Figure 1) supports the world's largest concentration of brown bears. The Alaska State Legislature established the McNeil River State Game *Sanctuary* in 1967 to: (1) provide permanent protection for brown bears and other fish and wildlife populations and their habitats so that these resources may be preserved for scientific, aesthetic, and educational purposes; (2) manage human use and activities in a way that is compatible with the permanent protection of brown bears and other purposes described in (1) and to maintain and enhance the unique bear-viewing opportunities within the sanctuary; and (3) provide opportunities that are compatible with (1) for wildlife viewing, fisheries enhancement, fishing, temporary safe anchorage, and other activities (AS 16.20.162(a)). Hunting, trapping and mineral entry are prohibited in the sanctuary.

The sanctuary was expanded and the adjoining McNeil River State Game *Refuge* was created in 1991; however, implementation of this legislation was delayed until January 1993 when the Commissioner of the Department of Fish and Game (the Department) certified the newly constructed Paint River fish ladder as operational. The refuge was created for purposes similar to those of the sanctuary; however, hunting and trapping were allowed to continue in the refuge at the discretion of the Alaska Board of Game (BOG) (AS 16.20.041). Additionally, human use in the refuge is managed to maintain and enhance the unique bear-viewing opportunities within the adjoining sanctuary and mineral entry in the refuge is permitted.

This report is submitted annually to the Alaska State Legislature by the Commissioner of the Department as required by the sanctuary and refuge enabling legislation (AS 16.20.041(f) and AS 16.20.162(f), respectively). This report provides a summary of the status of brown bears and other fish and wildlife resources within the sanctuary and refuge, the effects of fishing and fishery enhancement activities on these resources, land status and management issues, and known public use.

II. STATUS OF BROWN BEARS

Monitoring Bear Use

The number of bears at McNeil River Falls fluctuates daily and annually. Variability in bear use may be influenced by several factors including: food availability, the strength and timing of salmon runs in McNeil River and in surrounding systems, changes in the regional bear population, hunting and other human-caused mortalities. A public advisory committee assisted the Department with the development of the sanctuary and refuge operational management plans in 1993 and concluded that managers needed a consistent and reliable method for monitoring the fluctuations in the number of bears at McNeil River Falls. This information allows for the proper management of the sanctuary in accordance with its legislative purposes. There are three different methods used to monitor bear use at McNeil River: index counts (average highest counts at McNeil River Falls), individual counts (minimum number of different bears observed during the season), and bear use days (sum of individual bears and the number of days each was present).

Index Counts- This monitoring program detects large, short-term declines *or* gradual, long-term declines in the average number of independent bears (not including cubs) at McNeil River Falls and includes a "bear threshold criterion," which represents a statistically significant lower level in the observed number of bears. A decline below this "criterion" may result in adverse impacts to the purposes for which the sanctuary was established and would initiate an assessment of the possible causes.

This monitoring program involves counting all bears in view once each hour at McNeil River Falls from early July through early August and during the viewing period of approximately 11:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. The number of hourly counts (data points) that occur from year to year is variable due to the changing and opportunistic nature of the daily bear viewing schedule. The annual medians of the seven highest daily counts of bears at the falls from 1983 to 1992 were averaged to establish a standard of 48.6 bears as the benchmark for maintaining bear numbers and the quality viewing opportunities in the sanctuary. The "bear threshold criterion" (40.8 bears) represents the lower limit of these medians.

The highest individual hourly count in 2005 was 24 bears on July 20. In comparison, there were counts in excess of 40 bears on 11 days in 1997 and 1998 when as many as 66 bears were observed at one time (Table 1). The mean of the seven highest hourly counts (the count index) was 19.4 bears in 2005, well below the "bear threshold criterion" of 40.8 bears. This represents the lowest count index in the 23 years of monitoring bears at McNeil River Falls and continues the steady decline in the number of bears observed starting in 1998. The highest count indices in past years were 61.0 bears in 1990, 58.0 bears in 1997 and 57.0 bears in 1985; however, these high indices include cubs (Figure 2). Data for the 2006 hourly counts were inadvertently left at McNeil River when the camp was closed for the season. Those data will be included in the Legislative report for the 2007 season.

Individual Counts- A second method of monitoring bear use of the sanctuary and the quality of the bear-viewing program is by tallying the number of individual bears (adults, sub-adults, & cubs) observed by sanctuary staff throughout the season. Using unique identifying marks such as scars, coat color, sex and behavior, each bear visiting the sanctuary has been documented nearly every year since 1976. While this monitoring method only records the presence of an individual bear and not the frequency or amount of time it spends at McNeil River Sanctuary, it provides an additional index in evaluating the overall bear use and the quality of the bear-viewing program.

While the number of individual bears at McNeil River has increased during the past two years (from a 21-year low of 78 in 2004, to 87 in 2005, and 92 in 2006), it continues to remain below the long-term average of 102.5 individuals observed since 1983 (Table 2). It also remains well below the peak number of individual bears (144) observed in 1997. The results of this method of monitoring bear activity mimics the trend observed in the index count method discussed above, and the bear use days monitoring method discussed below.

Bear Use Days- The quality of the bear viewing is not just a matter of the number of bears that visit the area in a season, but also how many days the bears stay in the Sanctuary. This method of monitoring bear use at McNeil River is the annual summation of individual adult and sub-adult bears observed during each bear viewing day June 15 through August 25. One bear or

family group at McNeil River seen during a day is counted as one bear use day. This monitoring method may be less reliable than the *individual counts* and *index counts* discussed above. It represents the minimum bear use days due to count variability among sanctuary staff and variations in the total amount of daily effort. Because the actual amount of daily effort is not collected it is not possible to compare minor yearly variation. Bear Use Days is probably most useful in providing a general year to year comparison of the bear viewing experience relative to the number of bears observed. It is another method that can reflect trends in bear use and it generally correlates with the other methods discussed above (Figure 3). There were 795 bear-use days in 2006 (the third lowest recorded since this monitoring method was established in 1980). This is well below the annual peak of 1,863 use days in 1989 and it is also below the years 1983 through 2002 when bear-use days were well above 1000. The long-term average (since 1983) of bear-use days was 1,290 days.

Sex and Age Composition

Changes in the sex and age composition of a wildlife population can be indicative of other changes in the species' habitat and environment. The sex and age ratios of adult bears using McNeil River have changed in the last several years. While adult males have typically outnumbered adult females, this has become more pronounced in the past 6 years (Figure 4; Table 2). The percentage of adult male bears at the McNeil River increased from a five year (1986-1990) average of 54% to a 5 year (2001-2005) average of 67%. The percentage of adult males in 2006 was 63%.

The number of subadult bears observed in 2006 was 14. This was highest number of subadults recorded since 1988 and the fifth highest recorded since monitoring began in 1976 (Figure 5; Table 2). The highest subadult count was 17 in 1988 and 15 subadults were observed in 1981, 1982, and 1987. In contrast five subadults were observed in 2005 - approximately half of the long-term average of 10 subadults observed since monitoring began. The 2005 observation of five subadults was the second lowest count since observations began and continued a decline starting in 1999. The lowest number of subadults observed was 4 in 2003.

In 2006, there were 8 maternal females and 15 cubs counted at McNeil River (Figure 5; Table 2). While these figures are below the annual averages from the 30-year monitoring period (11.6 maternal females and 23.8 cubs), they are consistent with the decline in family group activity starting in the mid-1980s. The peak number of maternal females observed on the river was 20 in 1996 and the number of cubs on the river peaked at 43 in 1997.

Chenik Creek

While the Department has not conducted standardized surveys of bears in the refuge at Chenik Creek, a commercial bear-viewing company during the summer of 2006 counted a peak number of individual bears of approximately 15 during the July 5-10 period.

Hunting

The sanctuary is closed to hunting by Alaska state statute (AS 16.20.162(b)), and in October 1995, the Alaska Board of Game closed the refuge to brown bear hunting effective July 1996.

The areas south of the sanctuary including Katmai National Park and state-owned lands between the sanctuary and national park (including the Kamishak Special Use Area, managed by the Alaska Department of Natural Resources) are also currently closed to brown bear hunting, the national park by federal regulations and the state-owned lands by Board of Game action. The McNeil River sanctuary and refuge are currently within an area of approximately 5,585 square miles where bears are protected from hunting. However, in March 2005 the Board of Game removed the brown bear hunting closure on state owned lands in the Kamishak Special Use Area (and outside the sanctuary) starting July 1, 2007 (5AAC 92.510(9)(C)).

The harvest of bears marked at McNeil during early studies and observations by sanctuary staff have shown that some bears using McNeil River range throughout the region including areas open to hunting west and north of the sanctuary and refuge. Brown bear hunts on the Alaska Peninsula are currently open during alternate regulatory years with hunts open during the fall of odd-numbered years and the spring of even-numbered years. Historically, brown bear hunts were open every year; therefore, for purposes of this report, harvest for two consecutive regulatory years were combined to make the long term data more comparable. The reported bear harvests from areas surrounding McNeil Sanctuary and Refuge are presented in Figure 6.

Interpretation of data prior to the early 1980s is problematic and the harvest figures are not comparable to those afterwards (Figure 6). The Alaska Peninsula guided bear harvest was just getting started in the 1960s, and compliance related to mandatory sealing was low into the mid-1970s. The harvest database only includes reported harvests and is not indicative of the numbers of bears killed especially prior to the mid-70s. Tighter enforcement of laws around 1974 or 75 reduced unreported harvests and illegal take. The bear population had likely been over-harvested in large areas and greatly reduced by the late-70s. Regional bear populations began a slow recovery when a more conservative management regime was instituted.

The long term average harvest from areas surrounding McNeil River from the period 1980/81 thru 2004/05 is 73 brown bears. Average harvest by decade was 59 in the 1980s, 75 in the 1990s and 96 so far in the 2000s. Starting in 1998 the area saw a large increase in harvest. Two of the highest harvests in these areas were 120 during the combined 1998/99 regulatory years (July 1998 through June 2000) and 111 during the combined 2002/03 regulatory years (July 2002 – June 2004). The harvest during the combined 2004/2005 regulatory years (July 2004 through June 2006) was 88, closer to the long term average. There is no open season during the 2006 regulatory hunt year (July 2006 – June 2007).

Though brown bear harvests have increased since the early 80s, bear densities and hunter interest in the Alaska Peninsula bear population have also apparently increased. The lack of data on the bear population and hunting effort make it difficult to determine the rates at which the population has been harvested. The increase in harvest in recent years is likely due, in part, to the liberalized bear hunting seasons in Game Management Unit 9B (Iliamna Lake area) adopted by the Board of Game in an effort to bolster recruitment into the local moose population and to provide more opportunity for a sustained harvest of this resource.

Based on harvest levels, and the sex and age composition of harvested animals, it appears that legal hunting of bears outside the sanctuary is not significantly affecting the regional bear

population. But it is also unclear to what extent the increasing mortality in these areas may have affected the bear use of McNeil River.

Use Patterns

Although bear numbers were up somewhat in 2006, over the past eight years the brown bear monitoring programs at McNeil River indicate a significant decline in the number of bears and a shift in the sex composition, both of which have influenced the quality of the bear-viewing program at McNeil River. The reasons for these changes are not well understood but do not appear to be influenced by the sanctuary viewing program; sanctuary, refuge, or fisheries management actions; or land use activities in the region. Department staff conducted a preliminary assessment of historic bear-use at McNeil River including overall numbers and changes in sex and age composition, brown bear harvest from surrounding areas, and salmon escapement at McNeil River and surrounding systems. While results suggest some correlations may exist, more in-depth research is needed to better understand the effects that salmon escapement in McNeil River (and nearby drainages) have on McNeil River bears. Likewise, more information is needed to better understand the effects of legal hunting outside the sanctuary on bears at McNeil River.

As discussed in more detail in the *Fisheries* section below, McNeil River has experienced a long-term trend of low chum salmon returns that frequently fail to achieve escapement goals. Observations from the sanctuary indicate low salmon returns will result in a short-term increase in bear-use as they expend more effort and time catching enough fish to meet their nutritional requirements. However, long-term fish shortages will likely alter established use patterns as bears seek alternative sources for salmon or other sources of food. These long-term changes in use patterns appear to have started in 1998 and have continued to date. In addition to the size of the salmon run, the timing of the run also appears to influence the number of bears utilizing McNeil River. An evenly distributed run will generally attract more bears to the falls while a similarly sized run that arrives in a relatively short period will not afford a larger number of bears the opportunity to catch fish, thus they seek food elsewhere.

Observations at McNeil River also indicate that during periods of prolonged salmon shortages, the most dominant bears (generally larger males) occupy the most successful fishing spots and preclude use by less dominant bears. The least dominant bears (subadults and maternal females) typically fish in the less desirable locations downstream of the falls. In this area, they frequently consume partially eaten fish or fish scraps discarded by the more satiated bears upstream. During periods of diminished runs, overall fishing effort is less successful, particularly in the less desirable locations. Additionally, the dominant bears occupying the desired locations typically consume the entire fish, as they are not reaching satiation, leaving no opportunity for scavenging bears downstream. This is a potential reason for the unusually low number of subadults, maternal females and cubs in recent years.

Compounding the chronic low salmon escapements at McNeil River, comparatively strong chum salmon returns throughout Lower Cook Inlet during the past seven years (with the unique exception of the McNeil River system), and exceptionally large sockeye salmon returns to some nearby Bristol Bay drainages, may also be contributing to the decline in bear use by attracting bears away from McNeil River.

Based on the Department's review of fisheries escapements at McNeil River, and considering that commercial harvest of chum salmon in the McNeil River Subdistrict has been negligible for the past 13 years (and has been closed for the duration of the chum salmon return during every season since 1997), staff determined that changes in commercial fisheries activities were not warranted. Management actions such as artificial enhancement of the chum salmon population were also considered. However, sanctuary managers felt that these actions would have minimal or no affect on the McNeil River bear population or, in the case of fisheries enhancement, would not be feasible nor would it be consistent with management goals of the sanctuary. Managers did feel that further study of the McNeil River chum salmon spawning habitat and other parameters would assist in the future management of these resources and the sanctuary. This study was initiated in 2003 with a spawning habitat assessment. A chum salmon life history study was initiated in 2005 and was completed in 2006 (see *Fisheries* section below).

III. WILDLIFE OBSERVATIONS

One new mammal species was observed at McNeil River Sanctuary in 2006. A red squirrel was observed on the head between Akjemguiga Cove and McNeil Cove. Caspian Terns which were first observed in the sanctuary in 2005 were often observed in the vicinity of McNeil Spit and lower McNeil River.

