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ALASKA BOARD OF GAME
Emergency Teleconference: Skilak Loop Wildlife Management Area
September 7, 2005
Summary of Actions

This summary of actions is for information purposes only and is not intended to detail, reflect or fully interpret the reasons for the board's actions.

Finding of Emergency

DESCRIPTION: Delay implementation of provisions to allow use of firearms for small game hunting in the Skilak Loop special management area of the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge.

DISCUSSION: The board took action in March 2005 to allow the use of firearms in the Skilak Loop area to hunt small game. The board received an agenda change request at its June 2005 meeting to reconsider its actions, but declined to schedule it for consideration, reconfirming its previous actions. The US Fish and Wildlife Service then communicated to the board that it intends to go forward with federal rulemaking to close the Skilak Loop area in Kenai National Wildlife Refuge to the use of firearms, effectively overruling the state's regulation.

The board received input from the Department of Fish and Game that discussions have begun with the federal agency on options of working together with the public for updating the comprehensive management plan and regulations in this area. The USFWS agreed to hold off on its rulemaking if the state is willing to hold off on implementing the change of allowing firearms, to allow the opportunity for a public planning process to proceed.

While the board expressed concern with the effectiveness of past state input in federal planning processes, it recognizes that there is an important opportunity for the state's stakeholders to have input through this process. The board also discussed the possibility of a precedent being set of federal rulemaking in methods and means provisions, and wanted to avoid that federal involvement.

Regulatory Change

DESCRIPTION: Allow the use of bow and arrow to take small game and allow moose to be taken by permit only in the Skilak Loop Wildlife Management Area through June 30, 2007. Beginning July 1, 2007, allow the discharge of firearms providing it is at least one-quarter mile from any campground.

DISCUSSION: The board noted local support for allowing the discharge of firearms when the board took up the issue at its March 2005 meeting. The board acknowledges that the USFWS staff stated that they prefer more time to allow that change to be in effect in the Refuge. The board believes that delaying the implementation of the regulatory change to July 2007 will allow time for a full public planning process to go through.