

STATE OF ALASKA

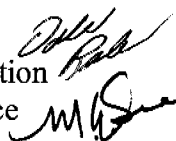
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

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TO: Alaska Board of Game Members
THRU: Kristy Tibbles, Executive Director, Boards Support
FROM: Dale Rabe, Deputy Director, Division of Wildlife Conservation
Marianne G. See, Assistant Director, Division of Subsistence



DATE: April 30, 2009

SUBJECT: Emergency Petition Kachemak Bay Sea Ducks

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game has reviewed the requests for an emergency repeal of the decision in March 2009 to restrict sea duck hunting in Kachemak Bay (Proposal 117) and provides the following analysis and recommendations. An important aspect of this matter is that the department was not able to provide the Board of Game (Board) all the relevant data during deliberation of the proposal.

The department does not believe there is any biological concern about sea duck populations nor other data to warrant new restrictions on hunting opportunity in Kachemak Bay. In the analysis and recommendations prepared for the Board meeting the department pointed out that because wintering sea ducks are highly mobile, populations are managed within the Cook Inlet and Gulf Coast regional zone rather than in site-specific areas like Kachemak Bay. With 15,000-30,000 sea ducks wintering in Kachemak Bay and an average annual harvest of only 1,500 there is no regional concern for overharvest of sea ducks.

The department further considers that the regulatory change of March 2009, which will substantially lower the bag limit, will have unnecessary and potentially significant impacts on resident waterfowl hunters in and around Kachemak Bay. As part of this concern, reduced harvest opportunity will likely decrease the subsistence harvest and use of waterfowl by residents of Seldovia, Nanwalek, and Port Graham. Travel in Kachemak Bay in November and December is difficult at best and very dangerous for the small boats used by most waterfowl hunters. Reducing the daily bag limits will require hunters to make additional trips to harvest enough ducks for subsistence uses. It will also have economic impacts on the local communities and guide services through reduced travel to the area in autumn by non-residents interested in waterfowl hunting. Therefore, the public may experience significant costs if this regulation becomes effective.

In conclusion, the department recommends further evaluation of this new regulation. The Board could consider the request under the procedures for evaluating an emergency petition, or alternatively could decide to defer implementing the new regulation and then include the proposal for further consideration in the statewide January 2010 Board meeting. Delaying implementation would also provide the department an opportunity to fully brief the Board on relevant biological and harvest information related to this issue.