

12355

HOUSE RES

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 renewal 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.

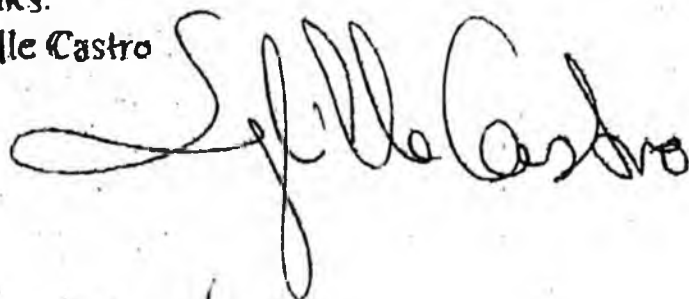
Your bill to be introduced to the legislature and supported by hundreds of Alaskans can change this.

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!

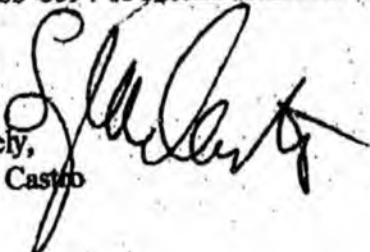
Sybille Castro
P.O.Box 1849
Kenai Alaska 99611
907 776 3637

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

FRANK H. MURKOWSKI
GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "McKie Campbell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "M".

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:
Joe Meehan, ADF&G
(907) 267-2281
joe_meehan@fishgame.state.ak.us
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.

