

RC15

Bev Davies Public Testimony Board of Game meeting November 5, 2010

My name is Bev Davies. I am a 37-year resident of Ketchikan and, with any luck, hope to live another 37 years here. Thank you for this opportunity to speak to you in person. I co-authored Proposal 4 requesting an area of Traitor's Cove/Marguerite Bay aka Margaret Creek to be closed to bear hunting. This is a USFS bear viewing observatory, with a fish ladder, attracting 3436 permitted visitors a summer. There are 2 USFS maintained roads and 2 USFS maintained ATV trails, about 20 miles in total, only accessible from the dock. Please see the large map I gave to you.

My husband and I have been frequenting this area in our boat since 2003. For example, we spent 33 nights at the dock last summer and 30 nights the summer before. We are observing fewer bears each year with this summer down 50% over last year and those we did see were much smaller than usual. As I have previously stated in our proposal and my comments previously submitted last October, also see attached, we have witnessed several problems related to conflicts with bear hunters and bear viewers. Memorial Day 2009 we witnessed a bear being harvested on the beach across from our boat. To the hunter this was a happy moment, to us, the bear viewer, this was a distressing moment. Hunters have a right to hunt and should have land available to do that. Bear viewers have a right to view bears and should have land available to do that. Both groups are taxpayers and both groups should have equal rights. The animals in Alaska should be managed for all Alaskans. Forcing these 2 groups to mix is like forcing whale hunters and whale watchers to share the same body of water. It is an obvious safety issue. The Department Bear Management Plan dated 1998 to 2001 noted the conflicts of these user groups described as "contentious" and a "safety concern" at Margaret Creek then and that was over 10 years ago. The Department acknowledges now in the recommendations on this proposal that this is an allocation issue. We respectfully request you allocate this area to bear viewing. It is an established, developed, USFS bear viewing observatory attracting local residents like ourselves and thousands of guided visitors generating \$1.25 million to our local economy. The pulp mill in Ketchikan closed in 1997. Since then tourism has replaced timber as the main industry in Ketchikan and most of Southeast. We are expecting 955,000 cruise ship visitors next summer together with the independent traveler more than a million people total. Bears are as iconic to Alaska as glaciers, bald eagles and whales. Dedicated bear viewing tours alone contributed to over \$6.5 million to our economy last summer. In addition the most frequently asked question of the pilot on a flightseeing tour is "are we going to see a bear?"

80 bears have been harvested from the Margaret Creek area in the last 10 years, an average of 8 bears per year. 16 were taken in 2008. In the Department's 2010 Bear Trails News it states "Unlike many areas in the northern part of the state, where black bears are numerous and managers are trying to reduce their numbers to bolster moose and caribou populations, managers of black bears on Prince of Wales Island and elsewhere in Southeast Alaska are concerned about apparent **declines in the bear population**". A female black bear's home range is anywhere from 1-15 sq. miles depending upon food availability. The bears at Margaret live around the road system and creek as that is where their food is: berries from the most recent clearcut areas (logging occurred from the 1950's to 1990's) and fish from the creek. However, as the trees grow back and stem exclusion (trees intertwine and prevent the growth of berry bushes due to lack of sunlight) is reached in these areas there will be less food available and the Department anticipates "drastic changes in bear numbers in the next 10 years, regardless of

what we do with hunting seasons and bag limits", please see my comments attached for the full quote. By closing this area to bear hunting you will be responsibly addressing the safety concerns, removing the conflicts between the disparate user groups, aiding the conservation and development of the resource while maintaining a sustainable bear population for the future of bear viewing and the resultant benefit to the economy of Ketchikan.

The Margaret Creek area being requested to be closed to bear hunting is app. 26 sq. miles of the "1064 sq. miles of bear habitat on Revilla Island" (Department) or about 2%. The Pack Creek Bear Viewing Area on Admiralty Island, accessible from Juneau, is 95 sq. miles and about 6% of the island. Juneau, Sitka, Petersburg and Wrangell all have several areas close by, in addition to their highway road systems, that are closed to bear hunting whereas Ketchikan and Prince of Wales Island have none. There are several other USFS road systems, some with docks, on Revilla Island that are available to hunters. Please see the large map attached.

Bear viewing is a growing segment of our local community and important part of our tourism industry and is not going to go away. I strongly urge you to carry the proposal as originally written as I believe this is the long-term solution to the current problems, but rather than take no action or fail the proposal please consider the other 2 options (1/2 mile around the roads or 1 mile around the creek) and carry with an amendment. Please see the maps attached showing all 3 options.

