

95-93-BOG

Finding of proposed changes to 5 AAC 92.049

Proposal 5 (as amended)

An Alaska resident or nonresident hunting license, a tag fee where applicable, and the application fee must be paid prior to or at the time of application for a drawing permit hunt. If the applicant is unsuccessful, any related tag fees will be refunded.

FINDINGS

Wildlife management, conservation and development in Alaska are paid for entirely by hunters, primarily through purchases of licenses, tag fees, firearms and ammunition. In order to preserve and enhance that funding source and to treat those hunters more fairly, the Board believes it is appropriate to require drawing permit applicants to purchase a hunting license before or when applying for a permit in the same manner as is currently required for registration and general hunts.

Drawing permit hunts are highly sought after and demand greatly exceeds supply. For the 1995-96 regulatory year, 93,823 hunt applications were submitted by 25,454 people. Because of the demand, many drawing hunt areas are among the most intensively managed in terms of surveys, censuses and research. Also, the Alaska Legislature recently mandated that many wildlife populations be managed more intensively than in the past, placing additional financial burden on the Alaska Department of Fish & Game. The increased revenue generated by requiring drawing applicants to buy a license would enhance ADF&G's ability to manage wildlife in Alaska, particularly those populations in high demand. Those costs now are being borne primarily by those people -- residents and nonresidents -- who actually buy hunting licenses. By requiring all drawing applicants to buy a license, the cost of managing wildlife would be shared more equitably.

Because of the popularity of drawing permit hunts, particularly those involving small populations such as bison, the Board has heard a great deal of public dissatisfaction over the difficulty of drawing a permit. For example, in 1994-95, 13,977 people applied for 40 Delta bison permits. Although it is difficult to quantify, it is clear some people apply for certain hunts for the nominal fee of \$5 or \$10 and do not buy a license unless they draw a permit. In effect, these people are seeking the potential benefits of years and years of wildlife management but are contributing little, if any, toward that management. Requiring all applicants to buy a license may dissuade some from applying, thereby increasing the odds of success for those who consistently buy licenses and contribute the most to management of Alaska's wildlife. If requiring all applicants to buy a license does not dissuade any applicants, at least regular license buyers will know that the costs of management are being borne more equitably.

When the Board creates a drawing permit, it essentially is making an allocation to a specific user group. Among other factors, serious conservation issues often are involved. Again using Delta bison as an example, because of limited habitat and neighboring agricultural development it is imperative that a certain number of animals be taken from the Delta bison herd each year. The financial commitment evidenced by the willingness to pay in advance license and tag fees indicates a genuine intent on the part of the applicant to achieve that harvest. If Delta bison drawing permits are won by people who can't or won't hunt, the Board process has been subverted, further complicating an already difficult management situation. Similarly, if the drawing permit system is intentionally subverted, it greatly hinders the Board's responsibility to allocate Alaska wildlife resources among various users.

Drawing permits for Dall sheep in Chugach State Park present a similar situation. The sheep population in the park is managed to the limit of habitat carrying capacity, primarily to the benefit of the viewing public. With the sheep population at such a high level, it again is imperative that a certain number of animals be taken each year. If drawing permits go

to people less committed to obtaining such a harvest, the entire management regime is jeopardized.

Predictability is an important conservation concern. The Board has considerable experience in making allocation decisions based on past hunt history in drawing permit hunts. To the extent that drawing permits go to people who can't or won't hunt, the Board's ability to manage effectively is damaged.

By requiring license purchases in advance, enforcement concerns are diminished. In the past, drawing permit winners -- especially nonresidents -- have had problems obtaining licenses. This has led to confusion, misunderstanding and violations of hunting regulations.

The public frequently complains about the complexity of the regulatory system. For the sake of consistency, simplicity and enforceability, drawing permit hunts should be treated the same as registration or general hunts in terms of license purchasing requirements wherein the purchase of the license is a prerequisite for acquisition of a tag. Many applicants for Alaska drawing permits are familiar with the licensing requirements of other states, many of which require advance license purchase in order to apply for a drawing permit.

Date: Oct 25, 1995

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Alaska Board of Game

Vote: 7-0