

The official publication of the Alaska Outdoor Council and Alaska Fish & Wildlife Conservation Fund "Protecting your hunting, fishing, trapping, and outdoor heritage since 1955."

Volume 14, Issue 4

www.alaskaoutdoorcouncil.org

Spring 2006

Schedule of upcoming events for 2006:

2 nd Tuesday of each month at 7: the AOC Fairbanks members a to meet at the Tanana Valley Sp	re invited
Association clubhouse.	
May 12 - 14	Anchorage
BOG takes action on all Pred	ator
Control Programs.	TZ 1:1
May 25 - 29	Kodiak
Kodiak Crab Festival	C 11 (
May 31	Soldotna
Soldotna Lions Gun Show	E I D
June 3	Eagle River
AGCA-Youth Firearms Safety	
July	Anchorage
ÁGCA Summer Gun Show	A
July All Terrain Calvary/Military	Anchorage
	Kenai
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Impact Area Gun Show August 24 - Sept 4	Palmer
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Non-resident Big Game hunters pay for 80% of the Division of Wildlife Conservations Budget each year. They make up less then 15% of all licensed hunters in Alaska and harvest less then 10% of the game. With good game management big game hunting is sustainable resource development for Alaska.

IT'S TIME TO BRING BACK THE DIVISION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE PROTECTION By Patrick Valkenburg

Soon after the last gubernatorial election, the administration decided to downgrade the Division of Fish and Wildlife Protection to a Bureau under the Division of Alaska State Troopers. Many people across the state were skeptical that the relatively minor cost savings would outweigh the likely reduction in enforcement of wildlife and fisheries laws and regulations. Reasons for the move were never entirely clear or very well explained and there was no opportunity for public comment. Reading between the lines, however, it appears the intent was to reduce upper level staff costs in FWP and make wildlife troopers spend more time helping state troopers with trooper patrol functions. After almost 3 years of this experiment it is now clear that the move was a failure from the perspective of fish and wildlife protection.

Here are some of the facts. After the reorganization and creation of the Alaska Bureau of Wildlife Enforcement (ABWE) there has been a 24% decrease in annual fish and wildlife patrol and investigation time by fish and wildlife troopers and a 20% decrease in fish and wildlife contacts. However, there has been an accompanying 50% increase in non-fish and wildlife citations and a 75% increase in non-fish and wildlife warnings by ABWE troopers. Also, money that comes into the Fish and Game Fund from fines is down significantly. In other words, fish and wildlife enforcement officers are spending much less of their time on wildlife enforcement and much more of their time assisting the state troopers with regular law enforcement duties.

As is usually the case, statistics don't tell the whole story. Most young people embark on a career in wildlife law enforcement because of their dedication to resource management and associated activities, including hunting, trapping, fishing, and flying. Under the new system, there is no guarantee that recruits into the state troopers will ever get to be fish and wildlife enforcement officers or pilots. These new policies have already taken their toll on recruitment and ABWE is having trouble filling vacant positions.

At the end of the Hammond administration in the early 1980s when fish and wildlife enforcement was a high priority, there were 117 commissioned positions and an annual budget of 13.5 million dollars. Today, there are less than 90 positions with a budget equivalent in early 1980s dollars of about 9 million. Since the early 1980s the wildlife and fisheries-related

Alaska Trust Fund

Dear Fellow Alaskans,

The Alaska Trust Fund or "Trust" was established in 1999 in response to the members citing a need for permanent and long-term funding of the Alaska Outdoor Council operations. Similar to other trust funds, the principal or "trust" is protected from invasion in perpetuity. Every dollar you invest in the Trust stays there- and only the interest it generates can be used for operations.

The Alaska Trust Fund is the only trust fund in the nation dedicated entirely to protecting Alaska's hunting, fishing, trapping, firearms ownership, and access to public lands and waters. Every dollar donated to the Trust stays right here at home- protecting the outdoor heritage we've grown to love and enjoy. There are many different ways to donate: cash, stocks, estate gifts, annuities, land, & more. Donors are also awarded with a level of distinction commensurate with their gift. For example, if you donate \$10,000 or more, you can name your own Endowment, i.e. the John Smith Outdoor Endowment. Be sure to contact your attorney and/or accountant about gifting options.

The board of the Alaska Trust Fund has set a target of reaching their stated goal of \$1 million by the year 2020. Contact the Alaska Outdoor Council (AOC) office to make donations to the Trust.