Thank you for your consideration.

Bev Davies

FAX TO : 907-465-6094 (by 5:00pm October 22, 2010) Southeast Nov. 5-9 Board of Game meeting

Or Mail: ATTN: Board of Game Comments
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Boards Support Section
P.O. Box 115526
Juneau, AK 99811-5526

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FROM: Bev Davies 37-year resident of Ketchikan, Alaska (cell 907-617-7207)

Proposal 1 SUPPORT

Reducing the season dates by 2 weeks will help solve the problem of the declining bear population as reported in the ADF&G 2010 Bear Trails newsletter.

Proposal 2 SUPPORT

Reducing the season for hunting in those 2 areas will help solve the problem of the declining bear population as reported in the ADF&G 2010 Bear Trails newsletter.

Protect the livelihood of those who work for, and the operators of, the bear viewing businesses in those locations and resultant positive effect on the economy in Ketchikan.

In the case of the Neets Bay salmon hatchery, where app. 8000 tourists per summer are guided there for the purpose of bear viewing, reducing the hunting season will solve the problems of conflict between the 2 user groups and improve the hunters, and Alaska's, reputation with these visitors who don't consider hunting at a salmon hatchery, where bears are also habituated to humans due to the tours, ethical or "fair chase".

Proposal 3 SUPPORT

Closing the bear hunting within a one-mile radius of the Whitman Lake Hatchery will help solve the problem of the declining bear population as reported in the ADF&G 2010 Bear Trails newsletter.

This salmon hatchery is located 8 miles by paved highway from downtown Ketchikan. 16,000 people were guided at the adjacent private acreage, named the Alaska Rainforest Sanctuary, in the summer of 2010. Residences are in close proximity to the hatchery and this business. In addition to the reasons cited in Proposal 3 above for the Neets Bay salmon hatchery there is the added problem of safety. Closing just one mile to bear hunting around this hatchery will create a safety zone for the 16,000 clients, plus employees and residents in this human-populated area.

The number of people to this site should continue to increase, dependent upon the bear population, as there is an anticipated increase to 955,000 cruise ship visitors next year. **Tourism has replaced timber as the anchor industry in Ketchikan so the economy of Ketchikan is dependent upon tourism with bear viewing being a favorite tour, contributing millions of dollars to the economy and employing hundreds of Ketchikan residents.**

Proposal 4 SUPPORT

Closing the Margaret Creek USFS bear viewing platform in the Traitor's Cove area to bear hunting will help solve the **problem of the declining bear population as reported in the ADF&G 2010 Bear Trails newsletter. This declining bear population is a serious concern to ADF&G.** Please read the email

quoted below dated October 21, 2010 from Boyd Porter, Wildlife Management Biologist with ADF&G in Ketchikan (907)225-2475:

"Bev, We don't have specific home range information for black bears in southeast Alaska. I am currently working on a project to get that exact information on black bear in Unit 2 (Prince Of Wales Island), but realize these studies are labor and cost intensive . I spent 6 years pulling funding together for the two bear projects I currently have going on POW. I also only have myself and one assistant on POW to do all the work. Remember we have all other species to manage and although very important, bears are just one component.

We use bear density estimates from Washington State where they have done extensive bear studies. We look at our habitat capability in specific areas here and extrapolate from that Washington work. At the end of our 3-year research project on POW we will also have better estimates from southeast bear populations. However, using that work to estimate bears in this area (Margaret Creek in the Traitor's Cove area) will still take some extrapolation because this habitat is not nearly as productive as most of Unit 2. **Regardless of what we do with hunting seasons and bag limits, we expect drastic changes in bear numbers in the next 10 years in many parts of southeast because of vast tracks of second growth timber reaching stem exclusion and reducing carrying capacity (less food) for bears.** If you apply 1.5 bears to this area you will be pretty close to a density estimate for Revilla. You can look at my management reports on the state website and get literature citations for the Washington work and other studies we have gleaned information from to manage bears. Revilla Island has about 1064 sq miles of habitat.

