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Submitted On
3/6/2016 1:51:16 PM
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Proposal 78 – Oppose. BACKGROUND: This proposal asks the BOG to remove the few existing trap-id requirements, and make a “statement of legislative intent” opposing any future law requiring trap ids.

Trap ids consist of either small metal tags attached to traps or signs posted near trap sites bearing the owner’s identification information. Such ids are required only in Southeast (Game Management Units 1-5) and within one-quarter mile of publicly maintained roads in GMUs 20E and 12 (the Tok Cutoff and Taylor Highway, and about 30 miles of the Alaska Highway).

Proposed by the Alaska Trappers Association (ATA), this is an attempt to let trappers remain anonymous while taking a resource from public or private property for their benefit. ATA clearly wishes to pre-empt any additional trap-id requirements which would effectively end any accountability for where they place their traps or any incidental catch of wildlife, pets or people.

Talking points:

- * A small metal tag – or a single sign for a trapping site – hardly constitutes a “cumbersome” burden on trappers. It is certainly no more bothersome than complying with the requirement for trappers to seal furs, or for fishermen to place id on their crab pots.
- * The existing trap-id regulations have been in place for more than 10 years. They are not a new or little-known requirement.
- * Conflicts between trappers and recreationalists are not going to end; reports are in fact increasing. Of course trap ids will make trappers more conscious of where they set traps. If they are already following regulations – and the ATA’s own directive to avoid heavily used recreation areas – this should not be an issue.
- * Trappers who choose to follow the regulations and the ATA directive to avoid heavily used areas should in fact support trap-id. It would aid law enforcement in weeding out the scofflaws who intentionally foster conflicts – and in the process obtain advantage over other trappers.

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Proposals 79 and 80 (below) were submitted by AWA members Michelle Anderson and Patricia O’Brien.

Proposal 79 – Support. BACKGROUND: This proposal would mandate that traps be checked at intervals of no more than 24 hours (with an exception allowed for delays in severe weather). Currently there is no required schedule to check traps in Alaska, except for a small area in Southeast where there is a 72-hour trap-check rule.

Absent a required trap-check, trapped animals can suffer for very long periods before dying of starvation, dehydration, predation or injuries before the trapper eventually returns to finish the kill. A required short trap-check interval would also help reduce the incidental killing of non-target species (for example moose), which could be released.

The trappers’ code of ethics (written by Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) and the Alaska Trappers Association) addresses the issue in just three words: “check traps regularly.”

Talking points:

- * Animals caught in traps are not always killed instantly. To allow them to languish for an indefinite period of time subjects them to inhumane suffering as a result of injuries, starvation, dehydration or predation by other animals.
- * The mere advice to “check traps regularly” is hardly a sufficient instruction for trappers. “Regularly” can be interpreted as daily, weekly, monthly, or “as time permits” – entirely at the trapper’s discretion.
- * A short trap-check interval benefits fur trappers by ensuring that the animals’ pelts will be in good condition rather than wasted as unusable. It would also lessen the stigma attached to trapping for killing non-target species and allowing excessive suffering.

Proposal 80 – Support. BACKGROUND: This proposal would, within cities of 1,000 or more population, prohibit trapping within one-quarter mile of a publicly maintained road, within 200 feet of a publicly maintained trail, and within one mile of a home, school or

recreational facility (such as a boat launch or campground).

Trapping activities are clearly inappropriate in the above-mentioned areas. Reports of pets injured or killed in traps have been increasing, and reports of traps set on or within a few feet of trails are common. The traps may be baited, increasing the likelihood a pet will venture off a trail to investigate. Signs are not required to mark areas where traps are set, leaving recreationalists – hikers, bikers, ski-jorers, mushers – with no warning whatsoever that dangerous traps are nearby.

Talking points:

* A section of the state's published trapping regulations advises trappers to avoid high recreational-use areas and locations where a pet might be caught. Numerous reports of traps set on or adjacent to trails clearly indicate that these common-sense suggestions are not being followed. It is time for the BOG to make these "suggestions" into "regulations" that can be enforced.

* Hikers, mushers and other trail users should not have to worry that their dog(s) might step into a trap set just a few feet off of a heavily used trail. Public trails are just that – public – and not the exclusive domain of trappers.

* Trapping adjacent to trails and public facilities is a danger to people as well as pets. Large traps are almost impossible to release without tools and expertise, and can inflict fatal injuries to a pet instantly. A person stepping on such a trap would be unable to free themselves and likely would suffer serious injuries.

* Conflicts between private property owners, recreationalists, etc., and trappers are growing, and resentment between the groups will escalate unless rules to restrict – not eliminate – trapping are enacted. Specific regulations would benefit both user groups.