A male cub of the year was found dead below the bluff on the west side of the Mikfik sedge flats on July 14, 2006. The cub had several injuries. The injuries included: a broken neck, severed spinal column, a punctured cranium, a broken and dislocated right femur, and a tear wound through the stomach cavity that pierced the kidney and bowel. It also had several contusions and breaks in the skin. The cub was observed with its' mother and siblings the previous evening.

IV. FISHERIES

Commercial Fisheries

The cumulative Mikfik Creek sockeye salmon escapement index for 2006 was 17,700 fish while the McNeil River chum salmon escapement was estimated at 28,176 fish (Table 3). Minimal commercial fishing effort targeting sockeyes in the McNeil River Subdistrict this season resulted in the harvest of 1,300 fish, while the subdistrict was closed for the duration of the chum return. Consequently, nearly all of the Mikfik Creek sockeye run, and the entire McNeil River chum return, entered their respective drainages to spawn. The 2006 Mikfik Creek estimated escapement of almost 18,000 sockeyes was about 45% (or 5,500 fish) greater than the upper end of the sustainable escapement goal (SEG) range of 6,300 - 12,150 sockeyes.

This season was the eighteenth consecutive year the McNeil River chum salmon run failed to produce a significant harvestable surplus. However, chum salmon escapement achieved the established SEG range of 14,000 - 26,000 chums for the second consecutive season but only the fifth time in the past 17 seasons (Figure 7). In a continuing recent trend, chum returns to the nearby Big and Little Kamishak Rivers and Bruin Bay River were relatively strong, while chum

returns to more northerly Kamishak Bay systems between Ursus Cove and the northern limits of the district were also once again quite strong in 2006. In addition, for the seventh successive season, commercial fishing effort directed at chum salmon occurred in the Kamishak Bay District, primarily in the northern portion of the district at Cottonwood/Iliamna Subdistrict, resulting in a district-wide harvest of nearly 57,000 fish, the fifth highest total for the district since 1988.

The number of spawning chum salmon documented upstream of McNeil River Falls in 2006 was similar to the previous two seasons and represents a considerable improvement over the preceding 11 years. Fish were consistently seen above the falls during aerial observations this season, beginning with the third survey on June 27. A peak daily count of just under 1,500 fish upstream of McNeil River Falls occurred on July 17.

Post-season evaluation indicated that run timing was conspicuously late for the Mikfik sockeye salmon run, while that of McNeil River chums seemed close to normal in arrival but peaked later than usual. The three different methods used to derive the total McNeil River chum escapement index yielded mixed results: 1) the historic mean run timing curve, used to extrapolate the "tail" of the run after the last (August 8) survey, produced a cumulative total of 23,500 fish; 2) the preferred method (calculates area under the curve assuming a 17.5-day stream life factor), now used to estimate escapements for most pink and chum streams in Lower Cook Inlet, resulted in a cumulative estimate of 28,176 chums; and 3) simple accumulation of daily counts, made after the first observed peak on July 10, resulted in an estimate of 30,300 chums. The second method has been adopted as the standard methodology for generating escapement indices in Lower Cook Inlet. Another method for estimating escapements, using a video camera attached to a digital video recorder to record the video images (see below), was used at Mikfik Creek/Lake again this season.

Mikfik Creek Video Research

A remote video escapement recorder (RVER) was installed at the outlet of Mikfik Lake for the eighth consecutive season. This project has already proven invaluable to both in season and post-season fisheries management and research in Lower Cook Inlet, demonstrating that remote video and time-lapse recording technology has the capability to largely supplant aerial surveys as a means for collecting escapement data on small clear streams that do not warrant the expense of weirs or sonar.

When originally configured eight years ago, the Mikfik video system consisted of a single remote video camera and a time-lapse videocassette recorder (VCR) logging one frame per second onto analog VHS tapes. While this system produced images of sufficient quality to facilitate reliable fish counts, it had shortcomings. Weekly flights were necessary to refresh videotapes, the analog tapes were fragile and cumbersome to review, and tracking individual fish was difficult at one frame per second. The next evolution of the Mikfik system, used from 2002 through 2005, recorded up to five digital frames per second and stored the images on a computer hard drive. However, relatively high power consumption by the computer resulted in recording downtime and has led to the development of alternative equipment. The new setup, implemented at Mikfik Creek in 2006, uses a time-lapse digital video recorder (DVR) in place of the personal computer. The new configuration completely overcomes the power issues affecting the

computer-based version. Additionally, in order to facilitate near real-time escapement monitoring and eventually reduce the number of flights necessary to maintain the system, transmission of recorded images via satellite back to Homer on a daily basis has also been tested with mixed success in recent years. The Department believes these problems can be successfully resolved and plans to continue the development of this promising technology, ultimately incorporating it into the Mikfik remote recording system.

In 2006, the video system at Mikfik Creek/Lake was powered up on June 17 and shut down on July 10. The system operated continuously during daylight hours (~ 20 hrs/d) and successfully recorded images 100% of the time that it was programmed to operate. Digital images were recorded locally onto a hot-swappable hard drive able to record about 28 days of video.

As was the case in 2001 and 2003 - 2005, a single camera mounted on the original (north bank) light pole, was used to collect all video images of fish passage in 2006. After experimenting with several configurations, recordings were made using a compression rate of five frames per second. The resulting image quality was excellent. Fish were very easy to see, and the new DVR facilitated efficient and convenient video review to estimate escapement. Upon preliminary review of the images collected at Mikfik Creek, 14,983 sockeye salmon were counted, representing approximately 2,717 fewer fish than were estimated by aerial surveys. The video-based estimate should be considered conservative, because the system is not designed to count fish during hours of darkness. To remain consistent with the historical Mikfik Creek database, aerial survey data was once again chosen to generate the 2006 spawning escapement index.

One advantage of using a remote video counting tower to count salmon escapement at Mikfik Creek is the opportunity to incidentally monitor other wildlife in the area. Video reviewers documented 12 instances where brown bears transited the field of view of the camera, with a peak of four bears recorded on July 2. Other wildlife observed included moose, beavers and river otters.

Sport Fishing

Limited sport fishing occurs in McNeil Lagoon and Chenik Creek and is incidental to bear-viewing activities. The only area in the sanctuary that attracts significant sport fishing interest is on the Kamishak River and, to a lesser extent, the Little Kamishak River and its tributary, Strike Creek. Due to the small number of anglers that fish in the Kamishak River relative to more accessible locations in Alaska, the annual survey of sport anglers conducted by the Division of Sport Fish does not accurately portray angler effort, catch or harvest in this area. Seven Bristol Bay area lodges operated in the area during summer and, as a condition of their sanctuary access permits, are required to report their sport fishing activities. Their reports are thought to better reflect the level of angler activity in the area (Table 5).

These lodges brought a minimum of 292 visitors to the sanctuary who sport fished; however, wildlife viewing, primarily brown bears, was a significant part of their activities. These anglers reported catching 6,343 fish, of which 45% were Dolly Varden and 38% were coho salmon. Nearly all Dolly Varden were released as were most pink and chum salmon. Eighty-seven percent of coho salmon were also released.

Fisheries Research

The Department hired a graduate student intern in 2005 to begin conducting a two year radio telemetry project on McNeil River chum salmon to estimate freshwater streamlife, document spawning distribution and estimate predation by bears. Because the number of pre-spawning chum salmon killed by brown bears is much greater at McNeil River than other streams, the Department wants to determine the average freshwater residency of chum salmon at McNeil River in order to improve the accuracy of total escapement indices derived by aerial survey. This project will likely result in the development of a new sustainable escapement goal (SEG) for McNeil River chum salmon that more accurately reflects the high rate of in-river predation that occurs there.

Two remote data logging stations were installed in June 2006, one at the tip of McNeil spit and one approximately 300 m above McNeil Falls. Approximately 70 radio tags were deployed between June 24 and July 28. Each tag was outfitted with a mortality sensor to indicate when fish died. Tags that were recovered from dead fish were redeployed in season, resulting in a total of 95 chum salmon being tagged. The movements and lifespan of tagged chum salmon were monitored by a combination of the remote data logging stations, radio telemetry flights, and daily manual tracking between the spit and McNeil Falls. The graduate intern successfully concluded the field portion of this project in August 2006 and has begun working up the telemetry data. More detailed results from this study will be forthcoming with the completion of the student's Master's Thesis in spring 2007.

Fisheries Enhancement

Fisheries enhancement continues to play a major role in Lower Cook Inlet salmon production and commercial harvests. The results of enhancement and rehabilitation of the Kamishak Bay District sockeye stocks have, at times in the past, made significant contributions to commercial salmon harvests. In 2006, no sockeye salmon were documented via aerial observation near the mouth of the Paint River, located approximately two miles north of McNeil River. The Paint River Lakes were first stocked with sockeye salmon fry in 1986 in an effort to develop a new sockeye salmon return to this salmon-barren drainage, which is blocked to upstream fish migration by a steep waterfall at tidewater. From 1991 to 1996, approximately 600,000-750,000 sockeye salmon fry were stocked annually in the Paint River Lakes. Although construction of the Paint River fish ladder was completed in October 1991, the number of returning adult sockeye salmon has only ranged from 30 (in 2000) to 2,000 (in 2005). Consequently, the structure has never been opened to allow fish passage upstream through the ladder.

Although the Paint River sockeye stocking project was formally suspended after the 1996 season, the Cook Inlet Aquaculture Association (CIAA) experimentally stocked Upper Paint Lake in early October 2002 with 536,000 sockeye fry/pre-smolts. An amendment to the 2002 Trail Lakes Hatchery Annual Management Plan granted the aquaculture association authorization for a one-time release of juveniles that were surplus to the 2002 Annual Management Plan stocking schedule.

V. LAND STATUS/USE

Land Use Permitting

Kamishak River- Seven lodges in the Bristol Bay region operated sport fishing and wildlife viewing operations on the Kamishak River within the sanctuary and adjacent Katmai National Park in 2006. The lodges stored riverboats on the lower reaches of the river and three of the lodges operated a guide camp at this location. These activities are managed through Special Area Permits and Access Permits issued by the Department, and Land Use Permits issued by the Department of Natural Resources. This area is also part of the Kamishak Special Use Area, which is managed by the Department of Natural Resources. Concerns about conflicting permit and management requirements on the Kamishak River between the Department, the Alaska Department of Natural Resources and the National Park Service have been mostly alleviated by coordinating permit requirements and by jointly addressing management concerns and conducting joint field visits.

The area will continue to be monitored for permit compliance and identification of possible impacts to the sanctuary. The primary management concern is the food-conditioning of Kamishak River bears, which also visit Mikfik Creek and McNeil River. Food-conditioning of bears would not be consistent with the purposes for which the sanctuary was established and would jeopardize the bear-viewing program at McNeil River. Additionally, concerns have been expressed about overcrowding, boating safety and impacts to the fisheries, bears and other resources on the Kamishak River. Several operators and guides have suggested that visitor limitations be placed on this area.

Chenik Creek- One commercial bear viewing operator obtained a Special Area Permit for a camp near the outlet of Chenik Lake for the purpose of bear viewing along Chenik Creek. The camp was occupied from July 5-10.

Archeological Survey- As part of a cooperative archeological survey of the McNeil River area, a National Park Service archeologist collected "charcoal" samples from pre-historic house pit sites for carbon dating. Samples were collected from sites on the bluff above the McNeil River/Mikfik Creek confluence, from the beach berm just east of the McNeil River camp, and from the McNeil River campground.

Other Land Uses- Several ongoing land use permits were in effect during 2006 and included: camp facilities at McNeil River, remote Internet camera placement at McNeil River Falls, fisheries remote video camera at Mikfik Creek/Lake, fisheries research cabin at Chenik Lake, and a GPS recording station in the refuge.

Air charter services periodically land on Chenik Lake, Paint River Lakes, Mikfik Lake, and other water bodies with the sanctuary and refuge when waiting on weather and scheduling issues.

Chenik Lodge- The facilities that formerly comprised the *Chenik Wilderness Lodge* located near Chenik Head in the refuge came under state ownership in October 2003 when 6,871 acres of federally owned land were conveyed from the Bureau of Land Management to the State of Alaska and incorporated into the refuge. With this land transfer, the state assumed ownership of

the unauthorized facility as the former owner had relinquished all interest in this site. In January 2005, the Department removed the facilities including the main lodge, three guest cabins and other support buildings and structures.

In May 2006, the Department conducted additional "mop-up" operations at the lodge site and removed tons of metal roofing, PVC pipe, wood pilings, and a variety of garbage. The debris was hauled by ship to Homer. One tent platform remains at the site and other debris still remain, however.

VI. SANCTUARY MANAGEMENT

Staff

Sanctuary Manager Doug Hill, previously the manager of Redoubt Bay Critical Habitat Area logged his first season at McNeil River. Tom Griffin (assistant Sanctuary Manager) returned for his seventh season; Polly Hessing (Wildlife Technician) who worked for the sanctuary in 1984-1987, 1995-1998, and 2005 returned for her tenth season. Josh Peirce (Graduate Intern) and Kelly Peirce (Volunteer) conducted their second year of research on McNeil River chum salmon.

VII. PUBLIC USE

McNeil River Falls/Mikfik Creek

Public use and access to the sanctuary, with the exception of the McNeil Cove spit and beach, requires an access permit from the Department (5 AAC 92.065). Since 1973, bear-viewing at established sites on McNeil River and nearby Mikfik Creek has been limited to ten people daily between June 7 and August 25, and Viewing Access Permits for this period are issued by lottery. Currently, 185 regular permits (Guided Viewing Access Permits) and 57 standby permits (Camp-Standby Viewing Access Permits) are issued in the lottery. An additional 15 regular permits are issued as Special Access Permits at the Commissioner's discretion for scientific, educational, media and other purposes. Ten regular and three standby permits are issued for each of the established four-day permit periods, a total of 257 permits issued for the season

In 2006, 183 permittees (Guided Viewing, Camp Standby, and Special Access) visited the sanctuary (Table 4). The previous 10-year period annual visitation average was 202. During the same ten year period, the lowest annual number of visitors occurred in 2002 when 175 people visited the sanctuary. The maximum number of people able to visit the sanctuary under the existing permit program is 257 people.

The average number of permits used each day at the sanctuary in 2006 was 7.5 (out of a maximum of 10.0), which is slightly higher than the low of 6.6 in 2002. These annual fluctuations were likely attributable to several factors including the streamlining of the permit system, limits placed on campground capacity, limits placed on the number of nights each individual is allowed to stay in the sanctuary, lottery winners either not purchasing or not utilizing their permits and more recently, the reduction in the number of standby permits issued.

