

PROPOSAL 145

5 AAC 92.550. Areas closed to trapping.

Establish trapping and snaring buffers along specific roads and pullouts in and around Cooper Landing in Unit 7 as follows:

What solution do you recommend? In other words, if the board adopted your solution, what would the new regulation say?

ADD Regulatory Language for Unit 7: “Trap and snare setback of 100-yards on both sides of roads and all sides of pullouts listed, unless the traps are elevated three feet above ground or snow level, enclosed, underwater, or under ice. Trapping would still be permitted on the below-listed roads and pull-outs if they are elevated three feet above ground or snow level, enclosed, underwater, or under ice. All other forms of lawful trapping would also still be allowed near the below-listed roads and pullouts, provided they are placed farther than 100-yards from the trail.

- Quartz Creek Road - Quartz Creek Road from its intersection with the Sterling Highway to the powerline crossing at approximately mile 2.5
- Quartz Creek Road - From powerline crossing to Crescent Creek Trailhead at mile 3.5 (used in winter for skiing)
- East Quartz Creek and Williams Road - Entire East Quartz Creek Road from its intersection with Quartz Creek Road and Williams Road
- Old Sterling Highway (unmaintained portion of Quartz Creek Road) - Old Sterling Highway from the Crescent Creek Trailhead to Tern Lake Rest and Picnic area
- Snug Harbor Road - The first 2.8 miles of Snug Harbor Road from its intersection with the Sterling Highway to the entrance of the Chugach Electric Power Station
- Bean Creek Road - The entire distance from the Sterling Highway to the end.
- West Juneau Bench Road/Chunkwood Rd - Pullout at mile 53.25 Sterling Highway to its intersection with Resurrection Trail.
- All DOT designated vehicle pullouts along 18 miles of the Sterling Highway, from Tern Lake to the Russian River Ferry and Boat Launch

The precedent for establishing trapping and snaring buffers for public safety along multi-use trails in the State of Alaska has already been set, most recently, in the Mat-Su Valley, where 50-yard setbacks were established for nine trails that both recreational users and the ATA mutually agreed on. The Alaska Supreme Court upheld Valdez’s trapping ordinance, confirming the city’s authority to regulate trapping within home rule

municipality for safety reasons. In 2023, Cordova created a special use map that closed trapping in part of the municipality and created trap setbacks of 200 yards from publicly maintained roads for traps larger than a 120 conibear, and a 200-yard setback for a popular trail. Juneau has trap setbacks of 1/4 mile. The Municipality of Anchorage, parts of Chugach State Park, and other areas in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough have existing trap setback laws. While these municipalities and boroughs have approved trapping regulations on lands they manage, they have not issued regulations for state- managed trails in deference to the regulatory powers of the Board of Game. We are requesting the Board of Game to modify this situation in our area.

Unit	Road or Pullout Name:	Description	Winter Uses
7	Quartz Creek Road	Quartz Creek Road from its intersection with the Sterling Highway to the powerline crossing at approximately mile 2.5. Borough maintained.	Walking, hiking, fat tire biking
7	Quartz Creek Road	From powerline crossing to Crescent Creek Trailhead at mile 3.5; winter groomed by Cooper Landing Nordic Ski Club	Cross-country skiing, skijoring, snowshoeing, hiking, fat tire biking, and access to backcountry skiing
7	East Quartz Creek and Williams Road	Entire East Quartz Creek Road from its intersection with Quartz Creek Road and Williams Road	Walking, hiking, fat tire biking,
7	Old Sterling Highway (unmaintained portion of Quartz Creek Road)	Old Sterling Highway from the Crescent Creek Trailhead to Tern Lake Rest and Picnic area	Cross-country skiing, access to backcountry skiing, snowshoeing, hiking, skijoring, snowmachining
7	Snug Harbor Road	The first 2.8 miles of Snug Harbor Road from its intersection with the Sterling Highway to the entrance of the Chugach Electric Power Station	Walking, hiking, fat tire biking

7	Bean Creek Road	The entire distance. This road is mainly surrounded by private property, but traps can be set unless posted.	Walking, hiking, fat tire biking
7	Russian Gap Road	The entire distance. This road is mainly surrounded by private property, but traps can be set unless posted.	Walking, hiking, and fat-tire biking
7	All DOT designated vehicle pullouts along 18 miles of the Sterling Highway	Pullouts along the Sterling Highway from its junction with the Seward Highway at Tern Lake to the entrance of the Russian River Ferry and Boat Launch	People use these pullouts to let their animals and children take bathroom breaks, stretch their legs, take in the views, and gear up for backcountry activities
7	West Juneau Bench Road/Chunkwood Rd. USGS Maps Seward B8, C8 and D8	From the Sterling Highway pullout at mile 53.25 just west of the southern Resurrection Trail trailhead, continuing to its intersection with the Resurrection Trail.	Skiing, snowshoeing, skijoring, fat tire biking, snowmachining walking, new access to parcel 395, cabin access

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?

We are requesting that the Board of Game amend Alaska Administrative Code No. 5 AAC 92.550 to establish a 100-yard trapping and buffers along both sides of roads and all sides of pullouts listed and described in the table provided, unless they are elevated three feet above ground or snow level, enclosed, underwater, or under ice. Trapping would still be permitted on the below-listed areas if they are elevated three feet above ground or snow level, enclosed, underwater, or under ice. All other forms of lawful trapping would also still be allowed near the below-listed areas, provided they are placed farther than 100-yards from the roads or pullouts.

