

PROPOSAL 149

5 AAC 92.550. Areas closed to trapping.

Establish trapping and snaring buffers along highway pullouts, backcountry access points, and winter trails in the Summit Lake Recreation 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 setback of 100-yards along the perimeter of highway pull outs accessing backcountry areas along the Seward Highway, and on both side of the winter trails listed within the Summit Lake Recreational Area, unless the traps are elevated three feet above ground or snow level, enclosed, underwater, or under ice. Trapping would still be permitted in the described areas if the traps 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 trail.

- Japan Woods - The west side of the Seward Highway from the southernmost tip of Summit Lake (MP44.5) north to Colorado Creek (MP 46.5).
- Tenderfoot Campground - Ski Area - MP 46 of the Seward Highway.
- Park N Poke - The west side of the Seward Highway from the southernmost tip of Lower Summit Lake (MP 47) to the gravel pit at (MP 49).
- Manitoba Mountain - MP 48 of the Seward Highway, pullout on the east side of the highway for the Alaska Mountain Huts (non-profit organization), following the established .7-mile trail to the Manitoba Cabin, and up the Polly Mine Trail (1 mile) to where it meets with the Manitoba Mountain Trail and continuing up to tree line at the summit of Little Manitoba Mountain.

The precedent for establishing trapping and snaring buffers for public safety along multi-use trails in the State of Alaska has been set, most recently, in the Mat-Su Valley, where 50-yard setbacks were established for 9 trails that both recreational users and the ATA mutually agreed on. In January 2025, 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 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.

	Trail Name	Description	Winter Uses
7	Japan woods	The west side of the Seward Highway from the southernmost tip of Summit Lake (MP 44.5) north to Colorado Creek (MP 46.5).	Backcountry skiing, snowshoeing, bird hunting, hiking
7	Tenderfoot Campground – Ski Area	MP 46 of the Seward Highway.	Backcountry skiing, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, bird hunting, hiking, snow machine use
7	Park N Poke	The west side of the Seward Highway from the southernmost tip of Lower Summit Lake (MP 47) to the gravel pit at (MP 49).	Backcountry Skiing, snowshoeing, bird hunting, hiking
7	Manitoba Mountain	MP 48 of the Seward Highway, pullout on the east side of the highway for the Alaska Mountain Huts (non-profit organization), following the established .7-mile trail to the Manitoba Cabin, and up the Polly Mine Trail (1 mile) to where it meets with the Manitoba Mountain Trail and continuing to tree line at the summit of Little Manitoba Mountain.	Backcountry and cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, bird hunting, hiking, backpacking for camping and cabin use

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 100-yard trapping and snaring buffers along the perimeter of all highway pull outs, backcountry access points, and winter trails in the Summit Lake Recreation Area, 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 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 specified recreational areas.

The purpose of 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 Summit Lake Recreation Area. Reports of dangerous encounters between user groups and traps in recreational areas 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. 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*

This conflict of user groups has been an issue for almost 20 years in the Cooper Landing area. It is getting more attention as the demographics change to a more recreational population. The community of Cooper Landing supports trap and snare setbacks. In 2021, the Cooper Landing Safe Trails Committee sent a survey to every post office box, landowner, and business in Cooper Landing to get a precise gauge of what people wanted. With a 35% return rate, 90% wanted trap setbacks established, and many requested up to a mile. This represents a 7% increase from a 2015 survey where 83% supported setbacks. The surveys and community meetings highlight people's concerns about taking their families, children, and pets to recreational areas due to past incidents and the risk of encountering traps. 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. The Summit Lake Recreational Area is about 1.5 hours south of Anchorage and 30 minutes north of Cooper Landing. Winter 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 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 Summit Lake Recreation Area. Proposing setbacks for *only the most popular and heavily used Summit Lake Recreation Area* 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 the popular areas of the Summit Lake Recreation Area.
- 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 Summit Lake Recreation Area, though understandably, 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, and in 2021 when a similar survey was conducted of property owners and residents of Cooper Landing, 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 actively traps. 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 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-F25-022)
