

Ronald G. Clarke
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Anchorage, AK 99517

4 March 2016

Ted Spraker, Chairman
Alaska Board of Game
% Alaska Department of Fish and Game
P.O. Box 115526
1255 W. 8th Street
Juneau, AK 99811-5526

Dear Chairman Spraker and Members of the Alaska Board of Game:

I have been a licensed falconer in Alaska for nearly forty years. In that time, I have worked closely with the Alaska Board of Game and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to help craft falconry regulations. I'm sorry the press of business this year will likely prevent me from testifying to you in person at your upcoming meeting in Fairbanks. I wish you extensive, timely data, meaningful discussions, and well-reasoned decisions – and I thank you for your service

I oppose Proposals 92 and 93 and urge you to reject them.

Last spring, following two public sessions in two consecutive years, considerable public testimony, and detailed work in the interim between meetings, the Alaska Board of Game adopted the first-ever scheme allowing a non-resident take of raptors for falconry. Falconers and others testified across a wide range of perspectives, from no non-resident take at all to take with little restriction. The Board examined the subject thoroughly, deliberated extensively, and crafted a responsible, conservative first venture into non-resident raptor take. The Board concluded the best way to begin was to issue a small number of permits for passage birds only; after some years, it would gauge the extent of interest, evaluate how well the new scheme functioned, perhaps uncover details it hadn't anticipated, and revisit the system if it deemed necessary. It was and is a reasonable first approach to a complicated and emotionally charged issue.

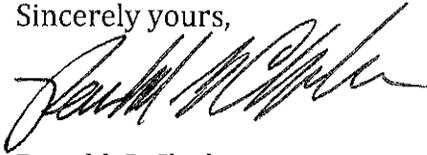
Now come two proposals, one to reverse the Board's judgment on passage birds only and another to remove all limits on non-resident take. Nothing material has changed since the Board last discussed this topic. There are compelling reasons to maintain a passage-only take. I urge you to resist changing the system you created less than a year ago simply because the people who didn't get everything they wanted last time are taking another run at it. As Alaska falconers cautioned in earlier deliberations, pressure from Outside will always favor greater take, looser regulations, and lower permit costs, and once they had their collective foot in the door, the pressure would never let up. Indeed, here it is, exactly as predicted.

I urge you to continue to protect Alaska interests first, regardless of the desires of non-residents. The reasoning behind the present system remains sound. Please give this system time to let us understand 1) how it's working, 2) success rates of applicants in securing permits and acquiring birds, 3) trends of participation, 4) any ramifications for other non-resident take schemes, and 5) what, if anything, needs to be changed. We can establish neither a baseline nor a trend with just one year of data. Please leave the new system alone. Reject Proposals 92 and 93.

Looking ahead, with the impending change from the previous two-year proposal period to episodes of three years, I understand the Board must decide whether statewide Cycle B topics, including falconry permits, will come up every three or every six years. Under the previous schedule, falconry regulations were available for consideration every four years – every other statewide cycle. If the Board were to maintain that pattern in the new configuration, falconry regulations would be considered every six years. In my mind, this is consistent with successful past practice and is entirely acceptable. I don't believe Alaska falconers want or can even ask for much more than we already have. There's no reason to take up falconry proposals more frequently.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ronald G. Clarke', written in a cursive style.

Ronald G. Clarke
Alaska Master Falconer #14-003-F
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