I hope this answers your questions. Boyd"

An average of 8 bears per year or 80 over the last 10 years have been legally (we suspect many are taken illegally) harvested from the Margaret Creek/Traitor's Cove area. This area was heavily logged in the 1950's and 60's with the most recent logging activity in some parts in the 1990's and no logging activity upcoming. The ADF&G's concern for a drastic decline in the bear numbers definitely applies to this area. My husband and I have spent almost every weekend from mid May in 2003 to early October in 2010 at the dock at Marguerite Bay in Traitor's Cove and we hike the 1.5 miles to the USFS bear viewing platform each day that we are there. The problem is we used to see a lot but now we see fewer and fewer bears with this summer being noticeably scarce on bears and those we did have the good fortune to see were quite small.

We meet many people each weekend at the dock. The vast majority (over 95%) are there for bear viewing and not bear hunting. These are mainly local Ketchikan residents out boating like us, some are boaters from other places. We also talk to many of the people who arrive by floatplane who, like us, are thrilled at the anticipation of seeing a bear in the Alaskan wilderness. None of us want to see a dead bear. Unfortunately this has happened many times with one hunter even asking a couple at the dock how to skin the dead mother bear and cub he had on the dock. This is distressing to the non-consumptive use segment of our population. We witnessed a bear being harvested from the beach across from the dock and were thankful our young nieces (ages 4,6,&8) were not with us that day. Forcing hunters and bear viewers to share the same space is like expecting whale watching and whale hunting to co-exist. We are asking for the BOG's help in allocating space for the Ketchikan residents to access for bear viewing. This proposal only asks for 1 mile from the USFS bear viewing platform, etc. **In the Black Bear Management Report by ADF&G 1 July 1998 to 30 June 2001 it was noted then, over 10 years ago, that Margaret Creek was "a contentious area" with "several clashes with hunters and bear**

viewers during the past several years; this site received more complaints to the Tongass Forest Supervisor than any other site in Southeast Alaska. Bear viewers would like to see some or all of the area closed to hunting, but the hunters do not want any more hunting area taken away from them.* ADF&G has safety concerns with an increasing number of bear viewers at the site and bear hunters using the same area for sport hunting.” It also cites “our crude population estimate” and concludes with “As local bear viewing interest continues to grow we will undoubtedly be faced with allocation issues related to both human safety and bear preservation issues, requiring compromise by hunters and wildlife watchers.” Again, this was over 10 years ago. *The only area currently closed to hunting is the Ketchikan road system: a strip ¼ mile wide on each side of the Tongass Highway system including the Ward, Connel, and Harriet Hunt Lake roads. Anan Creek (near Wrangell) for 1 mile of the Anan Creek drainage and mouth of the creek and the Hyder Salmon River drainage, both of which are not easily accessible from Ketchikan, are the closest bear viewing areas that are closed to hunting. There are app. 3 million acres in the Ketchikan-Misty Fjords Ranger District (Tongass National Forest surrounding Ketchikan) that is available to hunters plus **all** of Prince of Wales Island.

Now there are 6 tour operators with a total of 3436 USFS Special Use Permits for visitors to participate in bear viewing tours (**revenue to the economy of Ketchikan of \$1,250,000.00**) and an ever-increasing number of local Ketchikan families using this facility for bear viewing and various other utilizations of the logging roads, etc. mentioned in our proposal. The dock is owned and maintained by the USFS and Taquan Air added a section of dock for the boaters to use eliminating congestion with boats and floatplanes. The dock is full (up to 8 or 9 boats) most weekends now. This is the only USFS bear viewing facility in unit 1A (Ketchikan area). Most experienced hunters do not frequent this area due to the high volume of people there, however there is conflict with those that do and a **very real safety concern**. For example, hunters harvested a bear (we saw it draped over the handle bars of their 4-wheeler) on September 11, 2010. The next day we saw a wounded bear (couldn't use one leg). Fortunately for us this bear limped away. Bears are intelligent, shy animals that can also be dangerous if surprised or wounded.

Consistency of bear-human interactions is an important guideline for management of bear viewing areas. Humans who interact with habituated bears should behave consistently, and homogeneous management encourages consistent human behavior (Aumiller, 1994).

In the Board of Game Bear Conservation and Management Policy May 14, 2006 it is stated that “public interest in bears has increased dramatically in Alaska during the past decade. Some of this interest is specifically targeted at bear viewing. Bear viewing is a rapidly growing industry in selected areas of the state. **The interest exceeds the opportunities provided now by such established and controlled sites as McNeil River, Pack Creek, Anan Creek, Wolverine Creek and Brooks Camp.**” This BOG has the unique opportunity to acknowledge sites such as the USFS Margaret Creek bear observatory to add to this list of established and controlled bear viewing sites and thus be pro-active in contributing to the needs of the public and the economy of Ketchikan, Alaska. With over a million visitors a summer (955,000 cruise ship visitors plus independent travelers) Ketchikan is the bear viewing capital of Alaska with perhaps a higher volume and revenue than all the other sites listed above, combined. For example:

The following numbers were obtained from the USFS data (except Eagle Creek) and published bear viewing tour prices.

