

## **PROPOSAL 82**

### **5 AAC 92.550. Areas closed to trapping.**

Establish 50-yard trapping setbacks along specific trails in Unit 14 as follows:

In 2022, Alaska Wildlife Alliance submitted a proposal for 50-yard trap setbacks from multiple trails in Units 13, 14 and 16. At the 2022 Central & Southwest meeting, the Board of Game deferred the proposal until a stakeholder meeting between trappers and non-trappers was convened under the facilitation of a board member. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the setback proposal and “attempt to come up with solutions that would reduce potential conflicts between trapping and loose dogs, along highly developed trails in the Matsu Borough.”[1]

Stakeholders included representatives from Alaska Wildlife Alliance, non-trapper trail users, and trappers representing Alaska Frontier Trappers Association and Alaska Trappers Association. ADF&G staff were also present. The one-day meeting adjourned with consensus on the following setback location and conditions. We seek for these agreed-upon trails and restrictions to be codified in this proposal:

No trapping or snaring within 50-yards of the below-listed trails unless the traps are elevated three feet above hard ground, enclosed, underwater, or under ice. Trapping would still be permitted on the below-listed trails if they are elevated three feet above hard ground, enclosed, underwater, or under ice. All other forms of lawful trapping would also still be allowed near the below-listed trails, provided they are placed farther than 50-yards from the trail.

<b>Unit</b>	<b>Trail name</b>	<b>Description</b>
14B	Talkeetna Lakes Park trail system (XYZ lakes trails)	A trail system for skiing, hiking and mountain biking located within the Talkeetna Lakes Park. Construction of a trailhead facility at the park entrance was completed in 2007 and trails are maintained by Denali Nordic Ski Club. See map <a href="#">here</a>
14B	Dorothy Jones Trail System (Susitna Valley High School)	Trail system consists of a series of loops built on rolling hills between the Su Valley High School and Montana Lake. There are varying levels of difficulty from novice to expert.
14A	Matanuska Lakes State Recreation Area developed trails	Includes a pedestrian year round trail system and maintained ski trails. Map available <a href="#">here</a> .
14A	Scout Ridge Loop	Well-established trail located off Hayfield Road in the Knik-Fairview area. This year-round trail is used in the winter by hikers, skiers and snowshoers. See <a href="#">map here</a> .
14A	Reflections Lake Trail	Located south of Palmer just off the west side of the Glenn Highway on the north side of the Knik

		River. This year-round trail is used in the winter by hikers, skiers and snowshoers, and in the summer/fall by hikers, hunters and fishermen. See map <a href="#">here</a> .
14A	Nelson Road	Palmer Hay Flats area. See map <a href="#">here</a> .
14A	Rabbit Slough Boat Launch Access Road	Palmer Hay Flats. See map <a href="#">here</a> .
14A	Wasilla Creek Boardwalk (Nelson Road)	Palmer Hay Flats. See map <a href="#">here</a> .
14A	Government Peak Recreation Area developed Trails system within the southern development area	There are 4 miles (6.5 km) of Nordic skiing/hiking trails built for all skill levels. There is an additional 4 miles of bike trails intertwining with the skiing/hiking trails. Below the Chalet there is a sledding hill for all ages. The ski trails area maintained by the Mat-Su Ski Club for both summer and winter use. Mountain bike trails are maintained by the Valley Mountain Bikers and Hikers. See map <a href="#">here</a> .
14B	Independence Mine ski trails	Year round trail within the Hatcher Pass Management area. See map <a href="#">here</a> .
14B	Gold Mint trail to Mint Glacier	Year round trail within the Hatcher Pass Management area. See map <a href="#">here</a> .
14B	Reed Lakes trails to lower Reed Lake	Year round trail within the Hatcher Pass Management area. See map <a href="#">here</a> .
14B	Archangel Road to the gate	Year round trail within the Hatcher Pass Management area. See map <a href="#">here</a> .

Fifty yards is the minimum precedented distance for trap setbacks in Alaska. In Unit 1C, for example, Juneau-area designated trails have a regulated ¼ mile trap setback and 15C has 100-yard trap setbacks from specific trails. For trails outside the Juneau area in Unit 1C, the ¼ mile setback is also applied except for traps with an inside jaw spread of five inches or less, which can only be set if they are at least five feet above the ground and snow and are more than 50 yards from the trail. Additionally, in 2019 the Anchorage municipality passed an ordinance for 50 yard no-trap setbacks from designated trails in the Anchorage Municipality. In sum, the 50-yard distance is precedented as a reasonable compromise between various users, and has been implemented in other areas of the state. Trappers at the stakeholder meeting agreed that the setback distance would be appropriate on the above-listed trails.

The setback distance is small enough to not significantly reduce the Board of Game’s ability to manage wildlife. Should trapping of a species within this setback be proven biologically necessary, the board may utilize a temporary permit system that identifies active traps in specific cases or modify the list of trails in the setback system. In areas that permit off-leash dog use, dogs must

still be under voice and sight control to be protected by this setback. For the protection of users and wildlife, dogs must be in voice and sight control in all multi-use settings.

Finally, defining the trail would not pose a regulatory burden, as the trails are mapped and the same process for identifying the trail boundaries and regulating trap setbacks in Units 1C and 15C could be applied to Unit 14.

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[1] 2022 RC014

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** While the majority of trappers set traps a responsible distance from multi-use trails, some traps on/near Mat Su area trails and trailheads have incurred serious consequences for skiers, bikers, and walkers with pets. This issue was brought to the Matanuska-Susitna Borough (MSB) Assembly in 2017, when over 3,500 MSB residents petitioned assembly members to protect multi-use trails after 11 dogs had been caught in traps on local trails. The MSB approved trapping restrictions on six borough-managed trails and on school grounds, but did not issue regulations for state-managed trails in deference to the regulatory powers of the Board of Game. While the borough regulations limited trapping on a few trails in 2017, each year since there have been reports of pets in off-leash areas being caught and even killed in legally set traps on/near multiuse trails.

Land managers and law enforcement do not track trap-safety incidents, so reports are collected ad hoc and considered incomplete. Since 2019, Alaska Wildlife Alliance started tracking the incidents reported to our organization, and transitioned the reporting platform online so the public could see when a trap encounter was reported on an interactive map ([www.akwildlife.org/safetrails](http://www.akwildlife.org/safetrails)).

Many people live in Alaska for the year-round recreational activities, and tens of thousands of people in the MSB and surrounding areas enjoy multi-use trails during the trapping season. We respect the rights of trappers to utilize multi-use trails, and seek reasonable, regulated boundaries that ensure safe multi-use on some trails for the benefit of thousands of other trail users. The goal of this proposal is not to unduly restrict trapping, but to protect and reduce the uncertainty for users of multi-use trails by providing defined boundaries on trap placement.

**Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local fish and game advisory committee?** The setback conditions and trail recommendations in this proposal were negotiated by representatives present at the 2022 stakeholder meeting. Alaska Trappers Association (ATA) was presented with a draft of this proposal before submission, but ATA has not decided whether to support or oppose or amend this proposal before it was submitted.

**PROPOSED BY:** Alaska Wildlife Alliance

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