

Testimony to the Alaska Board of Game – Tom Rothe
March 17, 2023

My name is Tom Rothe from Eagle River. For over 40 years I have been an avid resident waterfowl hunter in Kachemak Bay and Greater Cook Inlet. I also have been a professional waterfowl biologist since 1977, first with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, then 25 years as Waterfowl Coordinator for ADF&G.

SPEAKING TO #163-170 SEA DUCKS IN KACHEMAK PART 15C

For more than 20 years, a small number of residents of Kachemak Bay have fabricated inaccurate or misleading narratives: (1) that sea duck populations are at risk; (2) that sea ducks should be managed based on small local flocks—supposedly irreplaceable units—rather than on scientifically delineated regional populations; (3) that sea duck harvest is excessive; and (4) that hunters and guides are behaving wastefully and illegally. These unfounded narratives have been put forth to repeatedly support arbitrary and pointless proposals to reduce hunting opportunity for hunters and guides (e.g., Proposals 164-172).

For years Misleading claims that sea duck harvest must be reduced for biological reasons are actually veiled opposition to duck hunting by a small number of local people who--either have been misled about legitimate conservation needs or who really object to boating, gunfire and other aspects of hunting in Kachemak Bay. They presume a proprietary interest in areas where duck hunting occurs—actually on public lands and waters open to hunting. At the core of this long-running campaign to restrict duck hunting is NOT a biological wildlife management issue, but a conflict between users of public spaces. The relevant question, then, is “Can or should the Board of Game try to serve as a referee in this contentious skirmish affecting waterfowl hunting?” My conclusion is “no” the Board should focus on providing adequate and reasonable hunter opportunity based on the management needs of wildlife stocks.

I strongly urge the Board to adopt Proposal 163: to (1) rectify the needless restrictions on sea duck bag limits adopted in 2010 that have damaged recreational and subsistence hunting opportunity in Kachemak Bay; (2) base duck hunting regulations on best available biological information, and (3) provide advice and cooperation in some other more appropriate process to resolve Kachemak Bay conflicts.