Dog Salmon/Polk Inlet	1600 visitors	(\$365 per person x 1600 = \$584,000)
Traitors Cove/Margaret Creek	3436 visitors	(\$365 per person x 4000 = \$1,254,140)
Anan Creek	384 visitors	(\$485 per person x 384 = \$147,456)
Neets Bay	8000 visitors	(\$365 per person x 8000 = \$2,920,000)
<u>AK Rainforest/Eagle Creek</u>	<u>16000 visitors</u>	<u>(\$100 per person x 16000 = \$1,600,000)</u>
Totals for Bear Viewing	31,384 visitors	\$6,505,596 total revenue dollars

There were less tours to Anan Creek (closer to Wrangell) because of the greater distance from Ketchikan, resultant higher cost, and closer accessibility of the USFS platform at Margaret Creek. Promech Air has an exclusive contract to take bear viewing tours to the Neets Bay salmon hatchery owned and operated by Southern Southeast Regional Aquaculture Association (SSRAA).

These numbers do not include several companies that conduct bear viewing tours by boat nor the huge number of Misty Fjords flightseeing tours where all the clients inevitably ask the pilot "are we going to see a bear?"

This proposal only effects a small portion of the Traitor's Cove/Marguerite Bay area to bear hunting. A 1.5 mile portion from the dock to the Margaret Lake and the 2 USFS maintained roads. One road is a 4-mile road from the dock to just beyond the lake and the other is an 8-mile road from the dock over the lower bridge (over Margaret Creek downstream from the USFS platform) and around Marguerite Bay to Point Francis. It does not effect the many roads that lead off these 2 nor the Traitor's Cove salt chuck, and most of Traitor's Cove itself. The roads in Marguerite Bay are not connected to the Ketchikan road system nor to any of the other road systems on Revilla Island that are USFS roads such as at SW Neets, Fire Cove, Bluff, Shrimp Bay, Hassler, Klu, Upper Carroll Inlet, Elf Point, and the vast road systems at Shelter Cove and Shoal Cove.

If a compromise is needed then Margaret Creek: to within 1 mile of Margaret Creek downstream from the mouth of Margaret Lake including the area within one mile radius from the mouth of Margaret Creek outlet is closed to hunting, is reasonable and would provide a much needed safety zone.

However, this amended proposal would not solve the problem of the declining bear population and manage the resource for the bear viewing industry. Unfortunately, there are no studies done to determine the population of bears in this area or their home range. A female bear lives in one area. One estimate is the average female black bear's home range is 1 – 15 sq. miles depending upon the availability of food in her habitat. Males roam further. My husband and I and others hike and utilize all of the roads in the Marguerite Bay area so the original proposal as written would safeguard us more from stray bullets and wounded bears and conserve more of the bears that live in the area than the amended version.

Again, there are serious problems in this area that need to be solved, as stated earlier, and we request the BOG help in solving these problems for the benefit of all Alaskans. This area has been a problem for 10 years and we can't continue to ignore these safety and conservation issues. We will work with you to come to a solution that is in the best interests of all. Thank you.

Proposal 5 SUPPORT

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Closing the drainages leading into Walker Cove and Rudyerd Bay to bear hunting will help solve the problem of the declining bear population as reported in the ADF&G 2010 Bear Trails newsletter.

My husband and I have been to Rudyerd Bay in the Misty Fjords National Monument three times, by boat. We saw bears there only the first time, about 10 years ago. We were at the mooring buoy and a magnificent mother brown bear and her 3 cubs were playing on the beach, a true National Geographic moment. However, before this brown bear family appeared there was a scrawny orphaned brown bear cub on the beach. We learned that the mother was dead on the beach around the corner and had been shot from a boat and only the gall bladder was taken.

If a compromise needs to be reached with this proposal I favor closing the drainages leading into Rudyerd Bay. The economic impact of tourism to Ketchikan cannot be overstated.

Proposal 6 SUPPORT

If hunters are proposing to limit the season for "bucks only" deer hunting out of concern for rebuilding deer herds then that makes sense to me.