Thank you for your support Eddie Grasser, Chairman

A Gift to Alaska

Share the vision of Bob Rausch, Duane Goodrich, Lyle Carlson, and other Alaskans by including a bequest to the Alaska Trust Fund in your will.

A few simple words in your will can establish a truly Alaskan Heritage designed to ensure conservation of our game resources for generations to come.

Make your bequest by giving the following language to your attorney: "To the Alaska Trust Fund I give______% of my residuary estate." Or you can name a fixed amount. Contributions to the Trust are tax deductible. Please contact the Alaska Trust Fund for more information at:

> Alaska Trust Fund PO Box 73902 Fairbanks, AK 99707

Outdoor Alaska

President's Message

By Teresa Sager Albaugh



In the last newsletter I explained how the Outdoor Council had just filed a motion in Federal District Court to intervene in State v. Norton, a suit in which the State is challenging the federal government's assertion

of management authority over rightfully Stateowned waterways.

I am extremely pleased to report that on March 14th the Federal District Court granted our motion to intervene. The Court noted that without AOC as interveners, "...the party makeup of this consolidated case is heavily weighted toward government and Native Alaska interests and lacking non-native, rural, and urban points of view."

While we may be a long way from a decisive victory, the Court's ruling gives the Outdoor Council important legal status because we now have the ability to carry this case forward should the State choose to drop it at any level, or to settle on terms that are unacceptable to our membership. The financial cost of our involvement will be significant, and substantial funds will be necessary to maintain our forward momentum.

The alarming news is, the federal government has already taken steps to assert management control over waters situated within and adjacent to state lands. Even more troubling is the fact that other interveners in the case contend federal authority should extend even further, to waters running next to or through native allotment lands and marine waters. If these arguments prevail, very few waters in Alaska will escape federal control. The State and Governor Murkowski are currently very devoted to this lawsuit. But things can change. A court case can drag on for years, and appeals to higher courts add more years to the timeline. It's hard to say who will be in leadership roles in Alaska as critical milestones are reached in the case, or how firmly committed to the case they will be. These uncertainties help to illustrate why the Outdoor Council moved to intervene, and now we are firmly positioned to defend your rights to State management granted in the Statehood Act.

Not long ago, former Governor Knowles refused to appeal a ruling granting federal control over navigable waters on, and adjacent to federal lands. His decision, basically dropping the State's own suit, forever relinquished the State of Alaska's ability to challenge the ruling. Considering this grave loss of management authority, it is critical that we hold on to as much as possible of our State management of waterways over submerged lands given to the state at statehood and those running through State-owned lands. We would be fools to play dead while allowing the feds to assert management control over the precious remaining water bodies that still remain under State authority.

Outdoor Alaska

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Executive Director's Report

By Rod Arno

The Alaska Outdoor Council's Form of Member Representation

Each year the member clubs and individual members of the Alaska Outdoor Council (AOC) meet as delegates to deliberate and vote on actions necessary to improve hunting, fishing, trapping, firearms use, and access to public lands.

This February at the AOC Annual Meeting in Sitka, among other legislative and policy issues, the delegates voted to support allocation of General Funds (GF) to help finance the Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) game and sport fish management and research, and to increase enforcement of existing fish and wildlife laws. During the 2006 legislative session in Juneau, our aggressive support for the inclusion of GF money in the ADF&G budget has been very successful. We have also urged prioritization of adequate enforcement as a central theme in our testimony on many pieces of legislation, and we strongly support the resolutions passed by the Boards of Fisheries and Game urging recreation and adequate funding of the Division of Fish & Wildlife Protection. The delegates agreed increased wildlife management funding and proper enforcement would benefit AOC's membership. However, not all member clubs or individual members need necessarily agree with the votes cast at the annual meeting. A member club can choose not to agree with the majority of voting club delegates on certain issues yet may still remain a member club, committed to pursuing the same broad mission of sound natural resource management and habitat conservation. This is a thumbnail sketch of how the AOC identifies goals and sets its course regarding public policies affecting the membership's interests.

AOC delegates do not normally take positions on political candidates, although it has occurred in a few rare instances. As a rule, member clubs and individual members are free to support the candidates of their choice. A non-partisan organization known as the AOC Political Action Committee (AOC-PAC) was formed in 1996 for the primary purpose of studying and endorsing political candidates who support the policies and mission of the Outdoor Council. The AOC-PAC also raises money to help achieve its election objectives. While the PAC is technically an organization separate from the AOC, its main goal is to impact the election process for the benefit of AOC's membership.

