

Members of the Alaska Board of Game,

This letter is a condensed summary of the meeting comments submitted by the Mat Valley Advisory Committee outlining the concerns discussed by our body regarding Proposal 4, the proposed hunting and trapping closure along the Ambler mining road project affecting 422 square miles that currently may be hunted and trapped.

The first major concern voiced by many members was procedural in nature. This department generated proposal is being submitted out of cycle and does not appear to meet Agenda Change Request criteria even if it were introduced in a normal cycle. This special meeting overtly minimizes public process with the meeting being held in Fairbanks in the middle of summer when most of the public are busy enjoying our short summer with family and travel. Several of our members thought it was inappropriate for the Department to submit this proposal at all, especially considering that the public had no opportunity to submit proposals for this special session with other ideas for possible solutions to a potential problem. In addition, it was stated by the department that this was an “Administrative” proposal. The fact that the proposal itself calls for restrictions to other ACRs being submitted on this subject out of cycle regarding this issue was of particular concern.

Some members believe that this proposed hunting and trapping closure is the “nuclear option” and is an egregious overreach and being executed too soon, especially with no conservation concern of game in this area.

The idea that public money would be used to build a private road is particularly grating. The Alaska State Constitution, Article VIII, sections 1 thru 10 all address this subject with two of them being of particular interest.

§ 10. Public Notice

No disposals or leases of state lands, or interests therein, shall be made without prior public notice and other safeguards of the public interest as may be prescribed by law.

And...

§ 3. Common Use

Wherever occurring in their natural state, fish, wildlife, and waters are reserved to the people for common use.

Other concerns included the requirement to create “hot spot” hunts to mitigate moose/vehicle collisions. Others suspect the proposed closure is political in nature and not based on the basic philosophy of a sustained yield principle.

In short, this advisory committee voted 1-11 in opposition to this proposal with some very strong opinions. Other comments are available in our minutes but these were our primary concerns. We urge this board to consider tabling this proposal to be revisited during the regular cycle to provide for a more robust public process. We also ask that this board consider allowing for continued hunting and trapping until there are data points that would require action to begin to adjust methods, means, and harvest seasons that are more appropriate with professional game management.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration,

Herb Mansavage
Chairman, Mat Valley Advisory Committee