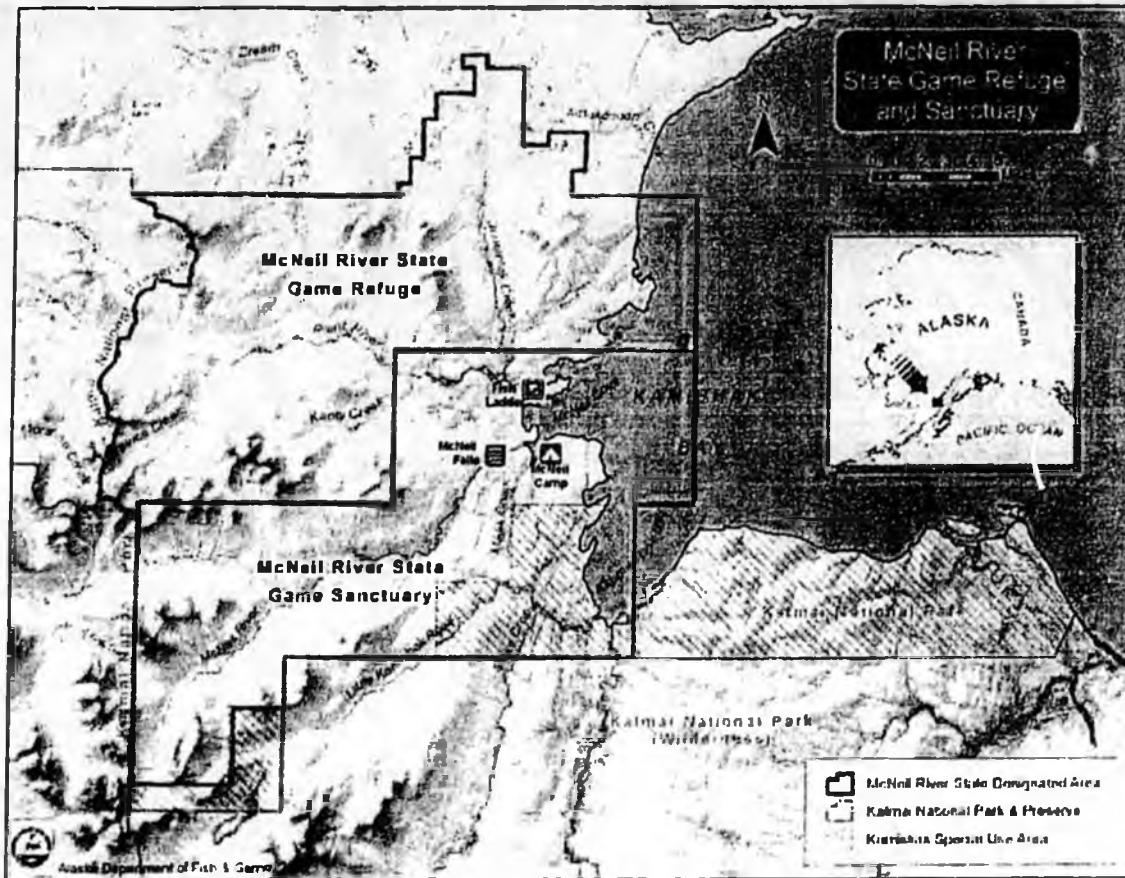


Figure 2. One-sided Shewhart control chart for the seven highest daily and hourly bear counts at McNeil River Falls, McNeil River State Sanctuary, Alaska, 1983 - 2005 ($\alpha = 0.01$).

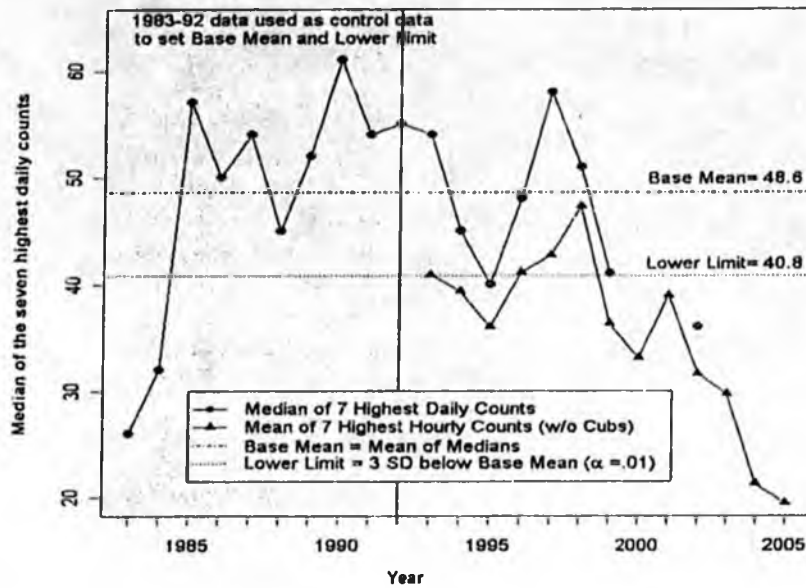


Figure 3. Bear use days at McNeil River Falls, McNeil River State Game Sanctuary, Alaska, 1982-2006.

