Findings of the Alaska Board of Game regarding HB 168, An Act relating to the use of traditional means of access to assist in taking game or fish and to traditional means of access for traditional outdoor activities on land and water set aside for fish and game purposes.

The Board of Game uses access restrictions that often affect areas larger than 640 acres, in the form of Controlled Use Areas.

One of the principle actions available to the board for protection of wildlife, habitat, broadest possible hunter opportunity, and hunt quality in areas of heavy harvest pressure and user conflict is the establishment of Controlled Use Areas. Controlled Use Areas allow separation of user groups and modes of hunting in space and time, thus reducing conflicts between them while maximizing hunter opportunity as a whole.

By their nature, however, Controlled Use Areas restrict access. For that reason, the board considers their establishment in cases where significant conflict between user groups or particular resource considerations have reached a level where separation of uses is less restrictive of overall opportunity than other alternatives available to the board, such as adjustment of season and bag limits, limiting participation through drawing hunts, or area closures.

Some examples of conflicting groups include motorized versus nonmotorized, aircraft versus boat, airboat versus prop boat, bowhunters versus rifle hunters. Separating hunter groups by restricting access in space and/or time has been used to the mutual satisfaction of the groups involved. Generally, there has been broad public support for these actions.

The Board of Game has not done a complete analysis of this bill, therefore it is unclear to us how this legislation would affect the board's ability to resolve user conflicts and protect wildlife habitat and populations in the future for the benefit of users. If, however, the bill's effect is to remove the board's ability to establish controlled use areas or their equivalent, it would greatly compromise the board's ability to maintain overall hunter opportunity. It would force the more frequent employment of more restrictive actions such as shorter seasons, lower bag limits and area closures in order to protect the resource and resolve user conflicts.

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Fairbanks, AK

Vote: 7-0

Lori Quakenbush
Lori Quakenbush, Chairman
Alaska Board of Game