

PROPOSAL150

5 AAC 92.550. Areas closed to trapping.

Establish trapping setbacks along certain roads and pullouts in Unit 7 as follows:

1) SOLUTION:

We are requesting the Board of Game amend 5 AAC 92.550 to establish 1) a 100-yard trapping setback along both sides of roads and all sides of the pullouts listed and described in the table provided. 2) We are requesting a 50-yard trapping setback for traps with an inside spread of 5 inches or less, that are set at least 4 feet above the ground or snow level, and size 3 leghold marten traps set in boxes. We are requesting these changes to protect the safety of people and their pets utilizing the most popular roads and pullouts in the Cooper Landing area.

2) REGULATORY LANGUAGE:

ADD Regulatory Language for Unit 7: “Trap setback of 100-yards on both sides of roads and all sides of pullouts listed. Traps with an inside spread of 5 inches or less which are at least 4 feet above the ground or snow level, and size 3 leghold marten traps in boxes are allowed if more than 50-yards from the road or pullout.”

- Quartz Creek Road - Quartz Creek Road from its intersection with the Sterling Highway to the powerline crossing at approximately mile 2.5.
- Quartz Creek Road - From powerline crossing to Crescent Creek Trailhead at mile 3.5 (used in winter for skiing)
- East Quartz Creek and Williams Road - Entire East Quartz Creek Road from its intersection with Quartz Creek Road and Williams Road
- Old Sterling Highway (unmaintained portion of Quartz Creek Road) - Old Sterling Highway from the Crescent Creek Trailhead to Tern Lake Rest and Picnic area
- Snug Harbor Road - The first 2.8 miles of Snug Harbor Road from its intersection with the Sterling Highway to the entrance of the Chugach Electric Power Station
- Bean Creek Road - The entire distance from the Sterling Hwy to end.

The precedent for establishing trapping buffers for public safety along multi-use trails in the State of Alaska has already been set, most notably in the Municipality of Anchorage, parts of Chugach State Park, the City/Borough of Juneau, and along six trails and surrounding all school yards in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. While these municipalities and boroughs have approved trapping regulations on lands they manage, they have not issued regulations for state-managed trails in deference to the regulatory powers of the Board of Game. We are asking the Board of Game to rectify this situation in our area.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?

1) ISSUE:

We are requesting the Board of Game amend 5 AAC 92.550 to establish 1) a 100-yard trapping

setback along both sides of roads and all sides of the pullouts listed and described in the table provided. 2) We are requesting a 50-yard trapping setback for traps with an inside spread of 5 inches or less, that are set at least 4 feet above the ground or snow level, and size 3 leghold marten traps set in boxes. We are requesting these changes to protect the safety of people and their pets utilizing the most popular roads and pullouts in the Cooper Landing area.

Unit	Road or Pullout Name:	Description	Winter Uses
7	Quartz Creek Road	Quartz Creek Road from its intersection with the Sterling Highway to the powerline crossing at approximately mile 2.5.	Walking, hiking, fat tire biking
7	Quartz Creek Road	From powerline crossing to Crescent Creek Trailhead at mile 3.5	Cross-country skiing, skijoring, snowshoeing, hiking, fat tire biking, and access to backcountry skiing
7	East Quartz Creek and Williams Road	Entire East Quartz Creek Road from its intersection with Quartz Creek Road and Williams Road	Walking, hiking, fat tire biking,
7	Old Sterling Highway (unmaintained portion of Quartz Creek Road)	Old Sterling Highway from the Crescent Creek Trailhead to Tern Lake Rest and Picnic area	Cross-country skiing, access to backcountry skiing, snowshoeing, hiking, skijoring, snowmachine use
7	Snug Harbor Road	The first 2.8 miles of Snug Harbor Road from its intersection with the Sterling Highway to the entrance of the Chugach Electric Power Station	Walking, hiking, fat tire biking
7	Bean Creek Road	The entire distance. This road is mostly surrounded by private property, but unless posted, traps can be set.	Walking, hiking, fat tire biking
7	Russian Gap Road	The entire distance. This road is mostly surrounded by private property, but unless posted, traps can be set.	Walking, hiking fat-tire biking
	All vehicle pullouts along the Sterling Highway	Pullouts along the Sterling Highway from its junction with the Seward Highway to the entrance to the Russian River Ferry and Boat Launch	People use these pullouts to let their animals and children take bathroom breaks,

			stretch their legs, take in the views and gear up for backcountry activities
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2) WHY:

Year-round outdoor recreation is an important and growing segment of the Cooper Landing area’s economy. The community of Cooper Landing is located on the Sterling highway at the headwaters of the Kenai River. Easily accessible by road, Cooper Landing is located only 100 hundred miles south of Anchorage, the largest city in the state. Cooper landing’s primary economy is based on summer recreation and tourism to the area, however, as winter recreation in the area increases, Cooper Landing businesses could take advantage of this opportunity and extend their seasonal offerings. To encourage the increasing number of family-friendly, active, outdoor recreational pursuits (e.g., winter biking, cross-country skiing, backcountry skiing, snowshoeing, trail running, ice fishing, bird hunting, and backcountry cabin rentals) in the area, it would be beneficial for business owners to be able to accurately market Cooper Landing as a fun, safe, and uniquely beautiful area, for visitors to enjoy with their family and pets.

As the amount of winter recreation has increased over the past 20 years, so has the number of dangerous encounters between user groups and traps set in recreational areas. While many trappers set their traps a responsible distance from roads and pullouts, trap placements close

to roadways, or in pullouts, present a very real danger, especially for young children and pets. As of late February 2022, seven dogs have been caught in traps throughout Southcentral Alaska, and two dogs were killed, as reported via the Alaska Press. Since land managers and law enforcement do not track trap safety incidents all reports are collected and tabulated unofficially and are considered incomplete. While we respect the rights of trappers to set their traplines near roads and pullouts, we are seeking trapping regulation that will ensure the safety of all area user groups.

Our proposed 100- and 50-yard trapping setbacks are not large enough to significantly limit a trappers’ opportunity to trap near a road or pullout. Proposing setbacks for only the most popular and heavily used roads and pullouts leaves all other areas unrestricted. Trappers who follow the Trapper’s Code of Ethics’ third tenant, to “promote trapping methods that will reduce the possibility of catching non-target animals,” most likely already set traps back from heavily used roads and pullouts. The setbacks we are requesting will not unduly impact trappers and will greatly improve all user groups’ safety. These proposed setbacks would also align with the Forest Service’s Our Values Statement, which includes the intention of managing for “*Safety. In every way: physical, psychological, and social.*”

The 100- and 50-yard setbacks we have proposed would not present an undue burden on trappers. The average backpacking speed is 1 to 2 miles per hour. Assuming trappers are walking between one and two miles per hour, the setback distances requested would require only an additional two to three minutes of walking to place and check traps. Since many trappers use snow machines, the 100-yard setback could be crossed in less than one minute. **A local Cooper Landing trapper, as well as trappers from other nearby Units, have endorsed a 100- yard setback as reasonable and logical.**

Our proposed 100-yard and 50-yard setback distances will not impact the Board of Game’s ability

to manage wildlife along the listed roads and pullouts. Should trapping a particular species within the setback become biologically necessary, the board could use a temporary permit system to address any problem that might arise. A similar proposal requesting a 100- yard setback from trails has been submitted and endorsed by the Homer Advisory Committee. Having regulations that are similar, will make management, education, and enforcement easier in Units 7 and 15.

Establishing trap setbacks in the Cooper Landing area has strong community support. Cooper Landing property owners and residents were surveyed about trapping issues in their area in March 2021. Returned surveys were tallied to show that 90% of the respondents felt setbacks for traps in the Cooper Landing area were necessary, and 10% felt setbacks were unnecessary.

Our proposal includes only the most popular roads and pullouts accessed by a variety of users groups during the trapping season. The popular roadways and pullouts that we have proposed for trapping setbacks are used for: cross-country skiing, access to backcountry skiing, snowshoeing, hiking, fat tire biking, dog mushing, snow machining, travel by search and rescue dogs and personnel, hunting and trapping.

As of the 2019 census, there are 731,545 residents of the state of Alaska, and based on sealing records, license sales and the annual "Trapper Questionnaire," the Alaska Department of Fish and Game estimates 2,500 to 3,500 trappers in the state. By adopting this trapping regulation in Unit 7, the Board of Game would better represent the majority of its constituents and the current areas recreational uses.

PROPOSED BY: The Cooper Landing Safe Trails Committee (HQ-F22-009)