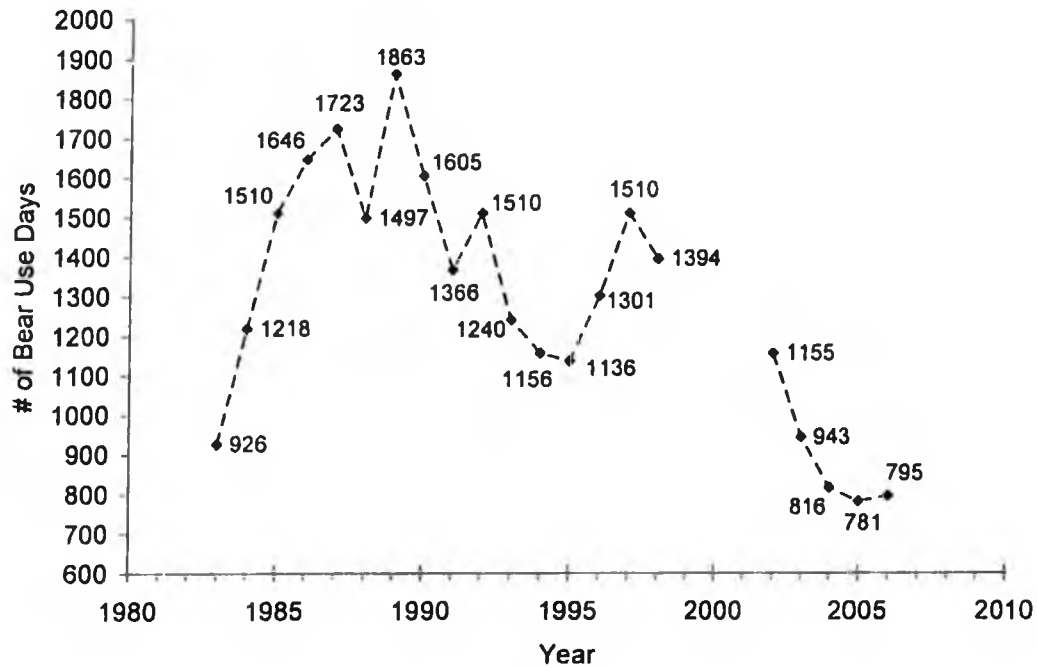


Figure 4. Average annual proportion of male and female bears observed at McNeil River Falls, McNeil River State Game Sanctuary, Alaska, 1986 – 2005 (in five year increments).

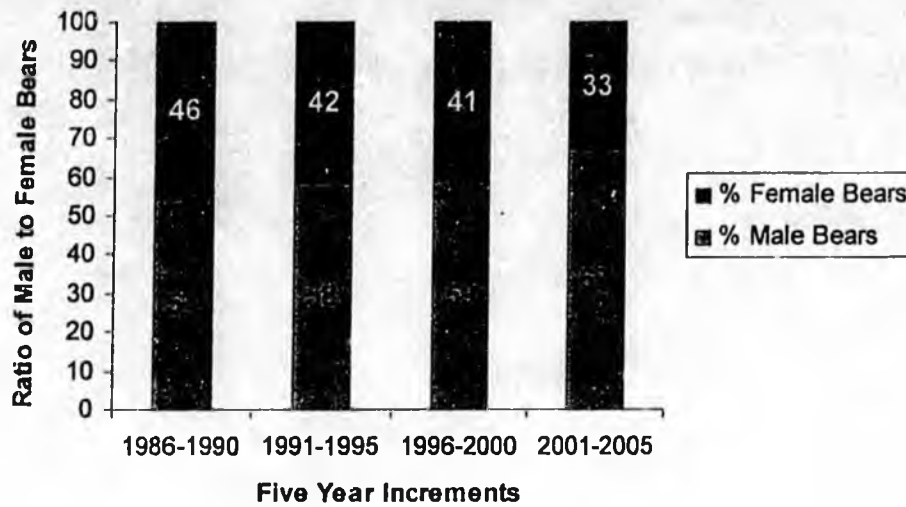


Figure 5. Average annual number of maternal females and sub-adult (both sexes) observed at McNeil River Falls, McNeil River State Game Sanctuary, Alaska, 1976-2005 (in five year increments).

