

Submitted by  
Resident Hunters of Alaska  
Mark Richards testimony



unapologetically **FOR ALASKAN RESIDENTS**

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RC 074

## **Resident Hunters of Alaska**

### **Testimony to the Alaska Board of Game**

#### **Statewide Meeting November 10 – 17, 2017**

Good afternoon Mr Chairman and members of the Board, for the record my name is Mark Richards, I'm the executive director of Resident Hunters of Alaska, RHAK. I'm proud to say that we now represent over 1400 Alaskans and their families and we continue to grow every week.

Our public comments are PC 27, and please note that we have amended language in our proposal #48 to align with what falls under Board of Game authority.

So let's talk sheep, Proposals #36 & #37

For a decade resident hunters have asked this Board to limit nonresident sheep hunters. All during this time the Board has acknowledged publicly the problems of too many nonresident sheep hunters, the vast majority of whom are guided, but this Board has said the problem is not too many nonresident guided sheep hunters, rather the problem is too many guides.

With all due respect, I've always found that rationale disingenuous, because this board determines how many nonresident hunters even have the opportunity to be guided. You can't have too many guides without having too many nonresident hunters who must be guided.

The real reason this board won't limit nonresident sheep hunters is because it involves putting them on draw-only hunts, and the guide lobby does not support draw hunts because that system doesn't ensure they have job security, that they have a client base. This board is thus reluctant to limit nonresident hunters because it would negatively affect some guides, and this board does not want to be responsible or take the blame for negative impacts to guides.

So it's ironic that for the last ten years this board has supported as the only solution to these known problems the proposed DNR Guide Concession Program (GCP) that at least 50% of all guides oppose, and that the legislature refused to even move out of committee when it was House Bill

158 a few years ago, and not because it had a million-dollar fiscal note, which I'll bring up in a bit, but because it had such strong opposition from so many guides and so many members of the public.

Guides opposed it because, just like draw permits, some would lose out. After all, the whole intention was to limit guides, right?

Here's another stunning irony. The Big Game Commercial Services Board regulates big game guides and also supports the GCP as the only solution to the problems they too, readily acknowledge, and just like the Board of Game they view the problem as too many guides. Yet in 2016 the BGCSB licensed 151 new big game guides and since 2015 total guide numbers increased by 13%.<sup>1</sup>

Yet another irony, the Big Game Commercial Services Board has always had the power and authority to limit guides on their own. But just like the Board of Game, they don't want to be responsible or take the blame for negatively affecting guides.

Here's another big point of frustration for resident sheep hunters. We recognize that the problems aren't in every area of the state, that they are localized. Proposals came in recognizing this asking the Board of Game at Regional meetings to deal with the problem areas. The board then said they didn't want to deal with individual subunits, they wanted a statewide solution. So we proposed statewide solutions but then, as at the Work Session a few days ago when the board was discussing nonresident allocation policy, the Chairman said, and I quote: "There is no one-size-fits-all solution to nonresident allocation."

I am flat-out begging this board, and guides, to see this from our point of view, to understand our frustration over the hypocrisy and doubletalk and inaction of this board and the board that regulates guides, in the face of known problems both boards acknowledge.

RHAK isn't out to somehow screw guides. We aren't in any way anti-guide or anti-nonresident. We have guide members, many of us are friends of guides. All we are is unapologetically **pro-Resident!** We want what is best for us and for the wildlife resource and our future hunting opportunities. We want the hunting priority our constitution demands, and I'd think most rational guides and hunters would respect and understand that.

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<sup>1</sup> DCCED Professional Licensing Statistics 2016  
[http://www.akleg.gov/basis/get\\_documents.asp?session=30&docid=11400](http://www.akleg.gov/basis/get_documents.asp?session=30&docid=11400)

To this day, we expect this board to say that the GCP is alive again and it will solve our problems. I say this because this past legislative session, the guide industry lobby convinced enough members of the Senate Finance committee to authorize federal receipt authority of one-million dollars to fund and implement the GCP without legislative approval. The way they did this is they hid it in the operating budget of DNR by directing that one-million dollars, believe it or not, to wildfire suppression activities. That is the money DNR uses to actually fight wildfires, pay for helicopters and MREs etc. Deep where you can't find it is a mention that these funds will be diverted to DNR to fund startup of the Guide Concession Program.

All this was done behind closed doors out of the public view, even out of public view of most all guides. Even DNR Fire Service managers didn't know about it. And yet the BGCSB and the BOG still support this program and support going behind the backs of legislators and the vast majority of guides who aren't APHA members. Frankly – and I've been involved with wildlife politics for a while – I've never seen anything as underhanded as going around the legislature and the public and using completely false pretenses to take money from U.S. taxpayers to subsidize the guide industry in Alaska.

In closing, we again request this board to limit nonresident sheep hunters. If you don't agree with our proposed allocation percentages, nothing is stopping you from amending our proposals with different numbers. It's past time for you to act on problems you've acknowledged for a decade. The problem has never been too many guides, too many transporters, or too many resident sheep hunters. The problem has always and continues to be too many nonresident sheep hunters who by law must be guided being given unlimited opportunity by this board.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment,

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