

In re Proposal 107 – 5 ACC 85.020 Brown Bear Season and Bag Limits. Retain the current no closed season for brown bear in the remainder of Unit 16B as follows..

To introduce myself, I am Doug Brewer. I live in Nikiski, AK, and I am a hunter and trapper. I own an air taxi service, Alaska West Air, and am part owner of a lodge in Unit 16B. I have provided air taxi service to resident hunters and guides in Unit 16B for over 25 year. I have been a pilot for the Wolf Control program since its inception, and believe strongly in keeping predator numbers in balance.

Hunting, fishing, and trapping all play a big part in my life, as does transporting clients who hunt, fish and bear view. The majority of the hunting, fishing and bear viewing that I do personally and provide for clients is done in Unit 16B. I am very familiar with the area as a year round user of the resources.

Unit 16B is a very large area, and all of these activities, for both residents and non residents should be able to coexist within the Unit, without detrimentally affecting any of them.

Unfortunately, that has not been the case over the past few years in regard to bear viewing at Wolverine Creek. We are seeing a definite effect of the regulations in place and bear viewing becoming more difficult due to lack of bears. Current hunting regs in Unit 16B allow hunting at the viewing area after Sept 15th each year, and two (2) brown bear are allowed, AND are allowed one mile from the viewing area hunting is allowed year round, allowing hunters to hunt in an area where bears have been habituated to people in fairly close quarters by years of bear viewing. I don't believe this is ethical, nor does it represent fair chase. A simple change can be made to protect the bear viewing resource and not negatively impact fair chase hunting in the Unit.

I know that fewer bears are coming to Wolverine Creek and this is having an impact on the many Alaska business that provide bear viewing trips to this location. The estimated direct revenue of Wolverine Creek bear viewing is 8 (eight) million dollars. Keep in mind that this does not include other monies spent at airlines, car rentals, lodging, restaurants, and the State of Alaska, etc.

One of the great things about Alaska is the variety of game related activities and the broad spectrum of population they appeal to individually. That Alaska has historically regulated the game to benefit all users is to its credit.

Proposal 107 states that hunters who wish to have the opportunity to harvest a brown bear between Jun 1 and August 9 will benefit, and that no one is likely to suffer if year round hunting is continued. The proposal also states that no other solutions have been considered.

A great precedent has been set at the State managed sanctuary at McNeil River. McNeil River is state land and is closed to Brown bear hunts. I believe hunters should not be allowed to hunt at Wolverine Creek, just as they are not allowed to hunt at McNeil River and other bear viewing areas.

There are several areas in the state for bear viewing, the most popular being Wolverine Creek, Brooks Camp and McNeil River.

McNeil issues 185 permits each season. Brooks Camp showed 8,628 visitors in 2003, and 8,526 visitors in 2012, with a steady average of approximately 8,500 visitors per year. Wolverine Creek averages 180 - 200 visitors EACH DAY. This is more per season any other bear viewing area in the state.

I personally have seen the number of bears at Wolverine Creek decline dramatically over the last few years. We used to see 6-10 bears on each trip a few years ago. The number of bears seen per day declined during the 2010 and 2011 seasons to a noticeable degree. During the 2012 season we had a hard time finding one (1) bear some days!

Wolverine Creek is the most accessible bear viewing area in the state, and the loss of income if the bear population is hunted out will be devastating to many small businesses in South central Alaska, and will absolutely have a negative effect on many more.

I am not asking to change the regulations for the Brown Bear season in Unit 16B, but ask for a closed area for the taking of brown bears from the northern boundary of the Kustatan River to Drift River's southern boundary. This is a small area of 16B, but will allow for continued predator control and hunting as well as protecting the most valuable bear viewing area in the state.

I really feel the system we have in place for regulating game is a great one. I think this just an area that has been overlooked and needs protection for future users of this unique resource.

Thank you for your consideration and great job you all do for our state.

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Supplemental documentation in re Proposition 107

According to the minutes of Wolverine Creek Management Committee Meeting on October 28, 2003, as reported by the ADF&G staff on site, there were 8,704 visitors to Wolverine Creek in 2003. There were 16 independent adult and sub adult brown bears, and 12 cubs that fished / frequented Wolverine Creek in the 2003 season. (Photo at Wolverine Creek, July2003)

The same study, continued in 2002, reports 19 adult / sub adult brown bear and 8 cubs, for a total of 27 brown bear.



There were 11,345 visitors to Wolverine Creek in 2005, and increase of over 2,600 from 2 years prior!

These above statistics were culled from reports of studies made to the Wolverine Creek Management Committee by Doug Hill of ADF&G

In a recent canvas of bear citing records from three guide services at Wolverine Creek, the bears sited in 2012 were one brown bear sow with 2 cubs; 1 single brown bear, for a total of 4 brown bear. The remaining bears sighted were all black bears.

This represents an 85% decrease in the brown bears frequenting Wolverine Creek over a 9 -10 year period.

There were many days in 2012 where clients / guides reported seeing no bears at Wolverine Creek.



This photo, taken in 2009, shows the comfort level of close interaction between bear viewers and fishermen at Wolverine Creek. Subsequently opening bear hunting within 1 mile of the mouth of Wolverine Creek has absolutley given a huge advantage to hunters, and does not represent fair chase hunting by any standard. It practically borders on unethical.