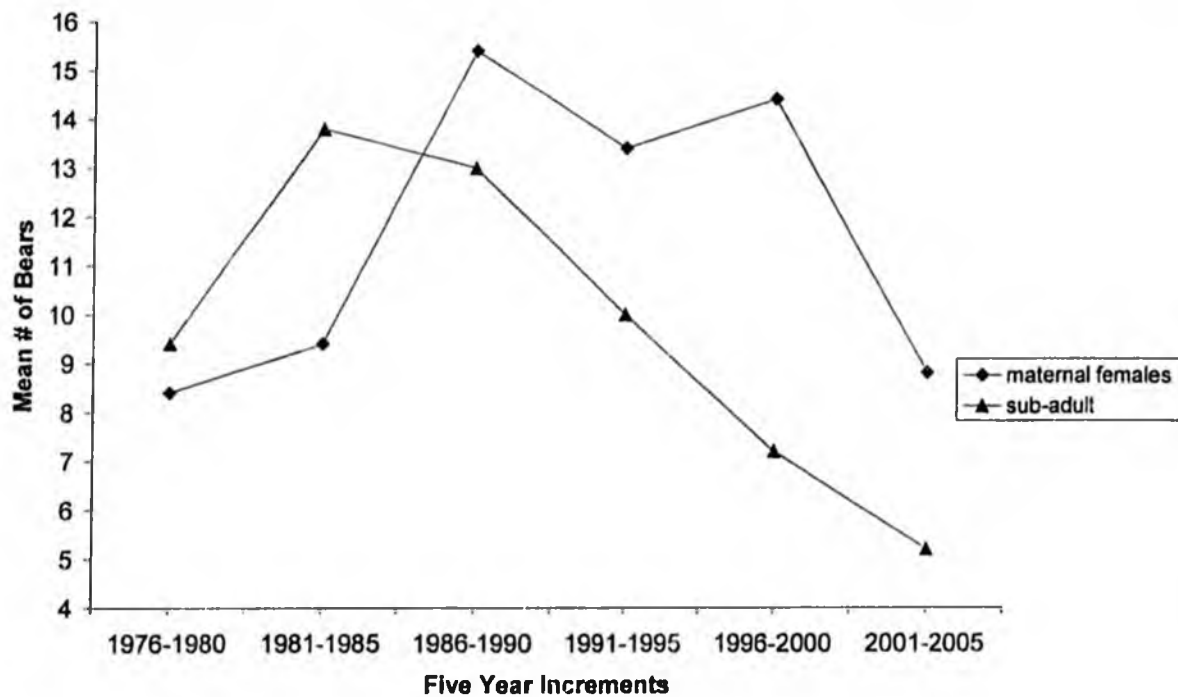
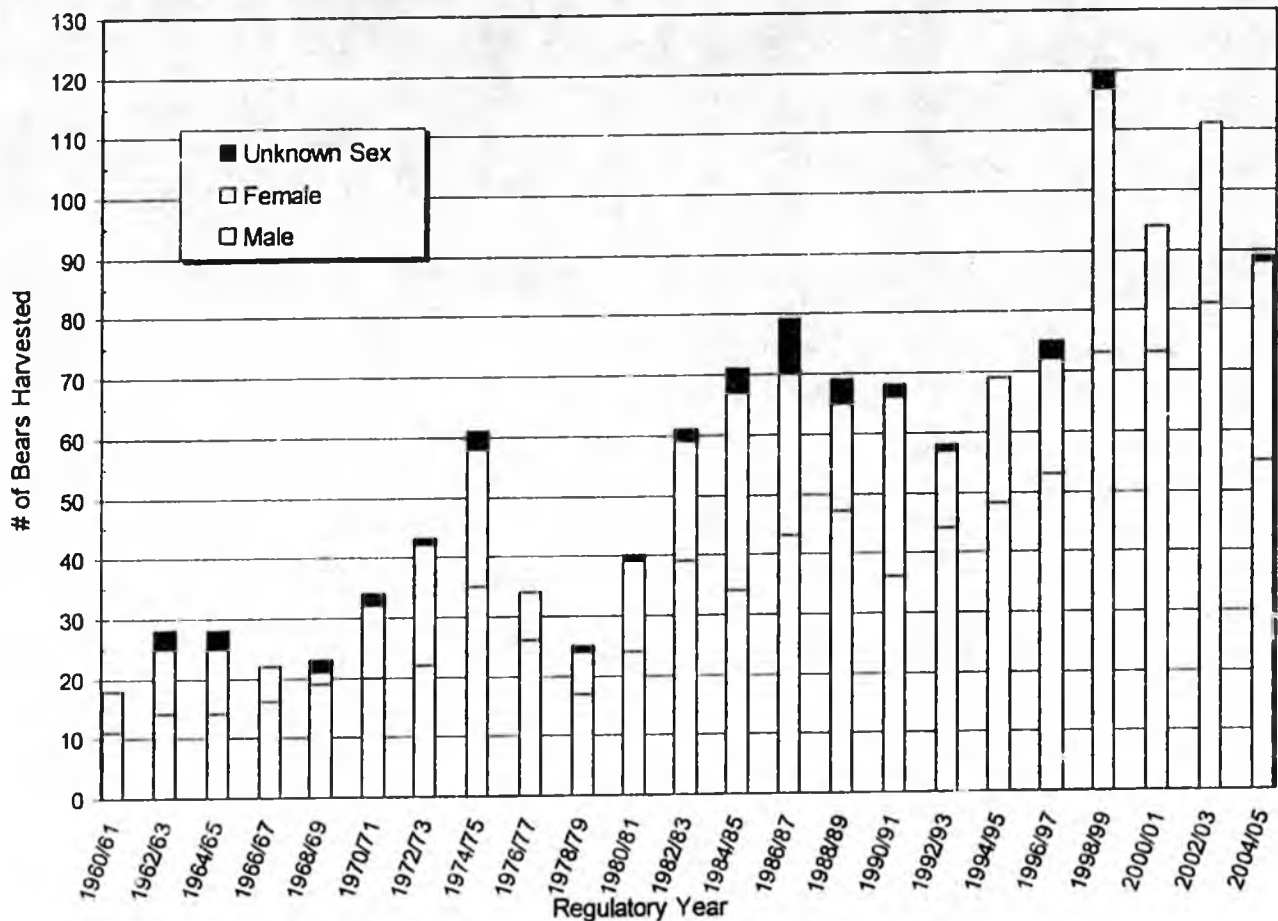