Proposal 18 SUPPORT

Proposal recommended by the ADF&G based on what seems like an alarmingly low number of wolves in Unit 2 (POW Island).

Proposal 19 SUPPORT

Closing the Dog Salmon Creek area at Polk Inlet on Prince of Wales Island will help solve the problem of the declining bear population as reported in the ADF&G 2010 Bear Trails newsletter.

For reasons of safety, sustainable bear population, public need for bear viewing opportunities, and the significant economic impact of guided tours.

Proposal 20 SUPPORT

Setting a number of tags to be allocated for black bear hunting in Unit 2 will help solve the problem of the declining bear population as reported in the ADF&G 2010 Bear Trails newsletter.

Proposal 21 SUPPORT

Reducing the opening of black bear season in Unit 2 will help solve the problem of the declining bear population as reported in the ADF&G 2010 Bear Trails newsletter.

Proposal 22 SUPPORT

Reducing the opening of black bear season in Unit 2 will help solve the problem of the declining bear population as reported in the ADF&G 2010 Bear Trails newsletter.

Proposal 23 SUPPORT

Changing the black bear hunt in Unit 2 to a registration hunt and shortening the season dates will help solve the problem of the declining bear population as reported in the ADF&G 2010 Bear Trails newsletter.

Proposal 24 SUPPORT

Lowering the nonresident bag limit for deer in Unit 2 to conserve the deer population. This will benefit the Alaskan resident hunters.

Proposal 25 SUPPORT

Modifying the wolf trapping and hunting regulations for Unit 2 to conserve the wolf population, a similar objective to the ADF&G's proposal 18.

Proposal 31 SUPPORT

Proposed by the ADF&G to close a loophole in the regs enabling some trappers to take marten and mink before the legal season.

Proposal 33 SUPPORT

Prohibiting the sale of black bear meat, hides, skulls and other parts in the Southeast Region will help solve the problem of the declining bear population as reported in the ADF&G 2010 Bear Trails newsletter.

Why encourage the harvesting of bears for profit when we already have a declining bear population?

Again, the economic impact of bear viewing in Southeast cannot be overstated.

Proposal 34 SUPPORT

Prohibiting black bear trapping and the sale of black bear meat in the Southeast Region will help solve the problem of the declining bear population as reported in the ADF&G 2010 Bear Trails newsletter.

It will also prevent the huge numbers of visitors to our State from having a very negative impression of Alaska for allowing such a practice on such large, intelligent and shy animals. Bear traps are indiscriminate in taking sows, cubs, brown bears, dogs or even people. Would a child know to stay away from a bear trap?

Again, the economic impact of bear viewing in Southeast, and protecting this resource for such, cannot be overstated.

Proposal 35 SUPPORT

Proposed by the ADF&G to reduce the black bear bag limit and thus it will help solve the problem of the declining bear population as reported in the ADF&G 2010 Bear Trails newsletter.

Proposal 36 SUPPORT

Proposed by the ADF&G to reduce the black bear harvest limits in the region to help solve the problem of the declining bear population as reported in the ADF&G 2010 Bear Trails newsletter.

Proposal 37 SUPPORT

Proposed by the Alaska Professional Hunters Association recognizing their "continued serious concern for black bear conservation in Southeast Alaska" with a proposal to open a nonresident drawing permit hunt for blackbear. This will help solve the problem of the declining bear population as reported in the ADF&G 2010 Bear Trails newsletter.

Proposal 38 SUPPORT

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Proposed by the Alaska Wildlife Troopers to require GPS coordinates for bear baiting stations to assist with law enforcement of bait stations.

Proposal 39 SUPPORT

No bear baiting in Units 1, 2, and 3. This will help solve the problem of the declining bear population as reported in the ADF&G 2010 Bear Trails newsletter.

Proposal 40 SUPPORT

Salvaging the black bear meat from the field is good utilization of the resource.

Proposal 41 SUPPORT

Allows for better management of the deer population by ADF&G.

