

March 8, 2015

RC 009

To: Alaska Board of Game
Juneau, AK
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Dear Board of Game members:

I had planned to testify before the board at your Anchorage meeting on March 14, 2015 but am unable to because I will be attending to a family medical issue in Washington State.

I would like to comment on your deliberations relative to the management of Kenai Peninsula brown bears. You will be considering modifications to the harvest management strategy for brown bears in Units 7 and 15 and also considering lengthening seasons for brown bears in those units.

Hunting regulations for Kenai brown bears were significantly liberalized in 2012. As a result, brown bear harvest levels have substantially increased and over the last two years, I believe the average annual known human-caused mortality is around 70 bears per year. As a former brown bear research biologist for the State of Alaska, I do not believe this level of harvest is sustainable.

The Kenai issue is further complicated because the brown bear population on the peninsula is relatively small and demographically isolated from the Alaska mainland. Because human population growth and resource development activities are continuing to increase on the peninsula, this increases the long-term risks to the Kenai brown bear population.

In your upcoming deliberations, I recommend that you modify the hunting regulations for Units 7 and 15 to more conservative levels to reduce risks of overharvesting this important population of brown bears, a population that is valued by many Alaskans both hunters and wildlife viewers.

Thank you for considering my concerns.

Sincerely,

John W. Schoen