The utilization of permits has improved since 2002 partly as a result of selling unclaimed permits to the next applicant on the draw list. In 2006 eleven "resale" permits were issued and utilized.

There were 783 Guided Viewing and Camp Standby applications received in 2006 for the 185 regular and 57 standby permits issued through the permit lottery. This is a decrease from the previous year (960 applicants) and is considerably lower than the annual average for the previous 10 years (1,058). The peak number of applicants received was 2,150 in 1993. While the number of applicants fluctuates annually, there was a general decline starting in 1993 when the Board of Game started requiring a 4-year waiting period for successful applicants to reapply. This general decline stopped in 1999 when the Board of Game reduced the waiting period to one year and then applicant numbers increased for the next three years. Since 2002, applicant numbers have generally declined. A contributing factor to these annual fluctuations and perhaps the reason for the recent decline in applicants is the availability of commercially guided bear viewing operators in the region.

There were 19 applications received for sanctuary Special Access Permits and included projects under the Department's criteria for scientific, educational, media or other projects. Twelve of these applicants and 5 additional visitors were issued access permits which included representatives of federal agencies involved in the management of bear-viewing programs, ADF&G hunter and wildlife education personnel, CBS news, Kenai Peninsula School District, ConocoPhillips, National Geographic Society, Rasmuson Foundation, one Alaskan writer, and the Pratt Museum of Homer.

In 2006, \$67,450 was generated from the McNeil River sanctuary permit program and all revenues were deposited in the Fish and Game Fund.

Kamishak River

Seven Bristol Bay area lodges operated on the Kamishak River in 2005 and brought a minimum of 292 visitors to the sanctuary and adjacent Katmai National Park (Table 5). Their primary activity was sport fishing; however, they also engaged in wildlife viewing activities, primarily of brown bears.

Bear-Human Conflicts

There were no known adverse interactions between bears and people in the sanctuary or refuge during the 2006 season.

VIII. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sanctuary Manager Doug Hill and staff, Tom Griffin, Polly Hessing, and Josh Peirce gathered data on bear use and visitor activities. Aaron Christ provided information on the bear-monitoring program; Doug Hill, John Hechtel, and Joe Meehan prepared this report and Lee Hammarstrom and Ted Otis prepared the narrative on fishing activities; Liz Solomon prepared the GIS map; Marian Snively provided technical advice, and Lem Butler provided bear harvest data and reviewed a draft of this report.

Figure 1. Map showing location of the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary and Refuge in southwestern Alaska.

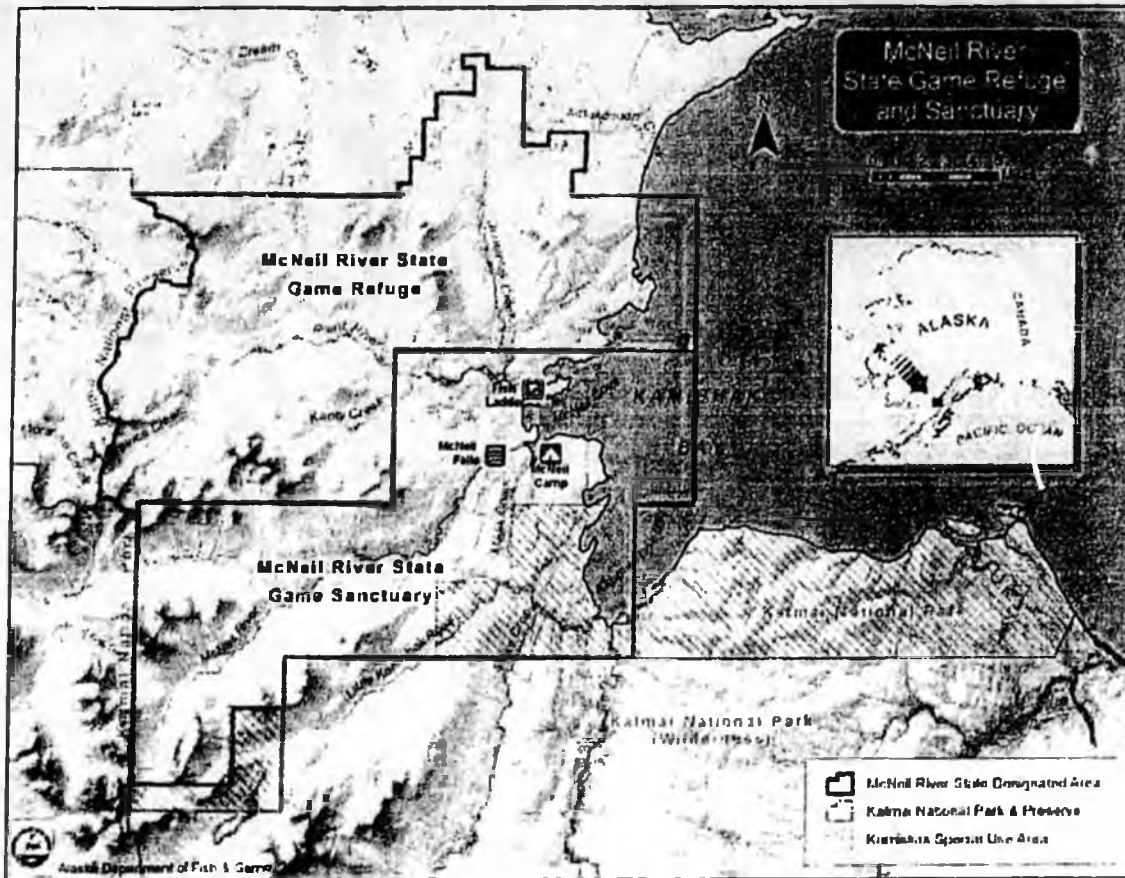


Figure 2. One-sided Shewhart control chart for the seven highest daily and hourly bear counts at McNeil River Falls, McNeil River State Sanctuary, Alaska, 1983 - 2005 ($\alpha = 0.01$).

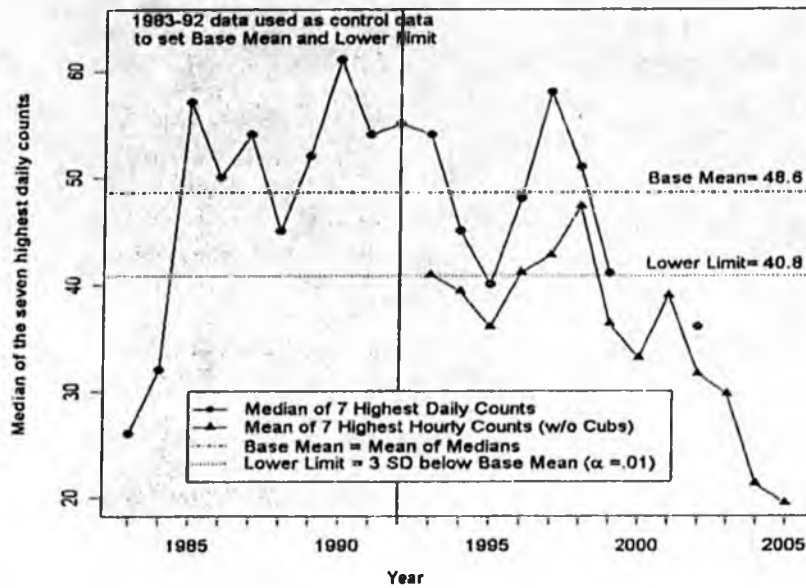


Figure 3. Bear use days at McNeil River Falls, McNeil River State Game Sanctuary, Alaska, 1982-2006.

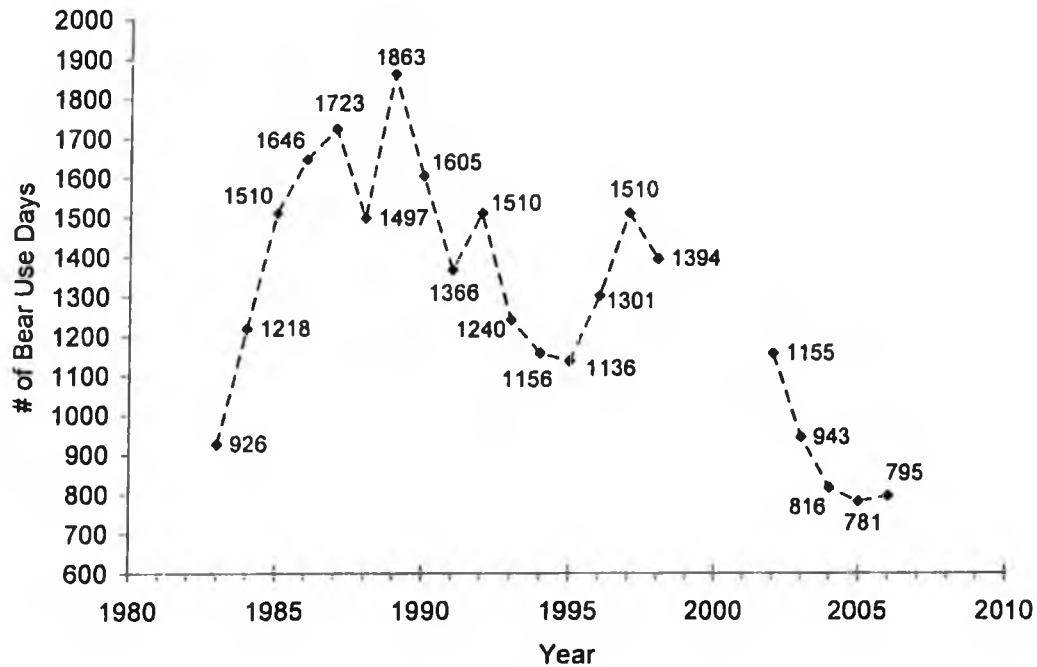


Figure 4. Average annual proportion of male and female bears observed at McNeil River Falls, McNeil River State Game Sanctuary, Alaska, 1986 – 2005 (in five year increments).

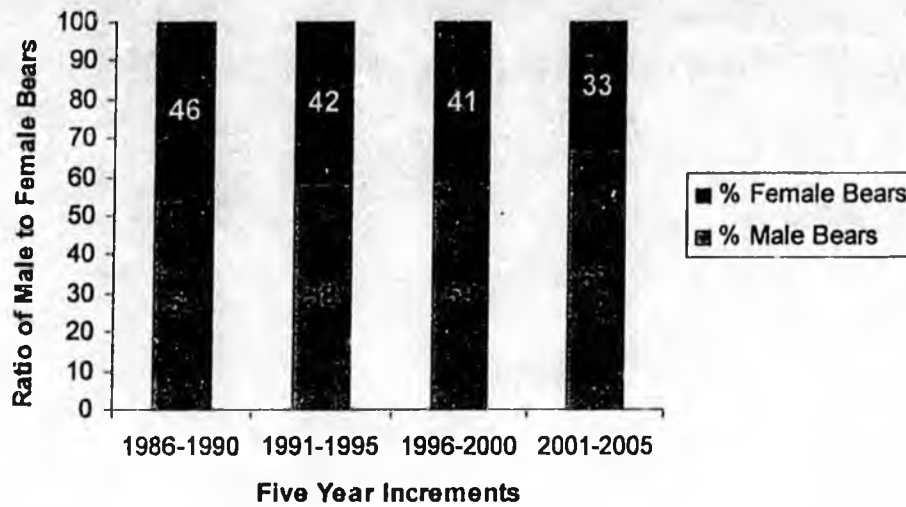


Figure 5. Average annual number of maternal females and sub-adult (both sexes) observed at McNeil River Falls, McNeil River State Game Sanctuary, Alaska, 1976-2005 (in five year increments).