The Alaska Outdoor Council appreciates the support of each of our individual members and member clubs who collectively form the largest conservation and outdoor organization in Alaska. It does make a difference when outdoors people band together to create effective representation in the public process.

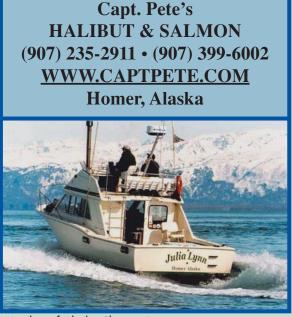
Outdoor Alaska

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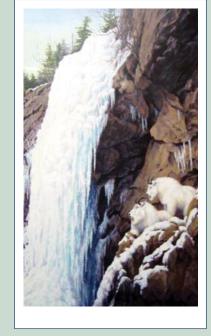
economy of Alaska has grown to well over 2 billion dollars, fishing charter fleets have exploded in size, and the transporter industry has grown substantially.

Unlike troopers, fish and wildlife enforcement officers have always had busy periods and slower periods. The slower periods have allowed protection officers to catch up on case reports, investigate ongoing cases, participate in education and community involvement, and work with biologists on management projects. Voluntary compliance is a key part of wildlife enforcement and good public relations and education are essential in building support for management and enforcement programs. Under the reorganization, whenever fish and wildlife troopers have some time to work on case files or perform other duties, they are called away to do bar checks, sex offender registration, prisoner transport, or other non-fish and wildlife-related activities. Many fish and wildlife troopers now have 20-30 cases piled up on their desks awaiting action. It is frustrating when someone goes out of their way or shortens a hunting or fishing trip to turn in a lawbreaker and then finds out that ABWE didn't have the time to follow up on the case.

Although the reorganization of Fish and Wildlife Protection was a well intentioned move, dissatisfaction within the organization and public dissatisfaction with enforcement throughout the state indicates that a change is needed. It seems clear that the enforcement function needs to be organized at the division level. AOC supports reestablishing the Division of Fish and Wildlife Protection within the Department of Fish and Game because the primary function of fish and wildlife protection is much more closely related to ADF&G than to the primary functions of the Department of Public Safety. Outdoor users should let their legislators and candidates know they feel on this issue.



Member of Alaska Charter Association



AOC 2003 Sponsor Print: "Mountain Goats" by Ed Mills of Juneau. (\$40 unframed. Order a write-in on Post, p. 15.)



Member of Alaska Charter Association



A message from Our AK NRA Election Volunteer Co-ordinator, Roy Burkhart

In recent years, AOC members have proved that working together, we could mobilize our forces to support lawmakers who back our rights to use Alaska's natural resources for the enjoyment of outdoor activities – hunting, fishing, trapping, and most importantly, access to the Alaska's public lands.

This year is an election year, and because of our successes in the last election, anti-gun advocates, animal rights activists and environmental extremists will be out in force again, promoting those politicians who oppose Alaska's outdoor traditions!

We need you and your friends on our front line to help us in the fight against their propaganda. To mount a successful campaign will require time, money and volunteers. As individuals, we all have restrictions on the time and money we can donate to our causes. But acting together, we can be successful again this year in defeating the politicians who would deny us the right to enjoy the outdoor activities that are our Alaskan heritage.

Remember, ours is a system of government *of the people, by the people, and for the people*, so any commitment you can make to the campaign efforts of a pro-gun, pro-hunting, pro-access candidate, no matter how large or small, can truly make a difference.

So, please take the first step in ensuring your freedoms and register to vote, or update your voter's registration if you have moved.

Registering to vote takes only a few minutes, yet it is the single most important step you can take to defend our rights – now & in the future. For AK voter registration dates, deadlines, requirements and applications, go to the State's webpage at http://ltgov.state.ak.us/elections or call:

Anchorage: 907.522.8683 Fairbanks: 907.451.2835 Juneau: 907.465.3021 Nome: 907.443.5285

This public service message is paid for by the AOC-PAC.



