



KAWERAK, INC.

Tungwenuk Family Qupak Design, used with permission

REPRESENTING

Brevig Mission

Sitaisaq

Council

Akauchak

Diomedede

Injalik

Elim

Neviarcuarluk

Gambell

Sivuqaq

Golovin

Chinik

King Island

Ugiuvak

Koyuk

Kuuyuk

Mary's Igloo

Iglaaruk

Nome Eskimo

Sitnasuami Inuit

Savoonga

Sivungaq

Shaktoolik

Saktuliq

Shishmaref

Kigiqtaq

Solomon

Ajuutaaq

St. Michael

Taciq

Stebbins

Tapraq

Teller

Tupqaqruk

Unalakleet

Uqalaqtiq

Wales

Kinigin

White Mountain

Natchigvik

Kawerak, Inc.

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Nome, AK 99762

TO:

Alaska Board of Game

ADF&G Boards Support Section

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Kawerak is the Alaska Native non-profit Tribal Consortium for the 20 federally recognized Tribes of the Bering Strait/Norton Sound region. Kawerak offers many services to our tribes and tribal members, including advocating for subsistence users and resources.

Kawerak **supports:**

Proposal 151 - Reauthorization of the current resident tag fee exemption for Brown Bears in GMU 18, 22, 23 & 26A. GMU 22 has a long-standing history for a brown bear tag fee exemption. Local concerns relayed to ADF&G staff from residents across the region is that there are too many brown bears, so much so that cabins are being broken into and meat drying racks are continually being raided. The recent bear population data conducted on the Seward Peninsula also indicates and aligns with local observations that the brown bear population is indeed on the rise. On the Seward Peninsula, brown bears do not appear to be a major big game animal of interest or first choice for hunters. Hunters are more interested in harvesting moose and/or caribou when the fall hunting season begins. When the brown bear tag fee exemption first came into effect it provided more incentives to local hunters and opportunities for a harvestable resource.

Kawerak **opposes:**

Proposal 86 – Mandatory reporting for sea duck harvest. Up front, this proposal makes it appear that there is no reporting requirement for sea ducks, or that the only reporting option is the Harvest Information Program or HIP for the whole state of Alaska. This is incorrect, the ADF&G Office of Subsistence Management collects bird harvest reports for spring, summer, fall & winter that is all inclusive for harvestable migratory birds, including sea ducks. The proposal only indicates what may be happening in their area, a small area of the state, and is not all inclusive to what may be happening statewide. Perhaps the sea ducks in their area, maybe moved onto another area, an area where there is far less hunting pressure. The latest population data collected by the US FWS indicates that the sea duck populations are stable. Having another requirement for harvest reporting will cause harvest reporting burn-out amongst harvesters who already fill out harvest reports for other areas of Alaska.

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Proposal 126 – Unlawful methods and means of taking game; the exceptions allow the use of night vision and forward looking infrared devices for taking furbearers. The use of night vision to harvest furbearers is not fair. It goes against the rules of fair chase, not only to animals that are nocturnal but to other trappers who are also in the area. Being that most furbearers are nocturnal there is a high probability that allowing the use of infrared devices will cause an overharvest of furbearers across the board. Already the use of artificial light is illegal to hunt any game. Night vision or infrared devices are no different than artificial light in that they give a distinct advantage to the hunter.

Proposal 129 & 130 – Establish a minimum standard caliber restriction for the taking of big game animals. Proposals like this have come before the Board of Game numerous times and have failed. There is sufficient data collected on the effectiveness of high velocity, small caliber center fire ammunition on big game animals.

High velocity, small caliber ammunition such as the .223 Remington is perfectly capable of hitting the vitals on even the biggest of big game animals and at distance with the right bullet. The key to any successful hunt is proper shot placement. Hitting the vitals, heart or double lung shot on any big game animal is well within the capabilities of a .223 Remington or similar high velocity, small caliber cartridge. Younger hunters who are just getting started in hunting are more likely to not want to use a bigger rifle cartridge for many reasons including recoil and muzzle blast being significantly higher. These factors may not be evident to an adult, but these factors certainly can and do impact younger hunters, so much so that they may not want to use a bigger caliber ever again.

In both Proposal 129 & 130 the proposer's are making a lot of suggestions based off of speculation or information that is incorrect, or hear say, or is implying that certain calibers are only available in certain types of bullet design, this is also incorrect. In proposal 129 the proposer states that a big game animal was lost because the hunter they talked to, missed the animal completely. The proposer states that they were aware of a moose that were shot several times with .223 rifles, and shot an entire AR-15 magazine of ammo but must have missed.

In Proposal 129 it stated: I had people tell me about shooting a brown bear over eighteen times with a .223 and then it died slow. Nowhere does either of the proposals address taking the time to aim and proper shot placement. Improper shot placement is not the fault of the caliber, but the sole responsibility of the hunter who missed continually. The proposer even goes so far as to state: – The waste of game, due to the use of insufficient cartridge size is a significant contributor to the dwindling game populations. This is pure speculation that is not backed by facts. It is false information stating high velocity, small caliber is the cause of game population decline. It is our opinion that it is the sole responsibility of the hunter behind the trigger and shot placement, and not the cartridge size dwindling the game population.

However, bigger calibers can cause even the most seasoned hunter to flinch, which in turn will make a hunter miss his target. This can contribute to big game loss; not hitting the vitals.

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If this regulation were to pass, it would cause undue hardship on many rural Alaskan hunters, who often times inherit a rifle from grandfather to grandson, father to son. Many individuals in rural Alaska simply cannot afford to buy a brand-new rifle or the bigger caliber ammunition that goes along with it which is also more expensive.

Many hunters throughout Alaska are meat hunters, and do not want to use a bigger caliber. Bigger calibers have been proven to cause more meat damage, hence more waste.

Proposal 135 – Allocate 10% of big game permits to non-residents. The proposal assumes that most big animal populations are doing well or that there is an overabundance in the majority of Alaska. This is false. Big game populations can and do vary from extremely low in one game management unit, to fair in another game management unit, to high in another game management unit. Extensive population surveys for moose and caribou conducted by ADF&G attest to this.

Proposal 139 & 140 – Remove Evidence of sex on hunts limited to one sex. Antlers or horns do not prove evidence of sex. For instance, a hunter can shoot a big bull moose and cut the head off, then immediately after shoot a cow moose. Having evidence of sex naturally attached to any big game is the easiest and simplest means of verifying male or female and does not cost anything. The proposal recommends DNA testing, and a cost associated with this. However, the proposer does not clarify who will pay for the testing to be performed. If the testing is passed onto the hunter, it will be an added cost on top of paying for gas, time off from work, supplies, ammo etc. etc., which in turn causes an undue hardship for many hunters if the additional cost of testing is expensive (cost of test, processing, and mail from rural community to testing site).

For further information or inquiries please contact Kawerak, VP of Natural Resources, Brandon Ahmasuk at 907-443-4377 or bahmasuk@kawerak.org.

Sincerely,

Melanie Bahnke

Kawerak, President, Melanie Bahnke

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