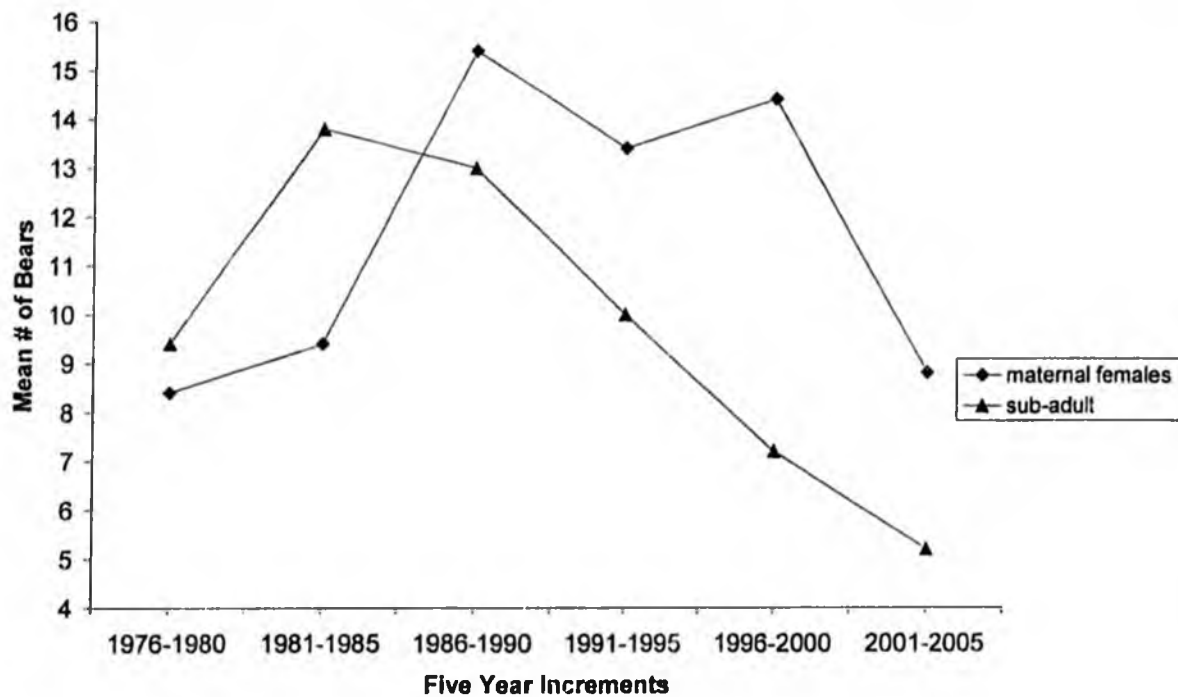
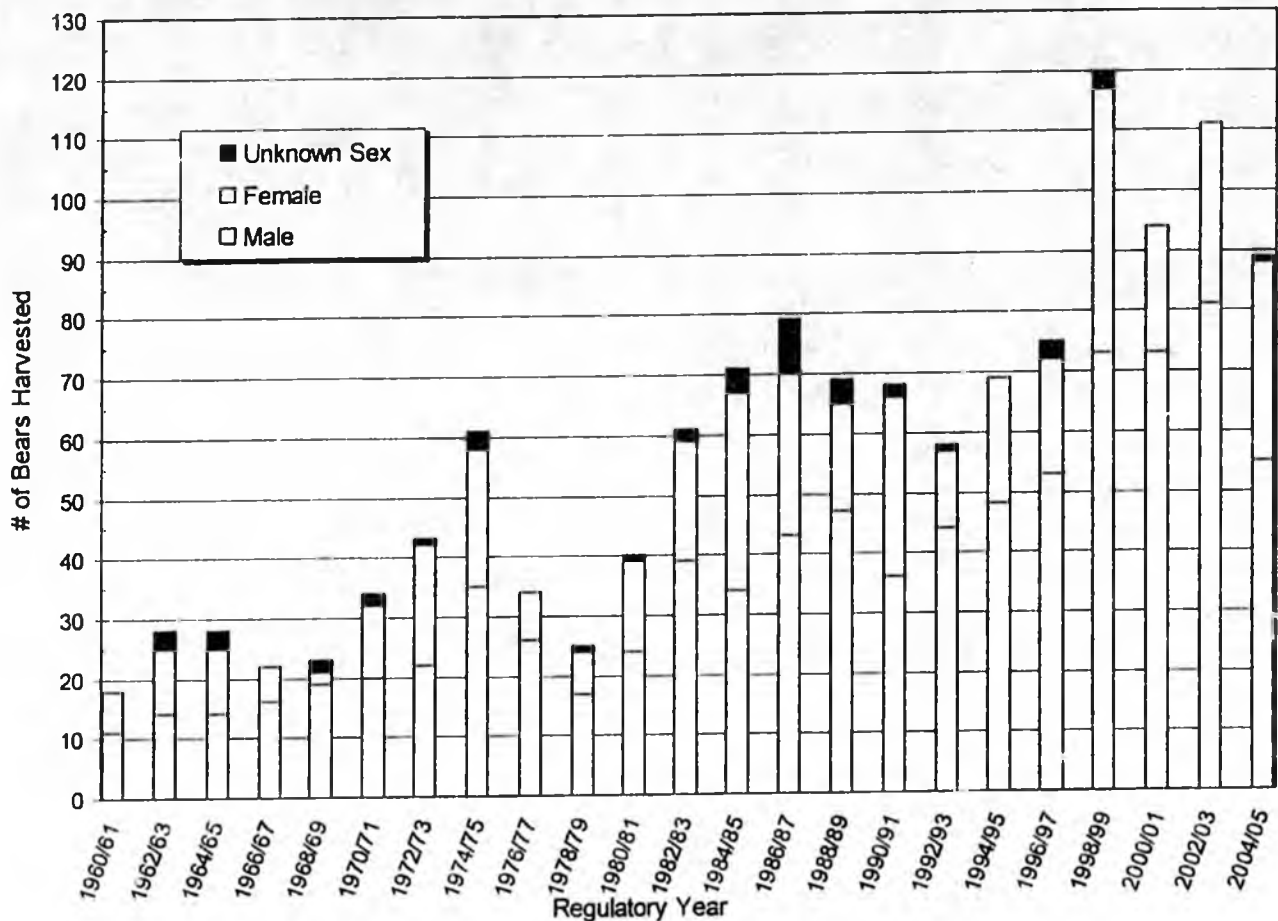


Figure 6. Brown bear harvest from areas surrounding the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary and Refuge, Alaska, 1960-2005 (harvest from GMU/UCUs: 9A/201, 301, 401, 501; 9B/301; and 9C/201,301, 601, 702, and 703). Two consecutive regulatory years* are lumped.

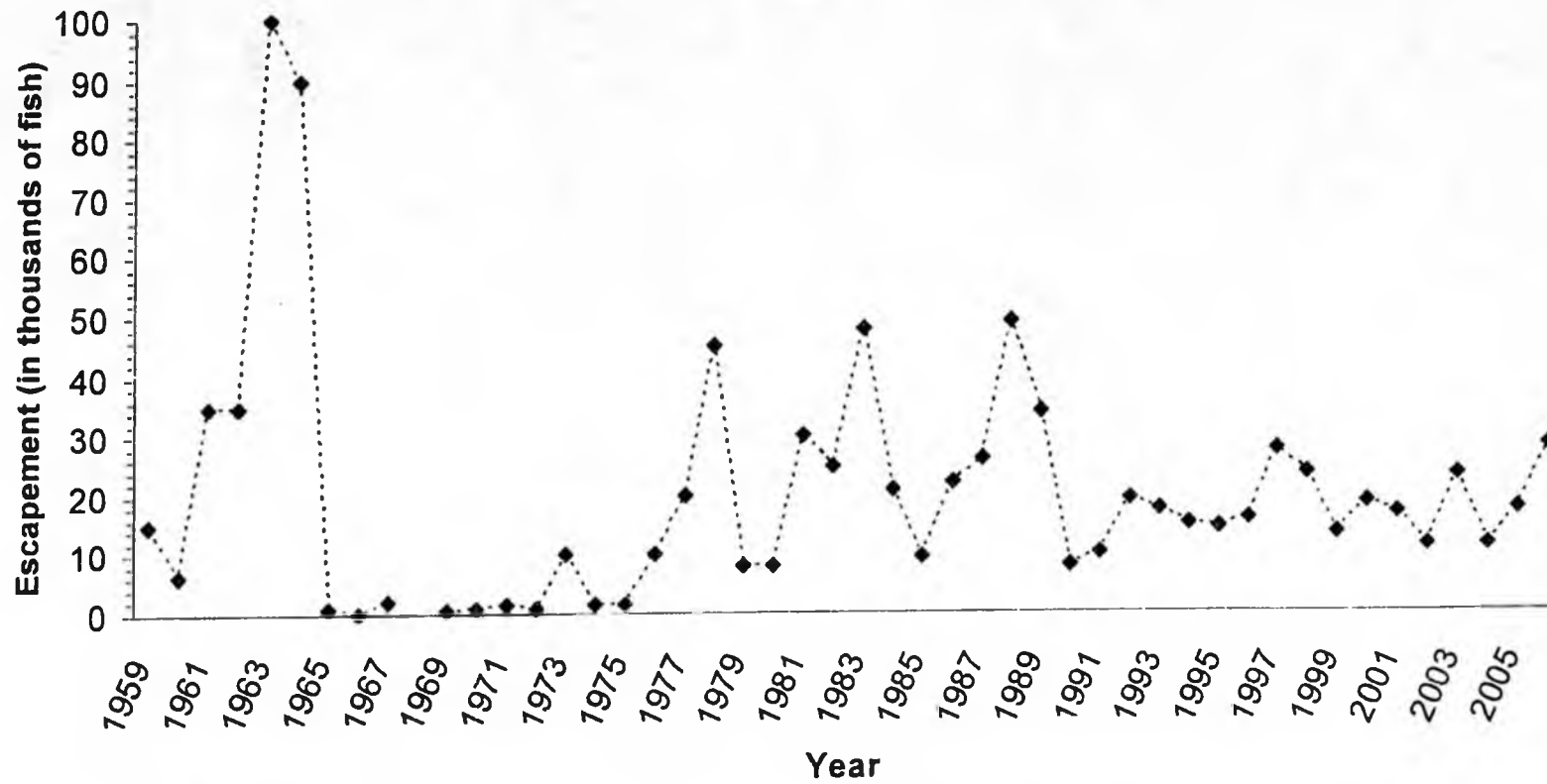
Figure 2
Brown Bear Harvest From Areas Surrounding the McNeil River
State Game Sanctuary and Refuge 1960 - 2005*
 (Harvest from GMU/UCUs: 9A/201, 301, 401, 501; 9B/301; and 9C/201, 301, 601, 702, 703)



* Notes: A regulatory year starts July 1 and ends June 30 of the following year.
 Harvest includes those bears taken as reported DLPs.
 Hunts occurred annually through 1975 and every other year thereafter.

* A regulatory year starts July 1 and ends June 30 of the following year. Harvest includes those bears taken as reported DLPs. Hunts occurred annually through 1975 and every other year thereafter.

Figure 7. McNeil River chum salmon escapement. McNeil River State Game Sanctuary, Alaska, 1959-2006.



* Note: The Sustainable Escapement Goal (SEG) was established at 14,000 - 26,000 fish beginning with the 2002 season.

Table 1. Peak hourly counts of brown bears (not including cubs) at McNeil River Falls, McNeil River State Game Sanctuary, Alaska, 1993-2005.

Date	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Average
July 15	-	-	-	38	40	<u>47</u>	28	<u>37</u>	25	30	<u>42</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>23</u>	33
16	-	-	-	<u>46</u>	32	42	28	31	<u>39</u>	26	<u>31</u>	<u>31</u>	<u>22</u>	33
17	-	-	-	29	47	46	35	31	<u>41</u>	32	<u>36</u>	<u>22</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>34</u>
18	<u>37</u>	30	29	<u>44</u>	<u>43</u>	<u>47</u>	26	<u>32</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>21</u>	<u>34</u>
19	<u>58</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>54</u>	<u>66</u>	<u>57</u>	36	<u>36</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>35</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>42</u>
20	<u>55</u>	<u>37</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>52</u>	32	<u>37</u>	23	<u>37</u>	<u>26</u>	<u>38</u>	<u>27</u>	<u>24</u>	<u>36</u>
21	<u>46</u>	<u>43</u>	28	<u>47</u>	<u>50</u>	10	35	28	<u>40</u>	<u>40</u>	30	21	13	33
22	<u>54</u>	26	<u>48</u>	<u>49</u>	44	18	38	<u>37</u>	32	25	<u>37</u>	<u>22</u>	16	<u>34</u>
23	<u>49</u>	<u>43</u>	29	<u>47</u>	<u>63</u>	35	<u>42</u>	<u>36</u>	30	<u>41</u>	27	17	<u>18</u>	<u>37</u>
24	30	<u>52</u>	31	<u>33</u>	<u>52</u>	43	32	<u>36</u>	<u>42</u>	32	20	20	13	<u>34</u>
25	19	18	<u>39</u>	<u>40</u>	<u>51</u>	46	29	<u>36</u>	33	30	25	11	?	29
26	28	<u>37</u>	30	31	<u>54</u>	<u>63</u>	35	<u>32</u>	24	30	21	7	8	31
27	<u>34</u>	<u>44</u>	<u>39</u>	37	49	<u>50</u>	31	23	29	22	24	6	7	30
28	24	33	28	33	27	<u>51</u>	<u>37</u>	23	23	<u>34</u>	17	12	8	27
29	28	32	12	21	30	<u>48</u>	36	24	20	<u>36</u>	14	9	6	24
30	21	25	<u>32</u>	29	27	39	<u>41</u>	28	15	31	16	10	8	25
31	19	20	<u>35</u>	26	15	34	<u>42</u>	19	11	<u>33</u>	-	14	7	23
August 1	13	16	23	22	17	35	<u>42</u>	15	7	25	-	9	-	20
2	7	16	16	18	24	31	29	20	5	21	-	12	-	18
3	-	-	-	18	21	23	27	25	3	19	-	10	-	18
4	-	-	-	11	11	12	16	14	3	11	-	4	-	10
5	-	-	-	10	-	18	23	4	1	9	-	7	-	10
Average of 7 high days	48	44	38	47	55	52	40	36	39	36	38	25	22	40

Notes: Highest hourly count is the single highest count of the day taken on the hour.

High daily count is a one time count of the highest number of bears taken when the most bears are present.

(^*) = Observations are generally made between 11:00am and 7:00 PM and average 6.5 hours a day.

(-) = Counts were not made.

Bold Numbers = 7 high daily counts for the season or 10 year average of 7 high daily counts

Table 2. Sex and age composition of brown bears at McNeil River State Game Sanctuary, Alaska, 1976-2006.

Year:	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	00	01	02	03	04	05	06
Females w/cubs	9	10	8	9	6	8	7	7	9	16	14	14	14	19	16	15	16	11	11	14	20	19	15	11	7	5	10	12	7	10	8
Single Adult Females	5	8	6	8	8	10	9	15	16	12	11	13	13	14	16	12	19	19	15	12	14	19	19	<u>14</u>	<u>14</u>	12	8	16	12	13	15
Single Adult Males	16	18	18	19	23	26	20	22	22	27	31	34	34	42	37	41	39	48	45	49	46	55	54	<u>48</u>	<u>48</u>	53	45	45	39	41	40
Adult Sex Unknown	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Adults	31	36	32	36	38	44	36	44	47	55	56	61	61	75	69	68	74	78	71	75	80	93	88	<u>73</u>	<u>69</u>	70	63	73	58	64	63
Sub-Adult Females	4	3	4	2	6	9	11	9	8	2	7	7	9	4	5	6	6	8	9	3	6	5	6	<u>4</u>	<u>4</u>	4	4	2	4	2	6
Sub-Adult Males	0	5	4	0	0	1	1	4	5	10	7	8	8	5	5	4	2	4	3	5	1	3	3	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u>	2	2	2	1	3	8
Sub-Adult Sex Unknown	3	4	5	3	4	5	3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total Sub-Adults (1)	7	12	13	5	10	15	15	14	13	12	14	15	17	9	10	10	8	12	12	8	7	8	9	<u>6</u>	<u>6</u>	6	6	4	5	5	14
Total Adults & Sub-Adults (2)	38	48	45	41	48	59	51	58	60	67	70	76	78	84	79	78	82	90	83	83	87	101	97	<u>79</u>	<u>75</u>	76	69	77	63	69	77
Total Cubs	20	21	20	17	12	14	16	12	17	28	26	30	31	42	34	30	31	24	22	25	35	43	31	20	15	11	21	26	15	18	15
Total Bears	58	69	65	58	60	73	67	77	95	96	106	109	126	113	108	113	114	105	108	122	144	128	<u>99</u>	<u>90</u>	87	90	103	78	87	92	

Notes: (1) Defined as 5.5 years old and younger from 1977 through the present.
(2) Only the bears that are recognizable as individuals and given names are included. In addition any bear that is recognizable but is seen less than three times and is not a regular user of Lower Mikfik, McNeil Falls or McNeil Cove are not included. Hence these figures represent minimum number of bears present at the sanctuary.