Friends of NRA News

by Eddie Grasser

Please allow me to introduce myself, my name is Brad Kruger and I am your new NRA Field Representative. I was lucky enough to be born into hunting and fishing family. I was in the Boy Scouts of America but didn't quite make Eagle (a huge regret) I competed on my high schools small bore rifle team and served in the US Army Infantry in 101st Airborne Division. I now live in beautiful Homer, Alaska and I love the outdoors. Hunting, fishing, camping, hiking, orienteering, trap shooting, and rifle shooting are my favorite pastimes.

I am following a great man I am sure you all know well, Mr. Eddie Grasser. Eddie resurrected the Friends of NRA program here in Alaska and left me a great foundation on which to build. The AOC and the Hunter Heritage Foundation has traditionally worked hand in hand with the Friends of NRA to each group's mutual benefit. I definitely want this to continue and grow, as well as working with other outdoor groups.

A Friends of NRA banquet accomplishes two missions simultaneously. The first is obvious, fund raising. Last year we raised over \$101,000 to spend in Alaska to promote the shooting sports. Of course we want to raise more this year so we can fund even more requests. The second mission that a FNRA Banquet accomplishes is that it raises awareness about the local shooting sports. Many NRA members only contact with the organization is their monthly magazine. An FNRA Banquet creates a sense of community among shooters and gives them a chance to do something positive for the future of the shooting sports.

Our Banquet Season this year started off with a BANG! Both the Homer and Mat-Su committees held GREAT banquets and raised considerable more money than they did last year. Both banquets are quickly becoming the social event of the year in their communities. This is a great way to start off the year and we are looking forward to our next one in Fairbanks.

We are also looking to start up a few more banquets in new communities, so if any one has an idea of a community that is ripe for a FNRA Banquet please give me a call. Also, we have some very strong committees but we are always looking for more help "many hands make light work", so please contact me if you want to join a winning team that is dedicated to the future of the shooting sports here in Alaska. Thank you.

Sincerely, Brad Kruger AK NRA Field Rep 907-235-9059 bronko77@hotmail.com



Lewis Cates age 6 of Eagle River; 39 1/2" pike his biggest one yet. The fishing for pike in SC Alaska has been great this winter. AOC thanks Lewis Cates and his dad, Jason, for helping to save salmon fry from the jaws of pike.



Valdez - April 22, 2006 Eagle River/Chugiak - April 29, 2006 Kodiak - May 13, 2006 Midnight Sun - August 11, 2006 Eddie Grasser - 745-6166 Sitka - September 30, 2006 Nome - October 7, 2006 Delta Junction - October 14, 2006 Glenallen - October 21, 2006 Anchorage - October 21, 2006 Kenai - October 28, 2006 Bethel - November 4, 2006 Visit the official website for more information

HHFA News

by Eddie Grasser

The joy one derives from introducing young people to the great outdoors is something that most of us will cherish for all the years of our lives. Recently those of us who volunteer for the Hunter Heritage Foundation (HHF) both as fund-raisers and as instructors were part of a wonderful experience. We had the rare privilege of introducing a group of young Alaskans to the world of hunting.

Introduction of a program to teach youngsters the basics of small game hunting and offering them the chance to actually experience it began with a grant to the Department of Fish and Game from the National Shooting Sports Foundation. Department staff was charged with developing a small game clinic and a booklet that would guide Alaskans, and especially young people in their desire to take up small game hunting. Long a partner of the ADF&G on similar projects like Becoming an Outdoors Woman and youth shooting programs, the HHF organized and coordinated two small game hunting clinics this past year. All funding for the actual hunting segment of this program come out of HHF coffers.

Of course none of this would have happened if it wasn't for all the great volunteers who gave of their time and expertise to teach these kids valuable lessons. Not only did we have a good turn out of adult mentors, many of them brought their canine friends along, and that added tremendously to the experience for all the kids involved. Will programs like this help "save hunting" and the associated wildlife management programs that come with it? If you had a chance to talk to any of the young Alaskans involved with this event at the end of the day you could only come away with one thought. There can and will be a next generation of hunters!

2006 promises to be another busy year for all the volunteers at the Hunter Heritage Foundation. Aside from four more small game hunting clinics for youth, we are planning at least 3 Becoming an Outdoors Woman programs. We are also in the planning stages of our very first Beyond B.O.W. women's hunt which we hope to have in September. Of course we will continue to support Women on Target classes and all the many youth programs such as the Rabbit Creek Range youth shooting league, the Youth Hunter Education Challenge, Youth Education Summit, and Youth Day at Birchwood. We also have one other new youth program slated for mid-summer, the Youth Conservation Camp.

