

Alaska Board of Game
Boards Support Section
P.O. Box 25526
Juneau, AK 99802
FAX: 907-465-6094

Re: Bear Proposals

Dear Board Members:

International Association for Bear
Research and Management
IUCN Bear Specialist Group



Oso	Urs
Bär	Ours
Björn	Медведь
Orso	Bca
Björn	Medved
Samxe	Bear
熊	Shash
Bhalou	Bèruang
Αρκτος	Karhu
	Bear

The International Association for Bear Research and Management (IBA) would like to offer the following comments regarding bear management proposals currently being considered by the Alaska Board of Game. The IBA is a professional organization of over 700 biologists, wildlife managers, and others dedicated to the conservation of all bear species. The goal of IBA is to achieve sound management, conservation and restoration of the world's bears through science-based research, management actions and education. It is in this professional capacity that we offer the following comments regarding bear proposals before the Alaska Board of Game.

Throughout much of the world, bear populations have declined from historic levels as a direct result of habitat loss and human-caused mortality; this includes many brown/grizzly bear populations in North America. Because of their very low reproductive rates, bear populations are particularly vulnerable to mortality pressures and are slow to recover from intensive harvesting. For these reasons, application of bear management practices must be judiciously considered.

Alaska's past bear management has been held in high esteem by other jurisdictions throughout the world. Its balanced regulatory approach that focuses on sustained populations has shown that bears are a valued and integral part of the ecosystem that can be managed for a wide variety of human uses.

However, the Alaska Board of Game now has before it many proposals that would significantly liberalize the take of Alaskan bears and devalue their status as an important wildlife resource. Proposed regulation changes would allow hunting of female brown bears with dependent yearlings, baiting of brown bears, hunting bears from motorized vehicles, using snares or traps to take bears, smoking bears from dens, and sale of bear parts. These proposals are highly controversial. Most represent practices that wildlife agencies have specifically culled from their allowable hunting practices in recent decades, either because of their potential for major impact on populations or because a growing proportion of both the hunting and non-hunting public felt them to be unethical.

In our view, these concerns are still valid. We believe that the potential detrimental effects of such regulation changes have not been adequately addressed and that their implementation could jeopardize sustained yield management and public use of Alaska bear populations.

If Alaskan wildlife management goals require reducing bear numbers in specific localities, the IBA strongly urges that acceptable methods be employed, such as adjusting season restrictions and bag limits. We recommend that any major change in regulations be accompanied by rigorously designed monitoring, so that effects of such changes can be scientifically evaluated.

We urge the Alaska Board of Game to deny these proposals.
Sincerely,

Karen Noyce
Vice President (Americas)

Cc: Kevin Duffy, Commissioner ADF&G