Underlined Bold Numbers represent average of data four years prior and after. (No data was actually recorded in 1999 & 2000)

Table 3. Aerial escapement estimates of sockeye and chum salmon in the Mikfik Creek and McNeil River drainages, McNeil River State Game Sanctuary, Alaska, 2005.

Survey Date	Mikfik Sockeyes (Daily) ^a	Estimated Cumulative	McNeil Chums (Daily) ^a	Estimated Cumulative ^b
5/31	0	0		
6/2	0	0		
6/13	0	0		
6/20	25	25	0	0
6/23	250	250	2	2
6/27	17,700	17,700	2,075	2,075
6/30	8,900	17,700	3,270	3,270
7/3	2,030	17,700	1,740	3,270
7/10	3,900	17,700	4,900	4,900
7/17			4,475	4,900
8/1			7,500	10,400
8/8			13,390	17,400
CUMULATIVE TOTAL		17,700		28,176^c

^a All individual daily estimates are unexpanded live counts and considered to be conservative.

^b The cumulative estimate is not the sum of daily counts, but is adjusted for fish schooled in the lagoon that may or may not have been observed in previous surveys.

^c The cumulative total was derived by estimating area under the curve with 17.5-day stream life factor applied and compares favorably with the historical mean run timing curve for McNeil River chum salmon.

Table 4. Number of applicants, visitors, user days and permit days at McNeil River State Game Sanctuary, Alaska, 1984-2006.

Year	Footnotes	# of Applicants	# of Visitors*	Total User days in Sanctuary**	Total Permit Days July/Aug (580 possible)***	Comments on Season Length
1984	A, F	992	159	574	377	6/5 - 8/27
1985	A	832	216	816	449	6/10 - 8/25
1986	A	806	255	967	430	6/9 - 8/25
1987	A, G	1,757	252	1,054	473	6/9 - 8/23
1988	A	1,094	304	1,328	498	6/1 - 8/29
1989	A	1,306	264	1,183	488	5/22 - 8/26
1990	A	1,481	299	1,435	524	6/8 - 8/25
1991	B, E	1,818	249	1,415	528	6/1 - 8/27
1992	C, E, H	1,672	245	1,210	478	6/1 - 8/25
1993	D	2,150	225	1,128	516	6/7 - 8/25
1994	D, I	1,766	221	1,086	484	6/7 - 8/25
1995	D, I	1,486	212	1,074	475	6/7 - 8/25
1996	D, I	1,502	219	1,158	494	6/7 - 8/25
1997	D, I	1,474	228	1,197	489	6/7 - 8/25
1998	D, I	1,159	219	1,096	504	6/7 - 8/25
1999	D, I, J	1,223	208	1,122	398	6/7 - 8/25
2000	D, J, K, L, M	1,322	198	1,051	424	6/7 - 8/25
2001	D, J, K, L, M, N	1,329	186	1,012	437	6/7 - 8/25
2002	D, J, K, L, M, N	1,434	175	930	351	6/7 - 8/25
2003	D, J, K, L, M, N, O, P	1,314	188	995	451	6/7 - 8/25
2004	D, J, K, L, M, O, P	860	201	1,034	462	6/7 - 8/25
2005	D, K, L, M, O, P	960	195	983	431	6/7 - 8/25
2006	D, K, L, M, O, P	783	183	970	420	6/7 - 8/25

Footnotes Table:

A = No limit on standby or camp numbers.
B = 1st come, 1st served for standby with no camp limit.
C = 1st come, 1st served for standby with camp limit of 15.
D = All permits (regular & standby) by lottery including June.
E = Unlimited permits prior to June 15 then 10 a day.
F = \$5 application fee instituted in 1993.
G = \$10 application fee and \$40 user fee instituted.
H = \$20 application fee and new user fees (\$100 Resident/\$250 Non-resident) instituted.
I = Visitors to the sanctuary must wait four years to re-apply.
J = Lower staffing levels prevented late arriving or early departing visitors from joining the group.
K = \$25 application fee and new user fees (\$150 Resident/\$350 Non-resident) instituted.
L = Number of Standby permits drop from 5 to 3 per period (05 to 57 annually).
M = Visitors to the sanctuary must wait one year to re-apply.
N = A major air taxi operator retires, leaving only one primary carrier to serve MRSQS.
O = Includes Resale permits (Unissued permits were resold and used).
P = Includes "fill in" permits.
* = Season (6/7-8/25) total of Guided, Standby, & Special Use permittees (actual bear-viewing permittee visitation).
** = Summation of all visitors (permitted bear-viewers and all other visitors) each day of viewing season (6/7-8/25).
*** = Summation of all Guided, Standby, & Special Use permittees each day from 7/1-8/25 (Relates to use of McNeil Falls area).

Table 5. Minimum visitor use and fish harvest reported at Kamishak River, McNeil River State Game Sanctuary, Alaska, 2006.

# of Anglers	# of Non-Anglers	# Days Guided	COHO SALMON		CHUM SALMON		PINK SALMON		DOLLY VARDEN	
			Kept	Released	Kept	Released	Kept	Released	Kept	Released
292	0	85	324	2113	0	387	0	665	62	2792

From: Paul & Carolyn Barry [mailto:barrysak@mtaonline.net]
Sent: Thursday, February 22, 2007 7:41 PM
To: Rep. Paul Seaton
Subject: HB 127

Rep. Seaton,

As a Palmer resident and hunter, I ask you to champion HB 127 and increase the protection of the McNeil River brown bears that are habituated to human presence.

The last thing we as hunters need is the reputation for shooting "tame" bears.

The effect of many bear viewers seeing the McNeil bears will only be positive to conservation and the melding of wildlife viewers and hunters as conservationists.

Jeff Fair

Jeff Fair
Author and Biologist
P.O. Box 2947
Palmer, AK 99634
907-745-1522

From: Larry Aumiller [mailto:aumatt@montana.com]
Sent: Friday, February 23, 2007 9:04 AM
To: Rep. Paul Seaton
Cc: joe_meehan@fishgame.state.ak.us
Subject:

Howdy Louie,

Any thing that I contribute can be used in any way that your office deems useful. Thanks for asking.

The Board of Game's primary rationale for increasing bear harvest in game management unit 9C was to help make more moose for locals. There was also speculation that increased bear harvest could help relieve some "bear problems" locals were having. However, I wasn't in the official loop for this management action. For the official documented rationales I suggest you contact Joe Meehan in the Anchorage ADF&G office or Lem Butler in the King Salmon ADF&G office. Ditto for tracking regulation changes for 1998 and 1999. Another contact for any information regarding Katmai preserve is Becky Brock who works as the concession specialist for Lake Clark National Park in Anchorage.

I share Senator Seaton's reasons for extending the Sanctuary. However, I have additional compelling reasons.

Attached is my abbreviated list of reasons for extension and responses to possible objections.

Thanks for the opportunity to comment,

Larry

REASONS TO EXTEND MCNEIL SANCTUARY BOUNDRIES

1. **First and foremost McNeil Sanctuary is a unique place that provides once-in-a-lifetime experiences.** Anything the State can do to preserve and enhance this exceptional place should a high priority. The McNeil River Sanctuary has the largest seasonal concentration of Brown bears in the WORLD! And it's one of only three State Game Sanctuaries (the highest level of protection) in all of Alaska. In fact it is the only true sanctuary in the state. The state's component of Stan Price Sanctuary exists only below mean high tide and therefore disappears twice a day. Round Island State Game Sanctuary allows Walrus hunting for subsistence, so it might more accurately be called a State Game Refuge.
2. **The controversy surrounding the hunting of brown bears in the McNeil ecosystem will never go away as long as tourists come to see bears and bear hunting is allowed.** Alaska has 25 years of acrimony, divisiveness and polarization among user groups over this issue. Various Boards of Games have closed or re-opened the Douglas River area. Each time opening actions are debated, the controversy grows. This controversy impacts how non-Alaskans see Alaska, and divides wildlife viewers and hunters. The only permanent solution is a Sanctuary extension.
3. **Fewer than 15% of Alaskans are licensed to hunt yet over 85% of Alaska is opened to hunting.** In the quest for fairness and balance shouldn't there be one piece of state land where viewing has priority over hunting? And if there is one place it should be the McNeil ecosystem.
4. **Bear viewing now generates more revenue than bear hunting.** Much of this viewing takes place in places where bears using McNeil River have ventured. There have been sightings of McNeil River bears From Kokhanok village to the north, Amakdedori beach to the east, Kulik and Moraine Creek to the west and all the way down to Kukak Bay in Katmai National Park. The latter sighting was a McNeil bear tagged 65 miles from McNeil falls. On purely economic grounds this bear population should be set aside for this valuable and growing use. The main economic beneficiaries are small businesses in the more rural parts of Alaska.
5. **The Alaskan public has shown overwhelming support for bear viewing in this area time after time in various polls and testimony.** You might want to check with Alaska Wildlife Alliance, and Friends of McNeil River and the BOG records for these data.
6. **Without passage of Rep. Seaton's bill, the general wildlife habitat is threatened.** In the past there have been DNR land disposal proposals in the Kamishak drainage salvage log operations on Amakdedori beach, and a failed fish ladder on the Paint River. Both the natural resources industries and subdivision could impact the bears of McNeil River. Bears could be displaced or killed outright by new users. (Please call Joe Meehan at ADF&G or Kim Cruse at DNR to confirm what is and is not allowed on these state lands).
7. **It is an ironic artifact of bad planning that the mouth of the Douglas River is located between the two most protected pieces of land in the state.** Katmai National Park and the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary frame the area in question. Rep. Seaton's bill will rectify that bad planning.
8. **Alaska's image in the other 49 states suffers as a result of various ongoing issues such as predator control and Arctic National Wildlife Refuge oil development.** If the Douglas River area becomes even more of a high profile issue, Alaska will tarnish its image in the minds of potential tourists and supporters. If the State promotes wildlife viewing and

conservation, it might help Alaska's image as well as promote consensus on natural resource extraction issues.

POSSIBLE OBJECTIONS TO EXTENDING THE SANCTUARY

1. *But our hunting opportunity will be lost"*

There is no lack of opportunity to kill a bear in the rest of Alaska. Unlike moose, caribou and other big game there are enough bears to go around. Everyone who wants to kill a bear can do so. Only Kodiak has a drawing hunt for bears. Elsewhere seasons, bag limits, methods and means are being liberalized for the purpose of predator management. In fact, the state might have more success with public opinion on this issue by protecting bears in the McNeil ecosystem as they promote more harvest elsewhere. Hunting for other species in this area is practically non-existent.

2. *"We won't be able to develop our natural resources on that land"*

There is no indication of any resources valuable enough to develop. The parcel consists mostly of the Douglas River. Interestingly, Charlie McNeil prospected the area in the early 1900's. He was the first to prospect and look for oil development potential in this area, both without success. I'm sure that the area has been evaluated for possible coal and oil development (using modern technology). You could get those records from DNR.

3. *"Won't commercial fisheries be affected?"*

No, Commercial fisheries are only very lightly affected at McNeil River. The Commercial Fisheries division cooperated with the Division of Wildlife to keep fishing inside McNeil River to a minimum.

4. *"Won't access be denied to people wanting to visit this area?"*

Access to the area will have to be addressed in an addendum to the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary Plan. Currently, several sport fishing guides camp at the mouth Kamishak River during the silver salmon runs. Bear-proof food and garbage containment is the only substantive permit requirement for Kamishak users. The number of access permits is limited to the area inland from McNeil cove including the falls, but not for other areas in the sanctuary.

5. *"Won't this extension of the sanctuary create more viewing?"*

The demand for viewing already exists. Douglas River may get more attention from bear viewers as a result of this legislation. If anything extending the sanctuary to include this area will take the pressure off of other places where hunters want to go and viewing currently exists. And, more viewing brings in more dollars to small business operators.

6. *"Aren't just succumbing to anti-hunters by closing the area to hunting?"*

First, bear viewers aren't anti-hunting. The cross-section of folks that want to see bears up close are mostly non-hunters and hunters. They may, like me, hunt for pleasure and subsistence. Leaving this area open to bear hunting will give anti-hunters great fuel to raise money to harm hunting rights elsewhere. If anything, hunters will be protected from ongoing controversy that creates bad publicity for them (and for me) as an ethical hunter.

-----Original Message-----

From: Bill Sherwonit [mailto:akgriz@hotmail.com]
Sent: Friday, February 23, 2007 9:28 AM
To: Rep. Paul Seaton
Subject: a few more thoughts on HB 127

Rep. Seaton --

First, I applaud you for proposing HB 127. An expansion of McNeil sanctuary would solve a lot of problems, most notably the periodic attempts to open up those state lands to hunting. Beside the letter I sent you Thursday, I thought you might be interested to know the following: this winter, while working on a magazine story about McNeil's bears (and the controversy surrounding the BOG's decision to open the Kamishak SUA to brown bear hunting), I talked with board member Ted Spraker. As you likely know, he was among the five board members to vote for the Kamishak hunt. But Spraker has apparently had a change of heart and/or mind. Among other things, he told me that opening Kamishak to bear hunting was intended to force the Park Service back to the negotiating table, on a long-ago land trade that fell through. In that context -- and I quote Spraker here -- "The board had good intentions, but it looks like [its tactic] may backfire on us," Spraker admits. "We puffed up our chests, played our cards. Now we may have to fall on our swords. We still could postpone any hunt [at the board's March 2007 meeting]. I can't speak for the entire board, but I'd push for a delay in the hunt, give the park service more time to deal with us."

But it gets better. Again to quote Spraker, "To be honest, I would hate to see [the Kamishak area or McNeil refuge] opened; I'd like to see a continuous area protected." So in essence, Spraker was saying he would support what you're proposing. I don't know what he's say now if put on the spot, but the quotes I include here are also in the story I wrote for Natural History magazine, which is running in its March 2007 issue. (Actually, I think the magazine is already on the newsstands.)

