

## **PROPOSAL 146**

### **5 AAC 92.550. Areas closed to trapping.**

Establish trapping and snaring buffers along specified trails and trailheads in and around the Cooper Landing Area 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 setbacks of 100 yards on both sides of the trails and trailheads 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 trails if they are elevated three feet above hard ground, enclosed, underwater, or under ice

- Crescent Creek Trail
- Lower Russian Lake Trail
- Bean Creek Trail
- Russian Gap//Historic Quartz Creek/Coyote Notch Trail System
- Resurrection Trail, South End
- Devil’s Pass Ski Loops
- Stetson Trail parking area and the first 400 yards

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 9 new 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 city limits. 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 200yd. setback for a popular trail. The Municipality of Anchorage, parts of Chugach State Park, the City/Borough of Juneau, and along six other trails, and surrounding all schoolyards 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 | Trail Name | Description | Winter Uses |
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| 7 | <p>Crescent Creek Trail</p> <p>USGS Map Seward B7, C7 and C8</p> <p>USFS, Chugach National Forest Map for Crescent Creek Trail</p>   | <p>Begins at Crescent Creek Trailhead parking area at mile 3.5 of Quartz Creek Road and ascends 6.5 miles to the Crescent Lake Cabin at the west end of the lake.</p>                                                                                | <p>Backcountry skiing, snowshoeing, hiking, backpacking, fat tire biking, and access to public-use cabins</p>                                                |
| 7 | <p>Lower Russian Lake Trail</p> <p>USGS Map Seward B8, Kenai B1</p> <p>USFS, Chugach National Forest Map for Russian Lakes Trail</p> | <p>Lower Russian Lake Trail from the trailhead parking located in the Russian River Campground about 1.0 miles from the campground entrance to both the Barber Cabin on the shore of Lower Russian Lake and to the Russian River Falls Overlook.</p> | <p>Backcountry and cross country skiing, skijoring, snowshoeing, hiking, fat tire biking, backpacking, and access to public-use cabins</p>                   |
| 7 | <p>Bean Creek Trail</p>                                                                                                              | <p>Bean Creek Trail starting at its trailhead to its intersection of the main Resurrection Pass Trail above Juneau Falls.</p>                                                                                                                        | <p>Backcountry and cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, hiking, fat tire biking, snow machining, dog mushing, backpacking, and access to public-use cabins</p> |

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| 7 | Russian Gap Trail/Historic Quartz Creek/Coyote Notch Trail System                                                | <p>On the 2004 plat approved by the Kenai Peninsula Borough for the Russian Gap Subdivision, this trail is referred to as the Quartz Creek Trail. It ascends behind the west side of KPB parcel 11912507 and continues through parcel 11912513, connecting with the Russian Gap Trail and heading north-easterly along a bench below Russian Gap.</p> <p>Coyote Notch Trail intersects with this trail. RESIDENTIAL COMMUNITY CLOSE BY.</p> | Backcountry and cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, hiking, snowmachine use.                                              |
| 7 | <p>Resurrection Trail, South End</p> <p>USGS Maps Seward B8, C8 and D8</p>                                       | From the southern Resurrection Trail trailhead on the Sterling Highway, continuing to the Swan Lake public use cabin                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Backcountry and cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, hiking, fat tire biking, backpacking, and access to public-use cabins |
| 7 | <p>Devil's Pass Ski Loops USGS Map Seward C7 and C8 USFS, Chugach National Forest Map for Devil's Pass Trail</p> | These trails begin at the far end of the parking area for Devil's Pass Trailhead at mile 39.5 of the Seward Highway. They loop along the cleared area northeast of the parking lot between Quartz Creek and the Seward Highway.                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Backcountry ski access, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, fat-tire biking, skijoring                                    |

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| 7 | Stetson Creek Parking area and Trail | Stetson Trail parking area at milepost 50.7 of Sterling Highway. Setback of 100 yards around the clearing beyond the gate under the power line and the first 400 yards up the trail. | Cooper Landing EMT training, search and rescue dog training, hiking, and snowshoeing |
|---|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

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

We are requesting the Board of Game amend Alaska Administrative Code No. 5 AAC 92.550 to establish 100- yard trapping and snaring buffers along both sides of the trails and all sides of the trailheads listed and described in the table below, 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 trails 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 trails, provided they are placed farther than 100-yards from the specified trails and trailheads.

The purpose for this proposal is to create a solution to the growing conflict between recreational uses of land and trapping in a manner that protects the safety of individuals, families, and pets when utilizing the most frequently used trails in the Cooper Landing area. Dangerous encounters between user groups and traps in recreational areas continues, unfortunately, reports are considered incomplete because land managers and law enforcement do not track trap injury incidents nor is there a 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 under strict voice command, however, there was a fatality where a trap had been placed 50 feet from the road. Search and rescue dog owners have voiced concern about the safety of their dogs in emergency missions. The Stetson Trail parking area and the first 400 yards have been used for training search-and-rescue dogs. Fears 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 proposed trap setbacks have increasing community support in Cooper Landing. A 2015 survey indicated that 83% of the respondents supported trap setbacks, but in 2021, when a similar survey of property owners and residents of Cooper Landing was conducted, results showed an increase to 90% who felt that trap setbacks were necessary. The community of Cooper Landing clearly supports traps and snare setbacks for a safe, trap- free zone in and around areas utilized for winter recreation. Surveys and meetings have highlighted the emotional stress and apprehension

experienced by residents and visitors when bringing their families, children, or pets to popular recreational areas due to the risk of encountering traps. This safety concern grows as Cooper Landing residents' demographics change to a younger, more outdoor enthusiast-oriented population. This proposal targets trails 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.

Year-round outdoor recreation is a significant and growing segment of Cooper Landing's economy. Easily accessible by road, Cooper Landing is located only 100 miles south of Anchorage, the largest city in the state. 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 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 buffer is not significant enough to limit a trapper's opportunity to trap near trails. Proposing setbacks for *only the most popular and heavily used Trails* 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 trails.
- 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 trails, though trapping nuisance wildlife may be required within the setback and environmentally necessary. A similar proposal requesting a 100-yard setback from trails has been submitted and endorsed by the Homer AC. Having regulations that are consistent will make management, education, and enforcement easier in Units 7 and 15.

• 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](http://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 South Central 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 on the trails listed will reduce conflicts and potentially improve trappers' public image for those opposed to the activity.

**PROPOSED BY:** The Cooper Landing Safe Trails Committee (HQ-F25-019)  
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