Figure 6. Brown bear harvest from areas surrounding the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary and Refuge, Alaska, 1960-2005 (harvest from GMU/UCUs: 9A/201, 301, 401, 501; 9B/301; and 9C/201,301, 601, 702, and 703). Two consecutive regulatory years* are lumped.

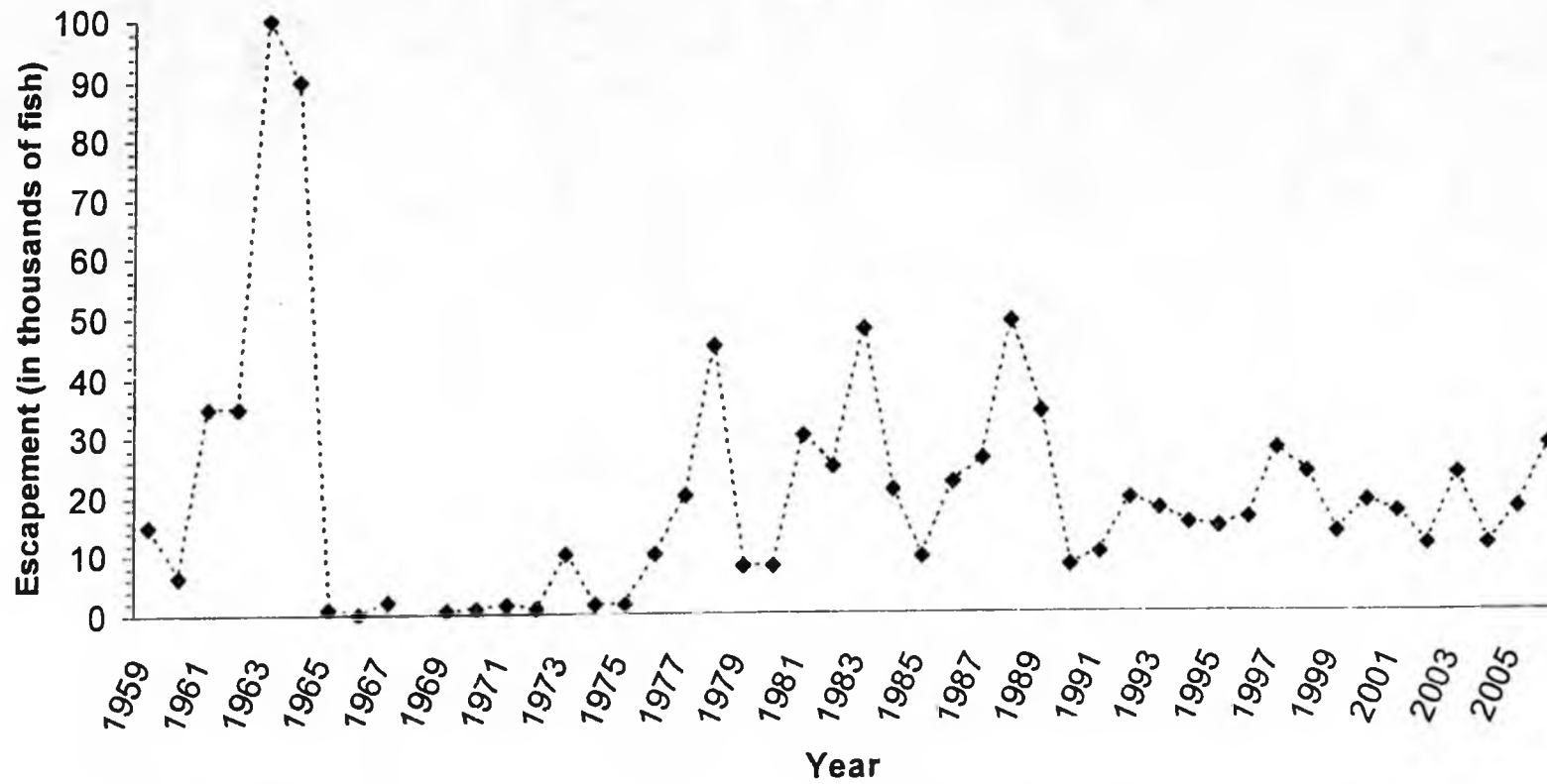
Figure 2
Brown Bear Harvest From Areas Surrounding the McNeil River
State Game Sanctuary and Refuge 1960 - 2005*
 (Harvest from GMU/UCUs: 9A/201, 301, 401, 501; 9B/301; and 9C/201, 301, 601, 702, 703)