Because of other commitments and short notice about your meeting, I doubt I'll be able to attend the Resources Committee hearing today, which is why I sent my comments by email and am also including these additional notes. Thanks again for your effort to better protect McNeil's bears. The time seems right for this sort of action. All the best with it,
Bill Sherwonit
907-345-1882
<http://www.billsherwonit.alaskawriters.com>

From: Richard Hahn [mailto:rdhahn@eagle.ptialaska.net]

Sent: Friday, February 23, 2007 9:57 AM

To: Rep. Carl Gatto; Rep. Craig Johnson; Rep. Vic Kohring; Rep. Bob Roses; Rep. Paul Seaton;
Rep. Peggy Wilson; Rep. Bryce Edgmon; Rep. Scott Kawasaki

Subject: Support for HB127

Dear Committee Members, Support for HB127 is really a "no brainer"!! Only people with no pride would kill a bear in the McNeil River area. I have camped for a week at McNeil River three(3) times, beginning in 1990. It is a marvelous experience of being able to observe bear behavior in both feeding, family and play situations. These magnificent animals simply go about their business of survival and caring for their young in the close proximity to humans, KNOWING they are safe? Psychologists call this behavior "a conditioned response" because the bears have been protected for more than two(2) generations. Allowing unprincipled "hunters" (macho trophy takers) to hunt at McNeil River would be very much like sanctioning the poachers who killed the rams on the hillside above the Seward Highway at Turnagin Arm or the idiot who killed the caribou bull for target practice at the Wildlife Park near Portage. Such people are cowardly opportunists who would probably hunt in a zoo if they had a chance. There would be nothing about fair chase hunting to kill a bear at McNeil River. And there are only a relatively few places in all of Alaska for bear viewing. To single out the immediate environs of a wildlife sanctuary of more than 30 years for "hunting" speaks volumes about the mentality of both the Alaska Outdoor Council and the Alaska Board of Game. The only reason they would do this is because, under Frank Murkowski's and Ralph Seekins' obtuseness and mindless lack of ethics, they could! It will take years, if ever, to right the many wrongs of the Murkowski administration's development at any cost policies, including proposed roads and bridges to nowhere, allowing pollution mixing zones in salmon spawning streams, annihilating wolves and bears from airplanes and running them down with ATV's and snow machines, and encouraging the tragedy-in-the-making called "Pebble". These are not the legacies proud Alaskans dream about, and I would hope you all seriously contemplate my words. Alaska can be a great State. It can support responsible, ethical development, and and it can do it in a sustainable way, and you can be a part of that legacy. Or, you can allow unprincipled, greedy, unethical opportunists override reason and common sense and rape the State of its beauty and natural resources. It is my sincere hope you will support the citizens of Alaska who support fair chase, legal hunting for food AND respect those who simply enjoy viewing wildlife in their natural habitats. Thanks to each of you if you read this letter.

Respectfully Submitted,

Richard Hahn
P.O. Box 2754
Soldotna, Alaska, 99669
907-262-8575
rdhahn@eagle.ptialaska.net

From: butch laughlin [mailto:akbyair@gci.net]
Sent: Friday, February 23, 2007 9:59 AM
To: Rep. Paul Seaton
Subject: Bill to expand boundaries of McNeil River Sanctuary

Dear Rep. Seaton,

I just wanted to send you a quick note of support of your legislation to expand the boundaries of the McNeil River Sanctuary, and wish you well in the hearing before the House Resources Committee this afternoon. My husband and I make out living from bear viewing at Pack Creek on Admiralty Island, and were very involved in fighting the BOG from re-opening hunting near there when they met in Southeast last fall. Fortunately we were successful in protecting Pack Creek, but we think the Board's decision to open areas near McNeil River is tragic.

Tommorrow night, Saturday the 24th, there will be a potluck party starting at 6:30 at the Yacht Club in Aurora Harbor. It is hosted by Friends of Admiralty Island, and our theme this year is a celebration of Pack Creek and the continued hunting closure at Swan Cove. It is open to the public and you would be most welcome to attend. It should be a fun event, and you will likely meet a lot of local people who would support your bill. Hope you can make it. ---Sarah Dunlap

Butch Laughlin & Sarah Dunlap
ALASKA FLY'N'FISH CHARTERS
9604 Kelly Court, Juneau AK 99801
ph/fax: (907) 790-2120
www.alaskabyair.com

From: LStender@aol.com [mailto:LStender@aol.com]

Sent: Thursday, February 22, 2007 10:59 PM

To: Rep. Paul Seaton

Subject: Support HB 127

Dear Representative Seaton,

I urge you to support House Bill 127 and stop the hunting at McNeil River Sanctuary.

I have had the opportunity to visit McNeil River and it was the most awesome experience I could ever imagine. These bears are accustomed to humans and would make easy targets for hunters.

- The number of bears at McNeil River has declined significantly since 1998 and has fallen below the level identified by sanctuary managers where it may affect the quality of the bear-viewing program.
- This area has been closed to brown bear hunting for over 20 years.
- Opening this area to trophy hunting could cause further decline in the number of bears at the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary (A National Natural Landmark).
- The Homer Fish and Game Advisory Committee has voted twice to support keeping this area closed to hunting.
- The Alaska Department of Fish and Game has recommended "Status Quo" for this area.
- Adding the Kamishak Special Use area to the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary will help to maintain a quality visitor/wildlife viewing experience, which translates into millions of tourism dollars. This revenue will benefit the local economy of Homer, the Kenai Peninsula Borough and particularly the State of Alaska.

I urge you to support this bill and protect one of Alaska's natural resources.

Thank you,
Lori Stender

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-----Original Message-----

From: Bob Gengler [mailto:goatb@earthlink.net]

Sent: Friday, February 23, 2007 12:18 AM

To: Rep. Scott Kawasaki; Rep. David Guttenberg; Rep. Bryce Edgmon; Rep. Peggy Wilson; Rep. Paul Seaton; Rep. Bob Roses; Rep. Vic Kohring; Rep. Craig Johnson; Rep. Carl Gatto

Subject: HB 127

Dear Representatives,

Please consider Rep Paul Seaton's HB 127 to add protected lands to the McNeil watershed areas. Hunting is a valuable resource for our state but this area is a financial boon to the state for bear viewing as well. These bears have been tolerant of human visitors for over twenty years.

The fact that Larry Aumiller left the state over this issue should be a telling sign as to the meaning of this area. The ADF&G has not supported the Boards actions in this matter and the Boards blatant strong handed tactics with this issue has created, and may continue to create, a backlash toward hunting in general in our state.

This issue has attracted worldwide attention and it would be an embarrassment for these bears to be hunted, not visa versa, as several people involved in this issue have stated. Please consider adding the Kamishak Special Use Area to the protected lands.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Bob Gengler
18625 S. Kanaga Lp.
Eagle River, AK 99577

Billie, Bruce and Jenny Cummings
38 Sanders Ranch Rd.
Moraga, CA 94556
billie@bcummings.com

House Research and Finance Committee

February 21, 2007

RE: HB 127

Dear Sirs:

We are writing to ask that you support **HB 127**.

The people of Alaska have created one of the greatest wonders of the world: being able to be among the bears in the Katmai area. For two days this past summer we lived among the bears at Hallo Bay. We were able to look into the eyes of one of God's great wild creatures—and feel a connection that all living beings share. As we flew away, we'll never forget the breathtaking view of the mountains, and of the two bears that were frolicking freely in the surf. Truly, this was Heaven.

Adding the Kamishak Special Use Area to the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary will help to maintain this unique wildlife viewing experience. We have traveled all over the world and there is nothing that compares with this!

The area has been closed to hunting for over 20 years. Alaska has so many other areas open to hunting, that there is no real need to hunt here.

Keeping this area closed to hunting will help the declining bear population at McNeil River by not accelerating the loss. The bears in this area are habituated to man and would surely be easy targets for hunters.

Also, Alaska would be foolish to risk losing the millions of dollars in revenue which wildlife viewing brings in from this area. I know that on top of the price of the bear viewing package, my family purchased 3 nights of hotel rooms, meals and taxis in Homer, about \$400 in purchases of gifts and gear, plus airplane flights to and from Anchorage. Our neighbors, the Theisens, stayed at Brooks Camp last year. I can just imagine how many other people viewed wildlife here. This is significant money! This revenue will benefit everyone in Alaska.

We plan to be in the McNeil River Bear Viewing Lottery this year. Please make sure that there will be bears for us to see.

We strongly urge you to support HB 127.

Thank you

Billie Cummings

Bruce Cummings

Jenny Cummings

Louie Flora

From: RAdki1841@aol.com
Sent: Wednesday, February 21, 2007 7:53 PM
To: Rep. Carl Gatto; Rep. Craig Johnson; Rep. Vic Kohring; Rep. Bob Roses; Rep. Paul Seaton; Rep. Peggy Wilson; Rep. Bryce Edgmon; Rep. David Guttenberg; Rep. Scott Kawasaki
Cc: TomA1841@aol.com
Subject: Please support HB 127

House Resources and Finance Committee

Re: Support HB 127

I am writing to support **HB127** introduced by Rep. Paul Seaton. I am a member of the Pratt Museum in Homer, Alaska and watched the McNeil Bears hunting for salmon last summer on the National Geographic website. I am concerned about the health and safety of these bears!

These bears have been taught that humans are a benign presence and have lost their natural wariness. I have seen pictures of cubs nursing in the presence of the winners of the Alaskan lottery to view the bears.

Adding the Kamishak Special Use area to the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary will help to maintain a quality visitor/wildlife viewing experience, which translates into millions of tourism dollars. This revenue will benefit the local economy of Homer, the Kenai Peninsula Borough, and particularly the State of Alaska. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game has recommended "Status Quo" for this area. The Homer Fish and Game Advisory Committee has voted twice to support keeping this area closed to hunting.

Do NOT allow the Kamishak special use area (Douglas river to Kamishak River) to open to brown bear hunting in the fall of 2007. This area has been closed to bear hunting for over 20 years to help protect the population of bears using the adjacent McNeil River Sanctuary as well as bears migrating out of Katmai National Park

These two areas are the best places in the world to see brown bears. I urge you to support legislation that will add state lands to the McNeil River sanctuary. McNeil River is home to the world's largest seasonal concentration of brown bears. Because of this unique concentration McNeil River is designated a State Game Sanctuary, the highest level of protection and one of only three in Alaska. **These lands should be protected in perpetuity from any activities including hunting that might interfere with the world class bear viewing opportunities in the area. The economic value of ecotourism far exceeds, in contrast, the value of killing bears that have become habituated to humans. If only one area in all of Alaska is set aside just for the bears and those that want only to view them, the McNeil ecosystem is it.**

It is unethical to teach these animals that humans are safe when they will be shot at other times of the year! Polls show that 78% of Alaskans, including hunters, oppose opening this area to hunting.

The number of bears at McNeil River Falls has declined to almost a third of the number present only eight short years ago, thereby necessitating an increase in their protection and not a decrease.

The world is watching you! Please support HB 127.

Respectfully,

Thomas R. Adkisson
1841 Country Club Drive

2/22/2007

High Point, NC 27262
336-889-7975

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From: Barbara and Brad Gamble [mailto:bgamble@alaska.net]

Sent: Thursday, February 22, 2007 7:23 AM

To: Rep. Paul Seaton

Cc: Rep. Carl Gatto; Rep. Craig Johnson; Rep. Vic Kohring; Rep. Bob Roses; Rep. Peggy Wilson; Rep. Bryce Edgmon; Rep. David Guttenberg; Rep. Scott Kawasaki; daytrips@xyz.net

Subject: *****SPAM***** Support HB 127 McNeil River Bears

Dear Honored State Representatives,

We are asking for your support of HB 127, adding the Kamishak Special Use area to the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary.

We would like to say that not only has the Homer Fish and Game Advisory Committee voted twice to support keeping this area closed to hunting to preserve the natural balance of wildlife in this supremely rare environment, but that we have first hand seen the benefit of the thousands of tourists dollars the "Bear Viewing" has brought to the City of Homer, Alaska.

We own and operate the Duncan House Diner on Pioneer Ave. in Homer. We serve breakfast and Lunch 7 days a week. Brad serves food and Barbara Hosts, not a day goes by in the summer that we don't have several tables of excited guests that are there eating and waiting to fly out to view the Bears. In many cases, those folks return the next day for breakfast and tell their incredible stories, show us pictures still on their digital cameras, and marvel in how in our lifetime we can go to such a "sacred place" and how the guides were so special and informative. There has never been in our 5 years of ownership, serving hundreds of thousands of guests, one person that talked of wanting to go Bear hunting there!

It is our urgent plea that you support this bill, to preserve this natural sanctuary, for the Bears, for the people to continue to be able to enjoy this incredible experience, and for the thousands of dollars spent by these visitors, and locals as they base their business here. My business receives and collects sales tax for the City of Homer and the Kenai Peninsula Borough Governments. We need these tourists dollars in Homer, they also support in our restaurant payroll jobs that also helps support the Alaska State Dept of Labor. It will impact us all greatly if the balance of the McNeil River Bears is disrupted by hunting, Mentally and financially.

Thank you for your support in setting this right for the generations to come.

Sincerely,

Brad and Barbara Gamble

owners/Operators

B&B Holdings

DBA Duncan House Diner

125 E Pioneer Ave.

Homer, Alaska 99603

907-235-3711

bgamble@alaska.net

Louie Flora

From: Sheryl Keene [srkcreative@sbcglobal.net]
Sent: Wednesday, February 21, 2007 10:11 AM
To: Rep. Carl Gatto; Rep. Craig Johnson; Rep. Vic Kohring; Rep. Bob Roses; Rep. Paul Seaton;
 Rep. Peggy Wilson; Rep. Bryce Edgmon; Rep. David Guttenberg; Rep. Scott Kawasaki
Subject: Urgent Information - Your Help Is Needed - Leg. HB 127
Attachments: 3749699123-mom and yearling cubs .jpg; 3304092953-napping .jpg

FROM: Sheryl Rosich Keene

DATE: Wednesday, February 21, 2007

TO:

Representative Carl Gatto: Rep_Carl_Gatto@legis.state.ak.us
 Representative Craig Johnson: Rep_Craig_Johnson@legis.state.ak.us
 Representative Vic Kohring: Rep_Vic_Kohring@legis.state.ak.us
 Representative Bob Roses: Rep_Bob_Roses@legis.state.ak.us
 Representative Paul Seaton: Rep_Paul_Seaton@legis.state.ak.us
 Representative Peggy Wilson : Rep_Peggy_Wilson@legis.state.ak.us
 Representative Bryce Edgmon: Rep_Bryce_Edgmon@legis.state.ak.us
 Representative David Guttenberg: Rep_David_Guttenberg@legis.state.ak.us
 Representative Scott Kawasaki: Rep_Scott_Kawasaki@legis.state.ak.us

RE: Legislation HB 127 (safeguarding the McNeil River bears)

I would like to express my support for Representative Paul Seaton of Homer and the introduced legislation HB 127 to help safeguard the McNeil River bears.

This bill will add two small parcels of Department of Natural Resources (DNR) managed land to the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary. The parcels in question are currently managed under the Kamishak Special Use Area Plan.

