

**Fairbanks Advisory Committee – Verbal Comments Given at Statewide BOG March 20, 2016**

Mr. Chair, Board Members, my name is Valerie Baxter and I am here with Virgil Umphenour and we are here to provide the verbal comments and testimony from the Fairbanks Fish and Game Advisory Committee, where Virgil serves as the AC Chair, and I am the Vice Chair as well as the Chair of the Game Subcommittee. First of all, the FAC would like to thank the Board for your service and time and for the opportunity to provide our comments to you today. Second, I want to point out that we provided you a written copy of all of our votes and comments on all of the proposals you are considering at this meeting, and those submissions are reflected in AC 16 and RC028. And just in case there is any confusion, I want to point out the way the Fairbanks AC considers proposals. We first take up proposals at our Game Subcommittee meetings, which for these comments were on December 15<sup>th</sup> and January 27<sup>th</sup>. At those subcommittee meetings we go over and discuss all of the proposals individually and vote on them. Where there is not unanimity or if it is an issue that the members feel should be considered by the full AC, then those proposals are set aside. At the Full AC meetings on the 13<sup>th</sup> of January, the 10<sup>th</sup> of February, we then brought those earmarked proposals to the members where they were discussed and voted on. We additionally reviewed our final BOG submission on March 9<sup>th</sup> and made a few corrections and additions, which are represented in RC028.

So now that we are all hopefully on the same page, I want to just briefly highlight a few of the proposals the AC considered that had mixed votes.

1. First of all, Proposal 15, requiring IBEP certification for all big game hunters using crossbows. The AC vote on this proposal was 3 in support and 8 in opposition. The opposition did not like adding any new restrictions or requirements to bow hunting at all, and were not in favor of the rule that goes into effect on July 1<sup>st</sup> of all archery hunters statewide having to be certified. The supporters of the proposal however did not see any reason not to require crossbow users to be certified and felt that the current bow hunter class could be modified to include crossbows without undue burden.
2. Sheep Proposals
  - a. For the first set of sheep proposals, the Fairbanks AC continues to oppose the original Proposal 207 on aircraft restrictions for sheep hunting. To this end, we voted in support of Proposal 23, repealing the restriction. The vote was not unanimous this time, with one member voting in opposition to 23. The members in favor of repeal continue to believe that the restriction is costly to the public, unenforceable, and are concerned it will be extended to other species. The one member who supports the restriction thinks that the restriction benefits regular resident hunters who do not use aircraft, other than air taxis, for their hunting activities.
  - b. Proposal 47, which seeks to create a statewide youth hunting season for Dall sheep, was supported by the Fairbanks AC. There was a great deal of discussion on this proposal by the AC. Those voting in support of this proposal stated that we should encourage and support youth hunting whenever possible, it is the only way to secure a future for hunting. A couple of members supported this proposal because they have eligible youth that could participate and there was discussion on how difficult it can be to get youth hunters away from technology and modern luxuries and into the field. This youth-only season may allow for a very high quality of experience and the proposed season occurs prior to school starting and that makes it easier as well. In opposition to the proposal, some members did not like that the harvest would count against the adult's bag limit, some members saw no need for a

special youth season; they and the adults can hunt in the regular season so why have any special seasons. There was disagreement with the author of the proposal that there is a lack of full curl rams and having a special youth season was not going to affect that other than the potential to increase take. There were also a couple of points made in general: a five day season seemed too short to some members, should adults and youth who choose to hunt this special season be ineligible to hunt the general season, and there was concern that a statewide approach was too broad and that maybe it should be restricted to one or two areas first. No actual amendments were proposed and the proposal was supported as-is by a 6-3 vote.

- c. Finally, the Fairbanks AC continues to believe that maintaining the status quo is the best approach at present. We supported Proposal 47, as amended to be only Option 1, as the best solution. We are participating in the Sheep Working Group process, we are tracking the process, and we have voted to stay involved. We do recommend that the Board make decisions on the proposals before you, do not defer them again, and move forward.
3. Proposal 53: Remove the restriction that wounded game counts against bag limit. The AC supported this proposal by an 8-3 vote. The supporters think that unless there is a case of very low population level or an emergency situation, a wounded animal should not count against the annual bag limit. The members in opposition think that the current regulation is fine as it is.
  4. Proposal 56: Prohibit transport of hides and skulls of bears before the meat. The AC voted to oppose this proposal by a vote of 7 in support and 3 in opposition. The members in opposition to this proposal believe this is an effort by AWT to add details to regulations in order to get more violations. It creates a violation where none is needed and needs a better thought out reason to change current regulations. The 3 members in support felt that the aligning of the trophy and meat transport rules made sense.
  5. Proposal 110: Add units 13 and 16 to the Mat-Su Valley AC jurisdiction for antlerless authorization. The AC voted to oppose this proposal with a 5-3 vote (1 abstention). This proposal garnered a lot of discussion. The members in opposition were concerned that if we base antlerless jurisdictions on who hunts that moose population and who has the most actively engaged ACs that this could result in major changes to antlerless jurisdictions and reauthorizations that would not be beneficial. It would be cumbersome to establish jurisdictions based on hunter residency data and AC activity. The current jurisdictions are fine and all ACs get the chance to weigh in and comment through the BOG process, they just may not all get a direct vote. The members in support of the proposal agree with the stated reasoning in the proposal about the hunters using the resource having a direct vote and voice.
  6. It is worth noting that the AC voted unanimously in support of antlerless reauthorization in 20A and 20B, though we did receive comments about deleting the Salcha River out of the 20B antlerless hunts and about changing the dates of the winter Minto antlerless hunt so as not to conflict with trappers and trapping seasons. The commenters have stated they will consider submitting proposals to the next Region III cycle to address their concerns.

7. Proposal 137: Intensive Management population and harvest objectives for 20A moose. Our Area Biologist, Don Young, gave us a presentation on this proposal and after discussion between him and the AC we agreed to recommend amending the proposal so that the population objective for 20A would be 10,000 to 15,000 moose and the harvest objective would be 500-900 moose. The discussion on this centered around current population estimate techniques and accuracy and error margins. The proposed amended objectives seem to make the most sense for the moose in 20A and to allow for flexibility in management strategies.

We also have a few housekeeping fixes to address quickly, which should be reflected in the March 9 meeting minutes and RC028:

Proposal 17 was just a typo/mistake – the vote was written in wrong and should be 0 in support and 11 opposed

Proposal 18 – Should read, “support,” in the first column, vote is the same, and the text should read: “We want to be certain that it is clear that slingbows MAY be used for small game and would be prohibited for only big game.”

Proposals 94 & 95: these were just typos in the vote columns. Both proposals were supported and there should be an 11 in the Support column and a 0 in the Oppose column.

Changes to proposal 52. The original vote in the subcommittee was a misunderstanding of the proposal and we have changed the vote accordingly after further discussion: final vote on 52: 9 to 2 to 1 abstain. We discussed what is “reasonable” with regard to salvaging game. There is a concern that hunters won’t work hard to recover wounded game if that provision is not in the hunting regulations booklet.

And finally the ACRs, which we did not get a chance to discuss prior to the March 9 meeting:

Proposal 141: Change the wolf season near Denali Park...to not coincide w/black bear baiting. We are not in favor of letting the Park Service dictate any regulations on state land, especially considering there is no biological reason for it. Unanimous opposition to this proposal 0-12.

Proposal 140: we support the compromise that was at the BOG meeting last March in Anchorage and by the western arctic caribou working group. Vote was 12 opposed, 0 support.

Thank you for your time and efforts. We are planning to be around during deliberations this week and we can address any questions you may have.