* 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
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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

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

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

HB

128

(FILE 1)

FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA
2007 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Fiscal Note Number: HB128-DOA-AOGCC 2-28-07
 Bill Version: HB128
 () Publish Date: _____

Revision Date/Time (Note if correction): _____ Dept. Affected: Administration
 Title Oil and Gas Production Tax RDU AOGCC
 Component AOGCC
 Sponsor Representatives Olson, Harris, Ramras, et. Al.
 Requester House Oil and Gas Component No 2010

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 | 250.0 | 250.0 | 250.0 | 250.0 | 250.0 | 250.0 |
| 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 | 250.0 | 250.0 | 250.0 | 250.0 | 250.0 | 250.0 |

| | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| CAPITAL EXPENDITURES | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
|-----------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| CHANGE IN REVENUES () | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 |
|-------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|

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 |
| 1162 AOGCC Receipts | 250.0 | 250.0 | 250.0 | 250.0 | 250.0 | 250.0 |
| TOTAL | 250.0 | 250.0 | 250.0 | 250.0 | 250.0 | 250.0 |

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 | | | | | | |
| Part-time | | | | | | |
| Temporary | | | | | | |

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

If HB128 is passed the AOGCC in conjunction with other State agencies would be charged with determining whether the lease expenditures incurred for repair, replacement, or incremental operating expenses were as a result of a lack of or improper maintenance of property or equipment. The Commission would also need authority under AS 31.05.030 to implement these need responsibilities.

1 contract Engineering Investigator for 2/3 of year, which equals \$250,000 a year.

Prepared by: Jody J. Colombie, Special Assistant I
 Division: Alaska Oil and Gas Conservation Commission
 Approved by: Rachael Petro, Deputy Commissioner
 Agency: Department of Administration

Phone 465-2200
 Date/Time 2/28/07 9:39 AM
 Date 2/28/07 10:00 AM

FISCAL NOTE

STATE OF ALASKA
2007 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Fiscal Note Number: HB128CS(HOG)-DNR-O&G-03-02-
 Bill Version: CS HB 128 (HOG)
 () Publish Date: _____

Revision Date/Time (Note if correction): _____ Dept. Affected: Natural Resources
 Title Oil & Gas Production Tax: Expenditures RDU Resource Development
 Component Petroleum Systems Integrity Office
 Sponsor Rep. Olson
 Requester House Oil and Gas Component No. 2847

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 | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|

| | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| CHANGE IN REVENUES () | | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|--|

FUND SOURCE (Thousands of Dollars)

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

Estimate of any current year (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 | | | | | | |
| Part-time | | | | | | |
| Temporary | | | | | | |

ANALYSIS: (Attach a separate page if necessary)

HB 128 would, for purposes of determining the taxable value of oil and gas production, prohibit oil and gas producers from deducting costs related to the repair and replacement of property or equipment that was either not maintained or improperly maintained. In making the determinations as to which costs were related to unmaintained or improperly maintained property or equipment, the commissioner of Revenue would consult with the commissioners of Environmental Conservation and Natural Resources, and the Alaska Oil and Gas Conservation Commission.

There is no fiscal impact to DNR.

Prepared by: Kevin Banks, Acting Director Phone 269-8800
 Division Oil and Gas Date/Time 3/1/2007
 Approved by: Tom Irwin, Commissioner Date 3/2/2007
 Agency Natural Resources