

Proposal 180: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

March 13, 2015

To Whom It May Concern:

I am concerned about Proposal 180 because I believe it is a concern about access to public lands that extends much beyond the trapping and dog safety issues it appears to represent. I am an Alaska resident with over 33 years of enjoyment of the beauty and wonder of Alaska. I am not a trapper, rather an upland and small game hunter, fisherman, hiker and camper. I have two hunting dogs, one being an English setter who casts out hundreds of yards while in the woods. Admittedly, there are trappers who don't respect others' access to public land, and are causing some of the concern and bad perception of trappers. But I think the core of the trapping community does not disrespect others wanting to use public lands and the safety issues surrounding that use. Trapping is historic to Alaska, and yes, many things have changed in terms of development of our communities and infrastructure that has changed the landscape. Although there are instances where trapping has been done inappropriately and without consideration for others, I think those are isolated events that can, and should be dealt with as individual violations of current laws and regulations. Even though there may exist individuals in a group who claim their "rights" to barge head on into public areas known for other activities, I don't see the greater trapping community doing so. On the other hand, we need to remember trapping has a "right" to be out there too. Our concerns about dog and hunter safety while hunting, as well as safety for many others accessing public lands, could be minimized if we together to enjoy the outdoors.

This is where I think we are considering more than trapping versus hunting with dogs, and where perhaps common sense can prevail, and where we can solve the existing concerns without government intervention. Our State has many regulated seasons for hunting varied game species. I think that all entail methods that are dangerous to others who happen into these areas during open seasons, and it can be disrespectful to those who are involved in the hunting/trapping activity. Also, many other activities beyond hunting with dogs in public areas can have an element of risk: walks or hiking with kids, pets, and other domestic animals, snow machines and four-wheelers, can be included when considering safe, multiuse of public lands. So where do we draw the line? Is it trapping versus all activities? Is it dogs versus all other hunting and concurrent activity in a given area? Where does this argument begin and end? So, I think rather than further restrict one user group, i.e. trappers, we need to improve education, communication and cooperation between our respective user groups, and I think we almost always are better to deal with conflicts as

individuals or groups of citizens, rather than allow government to make our decisions for us regarding these public concerns. I am concerned that not much good will come from this controversy, and trying to work out differences as citizens would be more productive. For instance, have folks from our user groups visit other various group's meetings and provide information and education about what they're up to, and to learn others habits and hear what concerns there may be. Publish information to do the same. Be aware of hunting and trapping seasons and activity and perhaps have more clear posting of activity in areas. Talk to each other! Again, I think this is a much bigger issue than what on the surface seems to involve just trappers and bird hunters, and I'm not sure much positive is going to come out of the direction this seems to be headed. As a lesser concern, but none-the-less a real one, is the fact that there are groups who are hungry for an opportunity to find a divide in access to public land: hunting and trapping activity specifically. This controversy, and others like it, may give these groups a chance to advance their agenda to restrict more of our hunting, trapping, and fishing in Alaska. I don't want to see that happen, and I think proposal 180 should not go forward for approval. Thank you for the opportunity to present my opinions about proposal 180. Please don't hesitate to contact me for further discussion if needed.

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