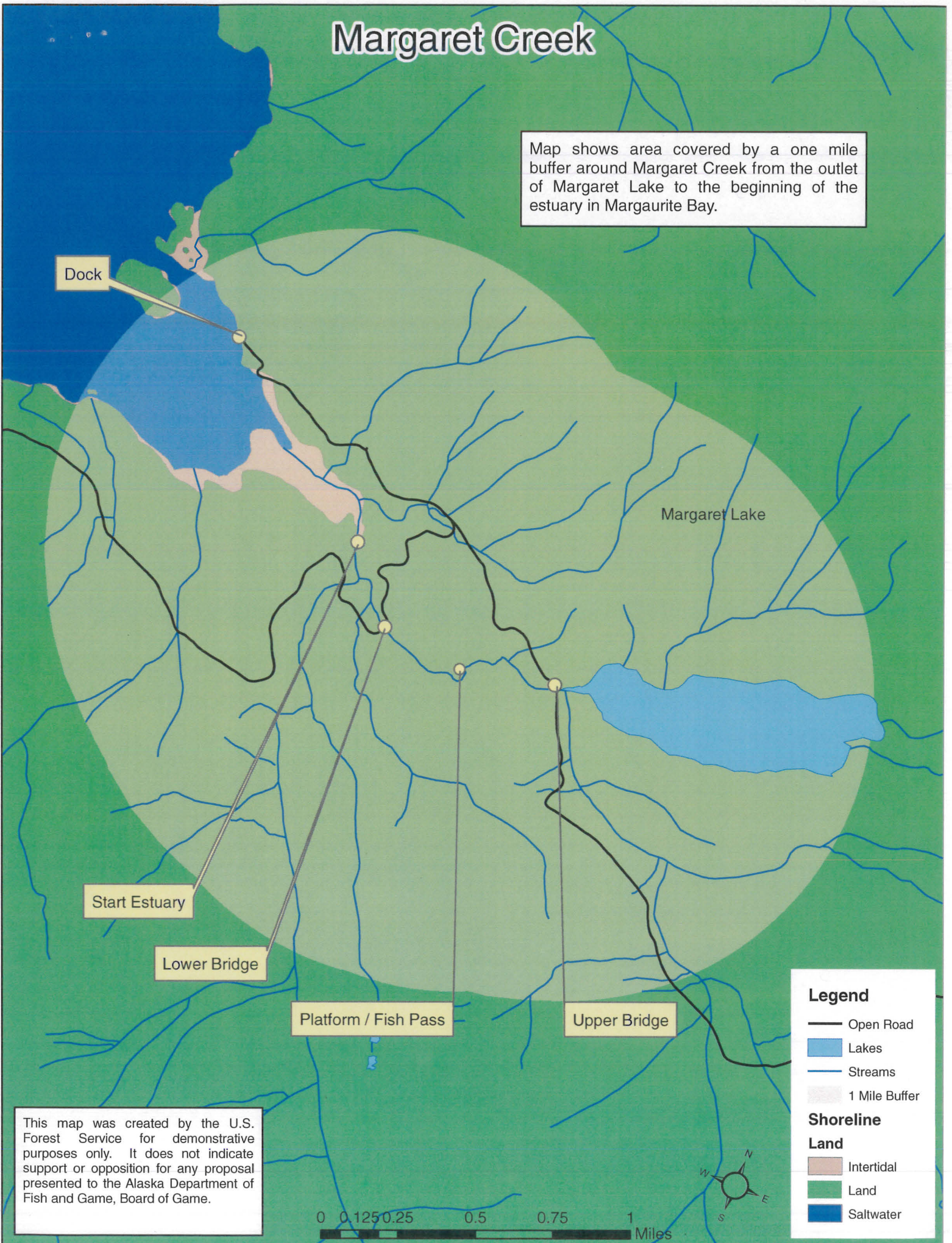
Proposal 43 SUPPORT

Allows for conservation of the wolf population.

Ben Davis 10/22/10 5:00pm

Margaret Creek

Map shows area covered by a one mile buffer around Margaret Creek from the outlet of Margaret Lake to the beginning of the estuary in Margaurite Bay.



Dock

Margaret Lake

Start Estuary

Lower Bridge

Platform / Fish Pass

Upper Bridge

Legend

- Open Road
- Lakes
- Streams
- 1 Mile Buffer

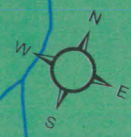
Shoreline

Land

- Intertidal
- Land
- Saltwater

This map was created by the U.S. Forest Service for demonstrative purposes only. It does not indicate support or opposition for any proposal presented to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Board of Game.

0 0.125 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles



Margaret Creek

Dock

Upper Bridge

Margaret Lake

Start Estuary

Lower Bridge

Platform / Fish Pass

Map shows area covered by a one mile buffer around roads and ATV trails identified as open under the Access Travel Management Plan.

