

## **Appendix 6. Public Comment Summary – 2003 and 2005**

### *Results of 2005 Public Review*

ADF&G conducted a 60-day public review period for the draft CWCS that ended on April 18, 2005. The overwhelming majority of more than 100 comments received from the public, other agencies, and organizations supported the draft CWCS and the importance of working toward the goal of conserving all of Alaska's wildlife and fish. Commenters included members of the public and the academic community, consultants, borough, state and federal agencies, tribal groups, a mining association, local Fish and Game Advisory Committee members, as well as hunting and conservation organizations.

During the CWCS planning effort, ADF&G hosted a website that served as the principal means for sharing information with the public about the draft strategy. During the public review period, the draft strategy could be viewed or downloaded from the website at <http://www.sf.adfg.state.ak.us/statewide/ngplan/>. Many people used the online comment form to submit input. Over 1600 unique visitors accessed the CWCS website during the public review period, making over 3600 visits. ADF&G also hosted an intranet CWCS website that could be accessed only by ADF&G staff.

Public comments arrived by email, fax, and sometimes as multi-page letters. Suggestions for changes ranged from minor edits to major rewrites or reorganization of the Strategy's chapters. Some commenters brought up important issues, such as if or how "game" species could be addressed, and whether or not habitat should be the focus of the Strategy. Due to the length of the draft strategy and the volumes of material included in its appendices, most reviewers were not expected to fully evaluate the entire document, and some of the submitted comments raised issues or made points that were clearly addressed or covered elsewhere in the draft. At other times, commenters made valuable suggestions about both the style and content of the Strategy, and the planning team incorporated such changes in the final CWCS.

A few commenters suggested the draft strategy should take more of an ecosystem-level approach toward the conservation of species. ADF&G revised the Strategy to include more mention of the value of ecosystem concepts in species conservation and management. We added an internet link to the Ecological Society of America's site, as well as numerous links to sites describing ecosystem-level work going on in, or otherwise of benefit to, Alaska. While the Strategy's conservation action plans (Appendix 4) continue to be primarily species-based, ecosystem considerations are presented throughout the final Strategy and are anticipated to play an important role during its implementation.

Several people suggested the CWCS focus more on the habitats needed by species, instead of directly on the species themselves, as a means to ensure sustainable wildlife and fish populations. Even though the emphasis remains on species,

ecosystem and habitat information and related considerations are included as part of the final Strategy.

Some commenters suggested adding one or more game species or populations to the Strategy's featured species list. Another commenter requested that the Strategy be rewritten to address only nongame species. The final CWCS includes a very limited number of game populations that experts identified as being of conservation concern, using criteria developed during the planning process. Although hundreds of specific conservation actions presented in the Strategy are aimed at addressing the conservation needs of species that are not commercially or recreationally hunted, trapped, or fished, many activities will also benefit species harvested in these ways.

In response to several commenters, we added language highlighting the economic value of Alaska's species, both for wildlife-related tourism and as foundations of food chains supporting commercially or recreationally valuable species. We also added a brief description of ADF&G's existing nongame and marine mammal programs, and text about the role of enforcement in conservation.

A couple of commenters expressed concern that there appeared to be a lack of involvement by representatives of the hunting community, and this lack could weaken the overall Strategy. The outreach effort for this project from the beginning was open and inclusive. ADF&G developed and used a contact list of about 600 names or organizations that included the Alaska Outdoor Council, Alaska Bowhunters Association, Alaska Flyfishers, Ducks Unlimited, Trout Unlimited, and the nearly 80 local ADF&G Fish and Game Advisory Committees spread across the state.

Literally hundreds of other suggestions for improving the draft were incorporated into the Strategy—far too many to include in this general summary about public input. The general and very detailed input submitted by the various reviewers contributed to a greatly improved final Strategy.

#### *Results of 2003 Public Scoping:*

Public outreach and scoping efforts in October 2003 generated the following list of issues.

##### 1. Habitat

- Factors and areas of concern
  - Climate change
  - Road development
  - Fragmentation
  - Oil development
  - Coal bed methane
  - Logging
  - Poorly planned development degrading water quality
  - Ocean changes

- Housing developments
  - Human pollution
  - Human use of habitat
  - Human recreation
  - Development in general
  - All-terrain vehicles
  - Areas of concern
    - Ponds by Woodriver Elementary
    - Soccer fields by Davis Rd.
    - Cook Inlet
    - Old-growth forest sites in Southeast Alaska
    - Teshekpuk Lake
      - ♦ Wetlands
    - North Slope
    - Kenai Peninsula
    - Rainforests in Southeast Alaska
    - Prince William Sound
      - ♦ Oil turbines
      - ♦ Boats
      - ♦ Cruise ships
    - Kodiak
      - ♦ Cruise ships
      - ♦ Longline fishing
  - “Aquatic organism” passage (not just game fish passage)
    - Need a commitment to protect, and just as important, enhance habitat
2. Policy and politics
    - Public indifference and apathy
    - Ignorance
    - No say in management
  3. Research needs
    - State forests research natural areas
      - Study importance of cavities for nesting
    - Population monitoring for land snails
    - Utilize local nonprofits and universities for monitoring
  4. Invasive species
    - Sharks
      - Salmon sharks
      - Pacific Sleeper sharks
    - Lancet Fish
  5. Species selection criteria
    - Ecological keystone species should be considered as a first priority
    - Priorities should be ranked by:
      - (1) first and second priorities
      - (2) number of organizations cross-listing
      - (3) weight of data used by the listing organization

- Take a landscape and habitat approach.
  - First priority list should be more specific in species.
  - Some of the codes should be corrected
  - BPIF monitor list should be shown strongly
  - Uncommon species should be first priority
  - Second priority identifying “species status is unknown” should put inventories as a top priority.
  - Second priority too broad
  - Consider evolutionary criteria—how long has this species been genetically diverging from other forms, i.e., how unique is it in an evolutionary sense?
  - Game species are dependent on nongame species
6. Predation
    - Martens killing off grouse on (Southeast) islands
  7. Game vs nongame conflicts
  8. Get harvesting stations
  9. Not enough management of nongame species
  10. Lack of knowledge on specific habitats types, locations and functions.
  11. Education
    - Educating areas about loons in jet-ski areas
    - Educational funding
    - Lack of information on specific species
  12. Don’t use fish and game funds unless there is a demonstrable benefit to hunters and game species
  13. Tourism/Viewing
    - Build a constituency for these species
  14. Process
    - Keep broad mailing list, use NGOs
      - All active advisory committee members should be on mailing list
    - Native concerns
      - Calls and community meetings with Natives are good
      - Allow time for postal limitations in rural areas
    - [Utilize] statewide news releases to local papers, radio, TV with a way to contact the department
    - Strong public outreach