

**Alaska Board of Game
2006-163-BOG
Alaska Board of Fisheries
2006-247-FB**

A Resolution Regarding Declining 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. And, 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, the Alaska Department of Public Safety is the front-line agency tasked by the legislature with enforcing regulations 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, fish and wildlife enforcement is a critical element in the state's fish and wildlife management programs; and

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

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

WHEREAS, Alaskans have been assured that the integration of the fish and wildlife enforcement programs into the Alaska State Troopers system would not result in any decreased level of effectiveness in our 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 response to expressed concerns by the Boards of Fisheries and Game, the Department of Public Safety provided the Boards with requested enforcement data from 2000 – 2005 for the purpose of comparing the level and effectiveness of the fish and wildlife enforcement program both before and after the final merger; and

WHEREAS, the final integration of the fish and wildlife enforcement staff into the Alaska State Troopers in 2003 resulted in the following: a 122% average increase in Alaska State Trooper patrol and investigations time by fish and wildlife personnel; a 24% decrease in fish and wildlife patrol and investigation time by fish and wildlife personnel; an 88% average annual increase in Alaska State Trooper contacts; a 20% average annual decrease in fish and wildlife contacts; a 76% annual increase in Alaska State Trooper warnings by fish and wildlife personnel; an 8% annual decrease in fish and wildlife warnings by fish and wildlife personnel; and a 50% average annual increase in Alaska State Troopers citations by Bureau of Wildlife Enforcement personnel; and

WHEREAS, the level of contributions to the Fish and Game Fund from fish and wildlife convictions has been steadily decreasing from approximately \$1.1 million in 1990 to \$51,000 in 2005 which indicates that although troopers are making citizen contacts, they are issuing citations on less serious violations rather than focusing on the more onerous and destructive violations and the fish and wildlife investigation unit responsible for the larger commercial fines has become significantly less effective; 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 deemphasized by the Trooper merger process; and

WHEREAS, there is not a consistent cross-training of Alaska State Troopers and Alaska Bureau of Wildlife Enforcement personnel which results in Alaska State Troopers unable to assist in fish and wildlife enforcement activities while Alaska Bureau of Wildlife Enforcement personnel are expected to assist in Alaska State Trooper public safety activities; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Boards of Fisheries and Game respectfully request that the Commissioner of Public Safety consider reestablishing the separate Division of Fish and Wildlife Protection with its identified 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 Division of Fish and Wildlife Protection 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 increase of approximately \$18 million to the Fish and Wildlife Protection Division for their fish and wildlife enforcement effort; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Boards of Fisheries and Game respectfully requests that the Commissioner of Public Safety begin a program to recruit Fish and Wildlife Enforcement officers separately from Alaska State Troopers for the purpose of adequately providing for career officers in the fish and wildlife enforcement field; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Alaska Boards of Fisheries and Game request that, to the greatest extent possible, the Alaska Bureau of Wildlife Enforcement within the Division of Alaska State Troopers, focus efforts on enforcing, patrolling and documenting criminal activity in the areas of fish and game regulations. Every effort is encouraged for the Alaska Bureau of Wildlife Enforcement 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 Commissioner William Tandeske of the Department of Public Safety, Governor Frank Murkowski, Commissioner McKie Campbell of the Department of Fish and Game, and the House and Senate leadership.



Mike Fleagle, Chairman
Alaska Board of Game



Art Nelson, Chairman
Alaska Board of Fisheries

Date: March 19, 2006

Date: March 23, 2006

Vote: 6-0

Vote: 7-0