To follow in this email is a copy of the letter that I faxed last week to the Board of Game about this issue. If you pass HB 127, these bears will have true protection, and this same fight will not have to be waged every time a hunting group slides into the backdoor of the BOG.

Thank you for understanding how important this issue really is. It is much more complex than the hunting groups would like you to believe. Allowing hunting of these particular bears for even one season will have far-reaching, negative effects on valuable research efforts, the local economy, the safety of humans in those areas, and most significantly – on the bears themselves, who are already declining in population and need our protection.

I am also including two photographs that I took of these bears. These were not taken with a professional zoom lens, just a regular point-and-shoot 35 mm camera. These photos will illustrate for you: just how tolerant and relaxed these bears are, and how significant the danger to them if hunting is allowed within their habitat.

2/21/2007

ATTN: BOG COMMENTS
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Board Support Section

FAX: 907-465-6094

Date: February 14, 2007

From: Sheryl Rosich Keene
Alaskan visitor, concerned U.S. citizen, currently a resident of Nevada

Re: My ABSOLUTE SUPPORT for Proposal 43, 44, 46 & 48 as well as
Proposals 38 & 39. (2 pages sent)

To Whom It May Concern:

Thank you for reading my comments regarding this very important issue.

My husband and I spent our ten-day honeymoon in Alaska - and didn't want to leave at the end of our trip. We completely fell in love with the land, the wildlife, the people and the freedom. That trip was in 2004, and we plan to return to Alaska at least once every five years. During the course of that trip, we spent approximately \$11,000 - not including airfare. Please don't turn a blind eye to all the tourist dollars generated in your state that don't have a thing to do with hunting .

Regardless of individual feelings and opinions about consumptive sports in general (fishing and hunting) - this particular issue really only has one correct side. This fight is not about right-wingers and liberals or about treehuggers and hunters - it's about protecting an area and the animals that live there for future generations, for future scientific knowledge and for the preservation - in it's natural state, with behavior and habitat unaltered by man - of one tiny, vital piece of our world. At the risk of offending some - this little piece of the world does not just belong to Alaska - it belongs to us all.

The bears of the McNeil River Sanctuary and the Katmai Preserve have contributed immeasurably to research efforts, and much of what we know today about coastal brown bears (not to mention salmon and many other wildlife species living within the same ecosystem) is due directly to these bears and the dedicated scientists who have been allowed to peacefully share their world. Why are you not listening to these experts? Why do the voices of a few hunters speak so loudly?

I have been to the Katmai Preserve and walked with the amazing brown bears that live there. These bears are relaxed and extremely tolerant of human presence. I have personally been within mere feet of lounging males and a female resting while her cubs tumbled and played around her. It literally brings tears to your eyes when a bear comes over and lays down near you. To share space and time with them in the wild, and to see the beauty of their acceptance, is utterly phenomenal. A true gift.

page 2

2/21/2007

These bears are huge, beautiful individuals who are at the top of their natural food chain - they have been given no reason to show aggression or to fear humans. They have interacted safely and confidently with biologists - and the few 'icky visitors who gain access to McNeil through their lottery system - for years. These are not bears that are wary enough to even have a chance to stay out of rifle range.

In a recent article on msnbc.com, Rod Arno, executive director of the hunting advocacy group "Alaska Outdoor Council" was quoted, *"Having guided there personally, I know that those bears that frequent the McNeil Falls, once they are away from that site they are just as leery as any bear that I have guided."*

I've been there personally too, and I understand hunting and firearms, and I can honestly tell you that every single one of the thirty-plus bears that I saw in just one day in the Katmai Preserve were WELL within rifle range - many within bow range for that matter - for hours and in no hurry to move away. We were a dozen people moving together as a group, in plain view the entire day. Much more noticeable to those supposedly "leery" bears than an experienced hunting guide or small group of hunters stalking and tracking game, trying to stay out of sight.

So Mr. Arno is wrong. He undoubtedly has a financial interest in bringing in hunters with a great deal of money to spend to guarantee a very large bear trophy with minimal effort.

This sickens me and my personal feelings would lead me to say more - and to question a great deal about this and similar "organizations", but I will stay out of the mud and stick with the facts.

Hunting these bears would not be sportsmanlike or ethically responsible hunting, it would be murder. Slaughter. That alone is bad enough, isn't it? And what of the loss of research potential and conservation education that each of these individual bears provides? Have you even considered the potential danger to researchers, naturalists, film-makers, bear-viewers, hikers, campers, wildlife officials and others if the balance shifts and the bears' natural behavior is modified due to human aggression? With one mistake - by allowing hunting in these areas for even one season - you could irrevocably change the entire ecosystem and ruin the experience for everyone. Is that really "managing game for the maximum benefit of all Alaskans"? Because from where I'm standing it looks like it's managing game for the maximum benefit of very few.

So much of Alaska is open to hunting - this particular issue is not just the same old political "hunters vs. environmentalists" debate. There are plenty of opportunities for world-class hunting without destroying this particular area. There are also other ways to increase revenue - please don't be penny-wise and pound-foolish with our national treasures. Instead of damaging the McNeil River Sanctuary area and it's future - we should be expanding it.

Thank you for consideration and for hearing my comments in support of Proposals 43, 44, 46, 48, 38 & 39.

Sincerely,

Sheryl Rosich Keene

-----Original Message-----

From: Tina Seaton [mailto:pseaton@gci.net]
Sent: Saturday, February 10, 2007 9:23 AM
To: Rep. Paul Seaton
Subject: McNeil River Bears

Hi Paul

I would like to take this opportunity to make a political request. Please do what ever you can to stop the McNeil River Bear hunt.

The bear viewing from Homer I am afraid will suffer if the bears are hunted.

They are nearly tame now and I am sure hunting will make them scarce and potentially dangerous.

Thanks

Louis

Louis Dupree [captlou3@bellsouth.net]

ELIZABETH GRABER
PO BOX 2609
HOMER, AK 99603
907 235-6078

February 19, 2007

Dear Members of the House Committee on Resources and Finance:

I am writing to urge you to support HB 127, a bill that has long-term importance for the economic, wilderness, and ethical health of our state. Like you, I am very aware that:

- The region surrounding the McNeil Brown Bear Sanctuary has been closed to brown bear hunting for over twenty years.
- The number of bears at the McNeil Brown Bear Sanctuary has declined significantly since 1998 and this has a severe impact on the quality of bear-viewing in the area, a fully renewable and economically important part of life in the Cook Inlet region.
- Opening the area to further hunting will only exacerbate the decline of bear populations, harm a vastly larger economic sector of our economy, and deeply hurt the reputation of our state and its citizens.
- Important citizen advisory boards all recommend no additional bear hunting in this area, and
- Enhancing this region as a sustainable, renewable economic resource based on bear-viewing rather than bear-harvesting has nothing but the greatest benefit for all Alaskans.

Thank you for all your support and, again, I urge you to support HB 127.



Elizabeth Graber
Homer

Louie Flora

From: Rep. Paul Seaton
Sent: Tuesday, February 20, 2007 1:34 PM
To: louie.flora@legis.state.ak.us
Subject: FW: HB 127 McNeil Sanctuary boundary extension

From: Alaska Backcountry Hunters & Anglers [mailto:Alaskabh@starband.net]
Sent: Monday, February 19, 2007 2:09 PM
To: Louie Flora; Rep. Paul Seaton
Subject: HB 127 McNeil Sanctuary boundary extension

Dear Louie and Rep. Seaton,

Thought you might be interested in Alaska Backcountry Hunters and Anglers (ABHA) recent comments to the Board of Game in support of reinstating the closure of brown bear hunting in the Kamishak Special Use Areas between McNeil and Katmai. Would appreciate more information about HB 127 as it moves along, as well as progress on HB 41, which we also sent in comments on.

Thank you,
Mark Richards
Co-chair ABHA

Proposal 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48 – 5 AAC 92.510.

Areas closed to hunting

SUPPORT



Alaska Office:
333 4th Avenue
Suite 302
Anchorage, Alaska 99501
Telephone: 907-276-9453
Fax: 907-276-9454
www.defenders.org

February 22, 2007

To: Members of the House Resources and Finance Committees:

Representative Carl Gatto	Fax: 907-465-2381
Representative Craig Johnson	Fax: 907-465-3872
Representative Vic Kohring	Fax: 907-465-3818
Representative Bob Roses	Fax: 907-465-2418
Representative Paul Seaton	Fax: 907-465-3472
Representative Peggy Wilson	Fax: 907-465-3175
Representative Bryce Edgmon	Fax: 907-465-3445
Representative David Guttenberg	Fax: 907-465-3519
Representative Scott Kawasaki	Fax: 907-465-2937

Re: House Bill 127, "McNeil River State Game Sanctuary"

As the House Resources and Finance Committees begin consideration of HB 127, Defenders of Wildlife would like to take this opportunity to comment on Representative Seaton's bill which would enlarge the boundaries of the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary.

Defenders of Wildlife strongly recommends that the Alaska Legislature enact HB 127. The Kamishak Special Use Area has been closed to bear hunting since 1985, and designation of this area as part of the Sanctuary would continue the status quo that has existed for over 20 years. Official comments by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game state that planned hunting in this area "is not in accord with the interests of the general public ... access is limited and some boundaries are vague and poorly defined" in this area which "is between two of the world's most famous brown bear sanctuaries."

An enlarged McNeil River State Game Sanctuary will provide consistency of management and enhanced protection for this world-class bear viewing area, further encouraging investment by ecotourism companies bringing business to Alaska. The financial impact to the State by changing the designation of this area should be minimal.

The hunting and non-hunting publics, alike, have recently spoken out in great number in support of maintaining the Kamishak Area as an area for wildlife viewing. This is an opportune time for the Legislature to act on a proposal that is in the common interest of Alaskans.

Sincerely,

Tom Banks
Alaska Associate

National Headquarters
1130 Seventeenth Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036-4604
Telephone: 202-682-9400
Fax: 202-682-1331
www.defenders.org

Louie Flora

From: Merrill Lowden [merrill@stsl.com]
Sent: Thursday, February 22, 2007 11:17 AM
To: Rep. Paul Seaton
Subject: HB 127 - McNeil River Bears

Representative Seaton:

Thank you for sponsoring HB 127 to enlarge the boundaries of the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary. Living just a paddling distance from Admiralty Island and the Pack Creek brown bear viewing opportunity, I have learned to appreciate our wildlife resources in the living-breathing state. We have something here that few others have, to be treasured and protected. I am also a big fan of the McNeil River Bear Sanctuary. I have had the good fortune to visit the McNeil Sanctuary several times over the years, most recently this last July; and I was greatly disturbed to learn from Larry Aumiller that the Board of Game decided to allow a 2007 hunt in the Kamishak Special Use Area ("KSUA") adjacent to the Sanctuary. As you say, this is not an appropriate area to be opened for hunting. Alaska is a big place; there are plenty of hunting opportunities without destroying these very special animals.

The Sanctuary was established in 1967, and hunting and trapping were prohibited within its boundaries, in order to: **"provide permanent protection for brown bear and other fish and wildlife populations and their habitats, so that these resources may be preserved for scientific, aesthetic, and educational purposes"** and **"maintain and enhance the unique bear viewing opportunities within the sanctuary."** AS 16.20.162. I believe the action taken by the Board of Game ("BOG") in 2005 (even though the permitted hunting would take place in the Refuge) violated the purpose of the Refuge to "manage human use and activities in a way that is compatible with" providing permanent protection for brown bear populations and "enhancing the unique bear viewing opportunities in the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary established under AS 16.20.160." AS 16.20.041 (b).

The hunting closures of the past several decades have provided a crucial buffer zone to protect the Sanctuary bears, animals that have lost their wariness from years of benign human presence. Should trophy hunting commence in the adjacent Refuge, it will surely have a drastic and tragic impact. Surely, Sanctuary bears will be easily slaughtered (not an ethical hunt), and many others sufficiently terrorized to perhaps destroy altogether the purpose of the McNeil River Sanctuary. The gig will be up. The loss to the people of Alaska, and the world, incalculable; a blow to South Central Alaska's economy, but just as surely a blow to the quality of life in our state.

Game, like other natural resources, must be managed for the benefit of Alaska's people. Article VII, § 2 of the Alaska Constitution commands: "The Legislature shall provide for the utilization, development, and conservation of all natural resources belonging to the State, including land and waters, **for the maximum benefit of its people.**" One measure of benefit to people is the quality of their outdoor experiences. The BOG's decision to open the KSUA crucial habitat to the trophy hunters when abundant hunting opportunities already exist throughout Alaska was worse than unbalanced. It was an abuse of discretion that disregarded the purpose for which the McNeil River Sanctuary (and Refuge) was established and our Constitution's command that these resources be conserved for the maximum benefit of all the people.

Again, thank you for presenting HB 127. I would be more than happy to provide testimony in support of this bill as it proceeds.

Merrill Lowden
2300 Old Lawson Creek Rd. # B-4
Douglas, Alaska 99824
Weekday phone: 586-1400
Home/Message: 364-2210

2/22/2007

Louie Flora

From: James Tinius [jrtinius@mtaonline.net]

Sent: Thursday, February 22, 2007 3:45 PM

To: Rep. Paul Seaton

Subject: McNeil

Dear Mr. Seaton,

I urge you to support and pass HB127 for the good of all the people.

James Tinius



Louie Flora

From: Maria [nerdfornature@gmail.com]
Sent: Thursday, February 22, 2007 5:02 PM
To: Rep. Paul Seaton
Subject: HB 127

Dear Mr. Seaton,

I am writing because I am a citizen of Alaska, and I want to encourage you to support House Bill 127 that will add a small amount of land to the McNeil River Sanctuary. Protecting bears in this area through the support of this bill is very important because the number of bears in the McNeil River Sanctuary has declined since 1998 and ensuring that bear populations are protected is both good for alaska's economy (in terms of tourism) and for future generations for whom alaska may be the last place on earth in which they can still see grizzlies in the wild. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Maria Geary

2/22/2007

Louie Flora

From: Walter Glooschenko [gloosch@yahoo.com]
Sent: Thursday, February 22, 2007 5:02 PM
To: Rep. Paul Seaton
Subject: HB127

As a resident of Alaska, I support passage of HB127. I oppose any hunting expansion that will impact bears of the McNeil River refuge system.

Dr. W.A. Glooschenko

Everyone is raving about the all-new Yahoo! Mail beta.