This map was created by the U.S. Forest Service for demonstrative purposes only. It does not indicate support or opposition for any proposal presented to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Board of Game.

0 0.125 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles



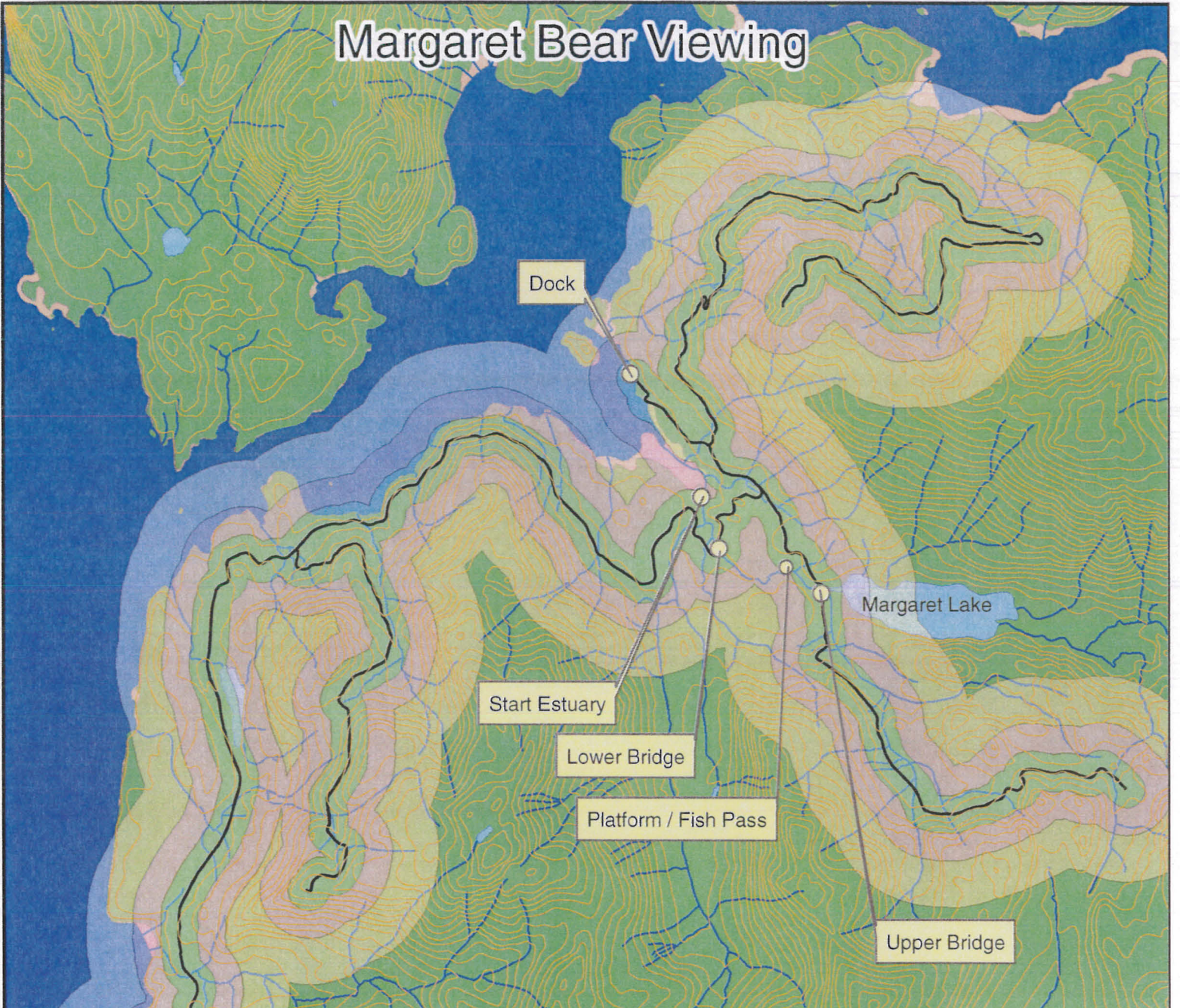
Legend

- Open Road
- Open Road 1 mi Buffer
- Lakes
- Streams

Shoreline

- Feature
- Intertidal
 - Land
 - Saltwater

Margaret Bear Viewing



Legend

— Open Road

