

**Alaska Board of Game
2017-221-BOG
Alaska Board of Fisheries
2017-286-FB**

A Resolution Regarding Fish & Wildlife Enforcement in Alaska

WHEREAS, the Board of Game and Board of Fisheries have received numerous public complaints in recent years concerning the decreasing level and effectiveness of fish and wildlife enforcement in Alaska; and

WHEREAS, management plans are formed by the Alaska Department of Fish & Game to support the constitutional mandate to maintain fish and game populations on sustained yield principle; and

WHEREAS, regulations are developed by the Alaska Boards of Fisheries and Game through the public process to support management plans. All management plans rely upon public compliance with regulations to achieve success; and

WHEREAS, enforcement is a crucial element needed to ensure long-term compliance with regulations by the public; and

WHEREAS, enforcement of the regulations that govern the take of these resources is an integral part of the sustainability; and

WHEREAS, fish and wildlife enforcement is a critical element in the state's fish and wildlife management programs; and

WHEREAS, the Alaska Department of Public Safety, Division of Alaska Wildlife Troopers are the front-line agency tasked by the legislature with enforcing regulations and statutes pertaining to fish and game; and

WHEREAS; vigorous, proactive efforts are required to positively affect compliance by the public in fish and game regulations; and

WHEREAS, every subsistence, personal use, recreational or commercial resource management program is dependent on robust enforcement for these programs to be successful; and

WHEREAS, Alaskans demand and have supported a strong and effective fish and wildlife enforcement program in the state; and

WHEREAS, Alaskans have been assured that the integration of the Alaska Wildlife Trooper enforcement programs into the Alaska State Troopers system would not result in any decreased level of effectiveness in the states fish and wildlife enforcement efforts; and

WHEREAS, in 2003 the Division of Fish and Wildlife Protection was eliminated and re-established as a separate Bureau within the Alaska State Troopers; and

WHEREAS, in 2006, in response to reduced levels of wildlife and fisheries enforcement statewide the Division was recreated into the Alaska Wildlife Troopers but only regained part of their original identity and personnel; and

WHEREAS, Alaska's population has steadily gone up from 524,000 people in 1983 to 739,000 people in 2017 and during that same time frame wildlife and fisheries enforcement has precipitously declined from 117 commissioned Troopers in 1983 to 89 commissioned Troopers in 2017; and

WHEREAS, the number of hunting and fishing opportunities created by the Board of Fisheries and the Board of Game have dramatically increased in the last 15 years which results in more fishing and hunting seasons, permit hunts, drawing hunts, commercial fisheries, sport fisheries, personal use fisheries and subsistence fisheries for the Alaska Wildlife Troopers to enforce; and

WHEREAS, Alaska's fish and game resources taken during commercial fishing, sport fishing, sport fish guiding, personal use fishing, subsistence fishing, big game guiding, hunting, trapping and subsistence activities are worth more than \$5 billion dollars annually to every community in the state; and

WHEREAS, more than 100,000 jobs in Alaska are directly supported by Alaska's game and fisheries resources and the loss of available resources directly affects these jobs; and

WHEREAS, in 2017 the entire budget for the Division of Alaska Wildlife Troopers was \$24 million dollars which represents .002% of the overall value of the resources to the economy of the state; and

WHEREAS, the primary emphasis and accepted principles of fish and wildlife enforcement relating to promoting voluntary compliance, preventing resource violations rather than focusing only on apprehending violators, educating the public about the conservation purposes for fish and wildlife regulations, emphasizing selective sting and special investigations directed at commercial operators and discouraging violations through a continued presence in the field have been reduced significantly due to substantial budget cuts, reductions of total number of Alaska Wildlife Troopers and reductions of equipment used to patrol the fisheries and hunts across the state; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Boards of Fisheries and Game respectfully request that the Commissioner of Public Safety recognize the importance and relevance of the Division of Alaska Wildlife Troopers and its essential separate identification and mission; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska Department of Public Safety must maximize its enforcement of fish and game regulations to the greatest extent possible in order to preserve and protect the fish and game resources of the State of Alaska for public use and future generations; and


BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Boards of Fisheries and Game respectfully request the Governor and the Legislature provide the Alaska State Troopers with adequate funds for their identified public safety mission rather than depending on the Alaska Wildlife Troopers to continually fill in for inadequate numbers of State Trooper positions; and

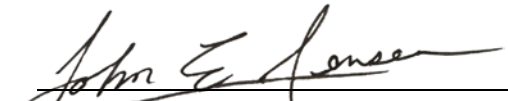
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Boards of Fisheries and Game respectfully requests the Governor and the Legislature provide an adequate budget to fully fund Alaska Wildlife Troopers enforcement activities to include vessel and aircraft operations statewide to ensure the Alaska Wildlife Troopers have the tools and personnel necessary for superior fish and wildlife enforcement; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska Boards of Fisheries and Game request that, to the greatest extent possible, the Alaska Wildlife Troopers focus efforts on enforcing, patrolling and documenting criminal activity in the areas of fish and game regulations. It is encouraged that every effort be made for the Alaska Wildlife Troopers to remove duties from enforcement personnel that do not pertain to the enforcement of fish and game regulations.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Boards of Fisheries and Game respectfully requests that the Governor's office and the Alaska State Legislature provide a reasonable level of oversight over the fish and wildlife enforcement performance of the Department of Public Safety to assure that our fish and wildlife resources are being adequately protected and our fish and wildlife management programs receive the enforcement support needed to make our programs successful.

Copies of this resolution are being sent to Governor Bill Walker, Commissioner Walt Monegan of the Department of Public Safety, Commissioner Sam Cotten of the Department of Fish and Game, and the House and Senate leadership.


Ted Spraker, Chairman
Alaska Board of Game


John Jensen, Chairman
Alaska Board of Fisheries

Date: November 17, 2017

Date: December 5, 2017

Vote: 7-0

Vote: 7-0