Bill Sherwonit
2441 Tulik Drive
Anchorage, AK 99517
907-245-0283 akgriz@hotmail.com

Feb. 22, 2007

To: Members of the House Resources Committee:

I'm writing to support HB 127, which would add the Kamishak Special Use Area to McNeil River State Game Sanctuary. As I'm sure committee members are aware, there's been considerable controversy over Board of Game efforts to increase brown-bear hunting opportunities on state lands adjacent to McNeil sanctuary. At its 2005 meeting, the BOG voted to (re)open the Kamishak SUA to such hunting against the advice of the Department of Fish and Game and despite overwhelming public testimony that requested the board to keep the area closed to bear hunting, to better protect McNeil's world-renowned gathering of bears.

There's lots of evidence that some brown bears that visit McNeil each summer also spend time in the Kamishak SUA before and/or after they spend time at McNeil River. To open Kamishak - or any other lands nearby McNeil - is poor public policy, for a number of reasons, including the ethics of "sport hunting" for bears that are highly habituated to humans. It's also possible that some of the bears which add most to the "McNeil experience" - that is, those that are most tolerant to people and thus feel comfortable around people, even at close distances - would be killed in a hunt on nearby lands. Though biologists normally are concerned only with populations, I (and many others, including some wildlife researchers) believe that there are places where wildlife managers and management policies should recognize the importance of individual animals. McNeil is a prime case in point.

Even more importantly, since the creation of McNeil sanctuary four decades ago, the Department of Fish and Game has always emphasized that "the bears come first" here. To unnecessarily open a bear hunt that would threaten McNeil's bears is contrary to that purpose.

There is also the point that the overwhelming percentage of Alaskans who have commented on this issue - including many hunters - have advocated the protection of McNeil's bears. This is the worst possible place in Alaska to increase hunting opportunities, at the expense of the world's largest and arguably most famous gathering of brown bears.

Though there's a chance that the BOG (at its March 2007 meeting) will reverse its decision to open the Kamishak SUA to brown bear hunting, members may reconsider that action in the future. The addition of this area to McNeil sanctuary would end the debate, once and for all.

Thanks for considering my comments,

Bill Sherwonit

Louie Flora

From: gearybra@stu.beloit.edu on behalf of Maria Geary [gearybra@stu.beloit.edu]
Sent: Thursday, February 22, 2007 5:27 PM
To: Rep. Paul Seaton
Subject: McNeil River Sanctuary

I'm writing to ask you to support House Bill 127 that will add land to the McNeil River Sanctuary. This bill will help protect bears in the area, which is very important because opening the area to hunting will further encourage the decline of the bear population. Protecting Alaska's wildlife is a priority for people in Alaska, and hopefully a priority for you as well. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Maria Geary

HB127

To the editor

Something for the McNeil bear watcher to think about.

According to the February 18th news paper article "Bringing
Influence to bear."

There has been no hunting around the McNeil sanctuary for
20 years, and the bear numbers have been declining in recent
years.

Could it be there are now too many big male bears in the area?

Male bears kill cubs.

I believe the indiscriminate killing of female cubs by boars reduce bear
population far more then hunting.

The object of a hunter is to kill a big boar. The hunter and bear watcher
all want a good bear population.

Larry DALY

Larry Daly

Tel 283 2736

Kasilof, AK.

Barbara Winkley

From: "Barbara Winkley" <baofrabbithcreek@gci.net>
To: "Barbara A. Winkley" <baofrabbithcreek@gci.net>
Sent: Friday, March 09, 2007 11:34 AM
Subject: Fw: McNeil River Bears

March 3, 07

8120 Rabbit Creek Road
Anchorage, Alaska 99516

The Honorable Paul Seaton and Committee Chairs Craig Johnson and Carl Gatto
Alaska House Resources Committee
Juneau, Alaska 99801

My name is Barbara Winkley and I have been an Alaskan Resident for forty years. Before settling in Alaska, I traveled extensively on five Continents, so that it was no accident that I chose Alaska to be my home, when I had never planned on living anywhere else but my country of birth.

Four years ago, I was privileged to be selected on the lottery for the McNeil River Bear Viewing at the Refuge.

The thrill of viewing these magnificent creatures at close range after waiting so long to see them was an experience, that will forever remain dear to my heart. Sows just out of hibernation were fishing to feed their hungry cubs. It was a privilege to see the delicate balance of a mother after a long winter's sleep feeding her offspring after fishing for often quite a long time and putting her offspring first. During the day, these sows would often suckle their young not far from the group or on a cliff not far from us, where mother could keep a wary eye out for Bores or any other intruders. One member of our group had waited 15 years to be drawn.

How can we call our state big and wild if we continue to destroy the very things that tourists from all over the world come to see?

Larry Aumiller has done an incredible job over the past 30 years by allowing these bears to tolerate people, where these fortunate visitors can enjoy them at close range. To see the same bear year after year is truly a renewable resource. Is shooting a humanized bear at close range, just to throw the skin on the floor and put the head above the mantle, with a one time use wise use of a renewable resource? I urge the Resources Committee to support HB127, to give one of Alaska's most valuable resources full and permanent protection.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Barbara Winkley

P.S. Please find attached copies of support by Dr. Haydn Washington from Australia, a letter of support from Daniel Kasza from Idaho and Pete and Claudia Martin, former residents of Alaska. Thank you.b

3/9/2007

Barbara Winkley

From: "Barbara Winkley" <baofrabbt creek@gci.net>
To: "Barbara A. Winkley" <baofrabbt creek@gci.net>
Sent: Friday, March 09, 2007 11:34 AM
Subject: Fw: McNeil River Bears

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Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Barbara Winkley

P.S. Please find attached copies of support by Dr. Haydn Washington from Australia, a letter of support from Daniel Kasza from Idaho and Pete and Claudia Martin, former residents of Alaska. Thank you. Please distribute to committee

Thanks

3/9/2007

Barbara Winkley

From: <fortuitouskasza@aol.com>
To: <baofrabbittcreek@gci.net>
Sent: Thursday, March 08, 2007 9:03 PM
Subject: McNeil Bears Comments

Dear Representative Paul Seaton,

I am sending this to voice my support for HB 127. When I heard about the impending plans to allow hunting this fall in the areas adjoining Katmai and the McNeil Rivers, I was appalled and saddened. I have had the good fortune to visit both places, and they were life-altering experiences. It was a great relief to hear the opening of this area to hunting was postponed. However, these bears need permanent protection, and the state of Alaska should protect this unique treasure by enacting HB 127.

The bears of this ecosystem have been habituated to the presence of humans for more than two decades. The state of Alaska allows for the hunting of brown bears throughout the state, but this population should continue to be protected. Where is the sport in hunting bears that have peacefully coexisted with humans, allowing unprecedented opportunity for us to examine them so closely? In my trip to McNeil 4 years ago, the bears were within 6 feet of us at times. I have been to many, many places, and have had many magical encounters, but none have rivaled the experience I had at McNeil.

I have always thought of Alaska as state that strikes a fine balance between interests of all individuals. The uniqueness of the McNeil and Katmai ecosystems is a treasure for the world to enjoy, and the state of Alaska has an obligation to protect it, and its bears. Anything less would be a travesty, a blemish upon the state.

I think of my trip to the McNeil River frequently, and long to return. Indeed, I continue to apply for a permit each year, in hopes of repeating my magical experience, and in the hopes of exploring more of Alaska, a place near and dear to my heart. I do not think I would return to Alaska again, if I knew that the state had failed to protect the special bears of McNeil and Katmai, by allowing them to be hunted. Please enact HB 127.

Thank you for your consideration,

Daniel Kasza
8787 N Atlas Rd
Hayden, Idaho 83835
(208) 762-3576

fortuitouskasza@aol.com

Barbara Winkley

From: "Haydn Washington" <haywash@bigpond.com>
To: <baofrabbitchreek@gci.net>
Sent: Thursday, March 01, 2007 9:03 PM
Subject: [Fwd: Support proposals 38-48]

Sent this off today. Read the bear book this morning, thanks so much for getting it autographed! Bet its good to be back and see your dogs! Dont see Keith much at moment, not having network meetings. Bet it was nice to see Tassie again!
Cheers Haydn

----- Original Message -----

Subject:Support proposals 38-48
Date:Fri, 02 Mar 2007 17:00:47 +1100
From:Haydn Washington <haywash@bigpond.com>
To:connie@akwildlife.org

Dear Board of Game,

I visited Alaska in October 2005. I have read about the McNeil River bears. As an Australian biologist, I was stunned to hear that there was a proposal to shoot this wonderful symbol of Alaska. Alaska, like Australia, is seen as one of the last great wild places. The brown bear is the top predator of the Alaskan wild. It has a right to be there. They have an intrinsic value of their own. If more and more culls are allowed, then like many predators (like the Indian tiger) they will be whittled away, and forced towards local extinction, and possibly total extinction. In Tasmania we did this to the Thylacine, the Tasmanian Tiger, which was hunted to extinction. Now people speak of an 'emptiness' in the landscape, a gap, that something important is missing. The bears of Alaska are the heritage not just of Alaskans, or Americans, but of the whole world. Future generations have a right to see them. Please do not authorise further culls of this world icon.

Dr Haydn Washington
Lot 35 Widden Trail, Nullo Mountain,
Rylstone, NSW, Australia

No virus found in this incoming message.

Checked by AVG Free Edition.

Version: 7.5.446 / Virus Database: 268.18.5/706 - Release Date: 2/28/2007 4:09 PM

3/2/2007

Barbara Winkley

From: "The Martin's" <tundrapair@coinet.com>
To: <connie@akwildlife.org>; <baofrabbittcreek@gci.net>
Sent: Thursday, March 01, 2007 12:40 AM
Subject: Proposals 38 through 48 re: McNeil River Bear Sanctuary

I support Proposals 38 through 48 which will set aside areas for protection which are adjacent to the McNeil River bear viewing area. I have seen many wonderful pictures of this area and listened to countless enthusiastic stories of those who have been fortunate enough to visit it. I have never been able to visit this beautiful area myself yet, but hope to someday. It is very important to me that this area be protected. Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,
Claudia C. Martin
Former resident of Alaska for 20 years

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Checked by AVG Free Edition.
Version: 7.5.446 / Virus Database: 268.18.5/706 - Release Date: 2/28/2007 4:09 PM

Barbara Winkley

From: "The Martin's" <tundrapair@coinet.com>
To: <connie@akwildlife.org>; <baofrabbithcreek@gci.net>
Sent: Thursday, March 01, 2007 12:30 AM
Subject: Proposals 38 and 48 re: McNeil River Bear viewing areas

Please protect the perimeter areas around the McNeil River State Game Refuge and Bear Observation Area. It would be tragic indeed if this area became a shooting gallery for hunters as bears that have never faced hunters suddenly cross into a legal hunting zone. This new protective zone should be large enough to ensure that the bears are not endangered. Thanks

USES	General State Land	Kamishak Special Use Area CURRENTLY ALLOWED	McNeil Refuge	Sanctuary
hunting	yes	yes	yes	NO
bear hunting	yes	NO*	NO*	NO
trapping	yes	yes	yes	NO
sport fishing	yes	yes	yes	yes
commercial fishing	yes	yes	yes	yes
hiking	yes	yes	yes	yes
commercial camping	yes	yes****	yes	yes
non-commercial camping	yes	yes	yes	yes
wildlife viewing	yes	yes	yes	yes
fisheries enhancement	yes	yes	yes	yes
off-road vehicle use	yes	yes	NO**	NO**
mining	yes	yes	yes	NO
oil and gas	yes	yes	yes	yes
material extraction	yes	yes	yes	yes
timber harvest	yes	yes	yes	yes
grazing	yes	yes	NO**	NO**
boating	yes	yes	yes	yes
commercial facilities	yes	yes	yes	yes
roads, docks, pipelines, utility lines	yes	yes	yes***	NO**
land sale	yes	yes	NO	NO
land lease	yes	yes	yes	yes

* Board of Game closure

** By MRSGR and Sanctuary management plan

***temporary road only for life of project

****limited to Kamishak River, guides only; no clients overnight

Debra Higgins

From: Heath Hilyard
Sent: Friday, February 23, 2007 9:35 AM
To: Adam Berg; Crystal Novotney; Debra Higgins; Graham Siebe; Heath Hilyard; Jeremy Thompson; John Davies; Julie Koehler; Louie Flora; Ronald Clarke
Subject: FW: Info request for tomorrow's H Resources Committee
Attachments: McNeil expansion.xls

All-

Here is a document provided to our office by ADF&G that may be helpful to understand the differences between "sanctuary" lands and "refuge" lands.

H

From: Tim M Barry [mailto:tim_barry@fishgame.state.ak.us]
Sent: Friday, February 23, 2007 8:11 AM
To: Heath Hilyard
Subject: FW: Info request for tomorrow's H Resources Committee

Hi,

Here is that matrix we talked about yesterday. Hope it works. If you need me this morning, please call my cell: 321-5212. See ya soon.

Tim

From: Tom Brookover [mailto:tom_brookover@fishgame.state.ak.us]
Sent: Thursday, February 22, 2007 5:09 PM
To: tim_barry@fishgame.state.ak.us
Cc: 'Kelly Hepler'
Subject: FW: Info request for tomorrow's H Resources Committee

Tim (and Kelly),

I think this is what we need but let me know if not. Mark and I will discuss this tomorrow am and get you a polished version shortly afterward.

Tom

From: Mark Fink [mailto:mark_fink@fishgame.state.ak.us]
Sent: Thursday, February 22, 2007 4:52 PM
To: tom_brookover@fishgame.state.ak.us
Cc: joe_meehan@fishgame.state.ak.us; 'Janet Hall Schempf'
Subject: RE: Info request for tomorrow's H Resources Committee

Tom,

Joe and I (similar to Lennon/McCartney) drafted a quick matrix. We'll look at it again tomorrow morning. Need to replace asterisks, etc...

2/23/2007

Mark

From: Tom Brookover [mailto:tom_brookover@fishgame.state.ak.us]
Sent: Thursday, February 22, 2007 3:46 PM
To: 'Fink, Mark J (DFG)'; joe_meehan@fishgame.state.ak.us
Cc: 'Kelly Hepler'; 'Robus, Matthew H (DFG)'; 'Kimberly Titus'; tim_barry@fishgame.state.ak.us
Subject: Info request for tommorrow's H Resources Committee

Mark and Joe,

Kelly was just asked to provide information to the House Resources Committee tomorrow regarding HB 167 (McNeil expansion). One of the Co-chairs asked for a matrix showing the differences between Sanctuary, Refuge, and general state land. Mark would you please work with Joe to develop the matrix so that we can provide it to Tim Barry by mid-morning. Please let me know if this isn't possible. Thanks.

Tom

2/23/2007