Buffer Dist

0.1 mi

0.25 mi

0.5 mi

Lakes

Streams

Feature

Intertidal

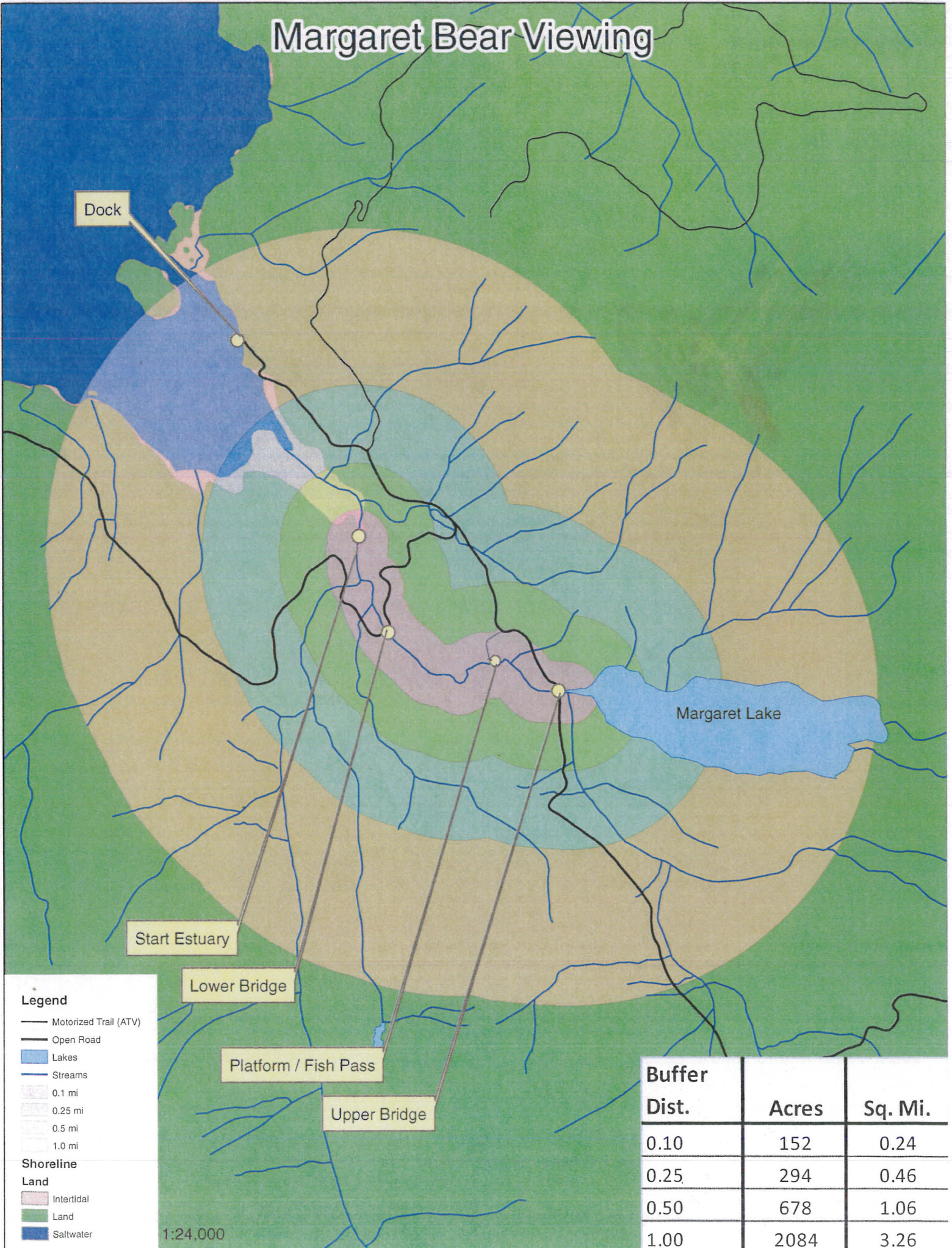
Land

Saltwater

Buffer Dist.	Acres	Sq. Mi.
0.1	2680	4.2
0.25	6220	9.7
0.5	11112	17.4

1:24,000

Margaret Bear Viewing



Legend

- Motorized Trail (ATV)
- Open Road
- Lakes
- Streams
- 0.1 mi
- 0.25 mi
- 0.5 mi
- 1.0 mi
- Shoreline**
- Land**
- Intertidal
- Land
- Saltwater

1:24,000

Buffer Dist.	Acres	Sq. Mi.
0.10	152	0.24
0.25	294	0.46
0.50	678	1.06
1.00	2084	3.26