The purpose of this proposal is to create a solution to the growing conflict between recreational land use and trapping in a manner that protects the safety of individuals, families, and pets when using the most popular roads and pullouts in the Cooper Landing area. Reports of dangerous encounters are considered incomplete because land managers and law enforcement do not track trap injury incidents, and there is no database for community documentation. As of late February 2022, seven dogs had been caught in traps throughout Southcentral Alaska, and two dogs were killed, as reported via the Alaska Press. Bird dogs are typically well-behaved and respond to strict voice commands. However, there was a fatality where a trap had been placed 50 feet from the road. Search and rescue dog owners have expressed concerns about the safety of their dogs during

emergency missions. Incidents of abandoned or “ghost traps” found at the Russian River Falls Trailhead and Williams Beach increase the community’s fear of risk.

Why should this regulation be amended?

The District Ranger for the Chugach National Forest supports proposals for regulatory measures of 100- yard setbacks and trapline signage. It is the intention of the NFS to allow all user groups to utilize multi- use public lands safely, and to balance the opportunities for all. *See attachment*

The community of Cooper Landing supports trap and snare setbacks to create a safe buffer in and around popular areas utilized for winter recreation. A 2021 survey by the Cooper Landing Safe Trails Committee resulted in 90% support for trap setbacks. Many respondents requested setbacks of ¼ to 1 mile. This was an increase from 83% in 2015, which favored setbacks from a similar survey. Many commented on the emotional stress and fear when taking their families, children and pets to favorite recreational places due to the danger of encountering a trap. This safety concern grows as Cooper Landing residents' demographics change to a younger, more outdoor enthusiast-oriented population.

This proposal targets several roads and pullouts in our area used by those who cross-country ski, snowshoe, hike, fat tire bike, skijor, snow machine, and train search-and-rescue dogs. Year-round outdoor recreation is a significant and growing segment of Cooper Landing’s economy. Cooper Landing’s primary economy is based on summer recreation and tourism; however, year-round recreational activity is expected to increase with the anticipated bypass highway completion and the addition of Three Bears grocery store in the future. Local businesses desire to extend their seasonal offerings to encourage the increasing number of family- friendly, active, outdoor recreational pursuits (e.g. winter biking, cross-country skiing, backcountry skiing, snowshoeing, trail running, ice fishing, bird hunting, and backcountry cabin rentals). The proposed trapping setback benefits business owners who market Cooper Landing as a fun, safe, and uniquely beautiful area for visitors to enjoy with family and pets.

What other support do you have for developing your proposal?

- The Precautionary Principle is widely recognized in international law and policy. It suggests that if an action or policy has the potential to cause harm to the public or the environment, precautionary measures should be taken even if some cause-and-effect relationships are not fully established scientifically. We are seeking trapping regulations that will be preventative and ensure the safety of all area user groups reducing the risk of accidental encounters.
- The proposed 100-yard trapping and snaring setback is not significant enough to limit a trapper’s opportunity to trap near roads and pullouts. Proposing setbacks for *only the most popular and heavily used roads and pullouts* leaves all other areas unrestricted. Trappers who follow the Trapper’s Code of Ethics’ third tenet to “promote trapping methods that will reduce the possibility of catching non-target animals,” presumably set traps back from heavily used roads and pullouts.
- A former Cooper Landing trapper and trappers from other nearby Units have endorsed a 100-yard setback as reasonable and logical. The proposed 100-yard setbacks do not present an undue burden on trappers. The average backpacking speed is 1 to 2 miles per hour. Assuming trappers are walking between one and two miles per hour, the setback distances requested would require an additional two to three minutes of walking to place and check

traps. Since many trappers use snow machines, the 100-yard setback could be crossed in less than 1 minute.

- The proposed 100-yard trapping and snaring setback would also align with the “Our Values Statement” set out by the U.S. Forest Service, which includes the intention of managing for “*Safety. In every way: physical, psychological, and social.*”
- The proposed 100-yard setback distance will not impact the Board of Game’s ability to manage wildlife along the listed roads and pullouts, though trapping nuisance wildlife may be required within the setback and environmentally necessary.
- The proposed trap setbacks have increasing community support in Cooper Landing. A 2015 survey indicated that 83% of the respondents supported trap setbacks; in 2021, a similar survey was conducted of property owners and residents of Cooper Landing, and the results showed an increase to 90% who felt that trap setbacks were necessary.
- As of the 2019 census, there are 741,147 residents of the state of Alaska. Based on sealing records, license sales, and the annual "Trapper Questionnaire," the Alaska Department of Fish and Game estimates the number of trappers in the state between 2,500 to 3,500, meaning only .4% of the Alaskan population is actively trapping. By adopting this safe trapping regulation in Unit 7, the Board of Game would better represent the majority of constituents and the current area's recreational uses.

Note: The proposal submission included attachments which are available on the proposal book website at: www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=gameboard.proposalbook .

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local fish and game advisory committee?

Several members of our Cooper Landing AC endorse this proposal and two members of the Cooper Landing Safe Trails have been trappers.

The Cooper Landing Safe Trails Committee met in April 2025 with members of the Southcentral Trappers Association to work together on solutions to reduce trap/pet conflicts; during the discussion, we gained a better understanding and appreciation of the trappers' concerns. Advocating for pet owner responsibility and not overreaching with more setback requests in the future were two concerns we heard clearly.

We took careful consideration of all land users while drafting this proposal, which will reduce conflicts between all user groups of shared recreational areas. We value the preservation, history, and tradition of trapping in Alaska for current and future generations. Providing a safe buffer along roads and pullouts will reduce conflicts and potentially improve trappers' public image for those opposed to the activity.

PROPOSED BY: The Cooper Landing Safe Trails Committee

(HQ-F25-018)