There are several other programs we support such as our new effort to establish a Pass It On program here in Alaska with Big Brothers/Big Sisters, the Oral History Project, and Refuse To Be A Victim classes.

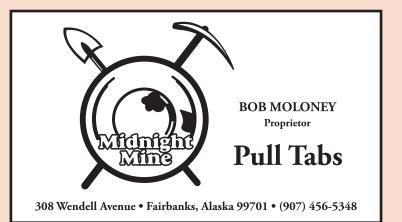
How, you may ask, do we do all these things with just volunteers as a non-profit? It is very simple; the HHF is blessed with strong support from several sources. Our two strongest allies are the **Friends of NRA** and both the **Alaska Chapter** and **Kenai Chapter of Safari Club International**. These three organizations account for nearly 30% of our yearly budget. Other major donors include PAC/WEST Communications, ConocoPhillips Alaska, Carlile Transportation, Alaska Airlines, Alaska Frontier Constructors, Carl Marrs & Company, Alaska Communications Systems and Anadarko Petroleum. Last of all, much of our support comes from the assistance of U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski who so graciously hosts our annual Midnight Sun Shootout fund-raiser.

So, the next time you are looking for a little joy and excitement in your life, remember that an adventure in the great outdoors is just a few steps away here in Alaska and that experience is best enjoyed when you are mentoring somebody else.

Good Hunting,

Eddie Grasser President

Midnight Sun Shootout dates are: August 10 & 11, 2006. The Shootout Banquet will be at the Captain Cook Hotel this year.



EMERALD ISLE PULL TABS IN FAIRBANKS

WASHINGTON PLAZA, RIVER MALL, 2110 BADGER ROAD, GOLD RUSH SALOON, FRONTIER LOUNGE, BADGER DEN, TESORO MALL, REFINERY LOUNGE

CONTACT 479-5821 FOR MORE INFO!

Science-based Game Management— When is There Enough Data?

By Patrick Valkenburg

Often, a critical question for the Board of Game, biologists in ADF&G, and the Department of Law is "do we have enough information to move forward with a game management program immediately, or is it necessary to wait for more data?" Legal challenges on procedural grounds are expected on controversial programs, but increasingly, challenges are also brought on scientific grounds. So far, most judges have sided with regulatory authorities as long as "the best available scientific information" is used to make decisions but this is a relatively new area of litigation.

The Board of Game wrestled with exactly this situation during the first part of its spring meeting in March. Rather than immediately adopting proposals 162-166 to update predator control implementation plans, they tabled the proposals while asking ADF&G for more review before bringing them up again at the continuation of the meeting in May.

The amount of biological information available from various areas of the state differs greatly. Three of the most critical areas right now are Game Management Units (GMUs) 13 (the Nelchina Basin), 16 and 14 (the Matsu Valley), and 19A (lower Kuskokwim). Unit 13 has been the focus of major studies on moose, grizzly bears, wolves, and caribou, and predator/prey relationships dating back to the late 1970s. There has been little comparable information gathered from GMU 16 until recently, and there was almost no information from GMU 19A. So how can the Board and ADF&G justify predator management in all these areas? The answer is that although studies on predator/prey relationships have not been done in GMUs 16 and 19, they have been done in very similar areas throughout interior Alaska and it is reasonable to assume that similar relationships apply.

Just because abundant information is lacking from a certain area does not mean that a new management program can't be started or that if one is started, it will not be scientifically based. The management biologist makes recommendations on the basis of the best information available from the area and relevant information from other, similar areas. To neglect or ignore findings from other areas would be bad science. This process of review and analysis takes time for the Area Biologist and other staff.

It's a challenging job. Estimates of biological parameters (like moose numbers) are not exact, yet both moose population and harvest goals are required to be prescribed under the Intensive Management Law. In an area with little background information where current data indicates poor population performance, prescribing overly specific management goals in legislation or in management plans can be counterproductive. For example, in McGrath, where background data on moose numbers were scarce (yet earlier high numbers of moose were well known) the predator management program was stopped in 1991 based on one moose survey that suggested that the moose population had reached the population goal. The harvest goal had not been reached, which suggested that either the moose numbers were underestimated or that population goal had been set too low.

Critics seize on these kinds of uncertainties to say that predator management should be delayed or abandoned unless population numbers are known with precision. But to hunters familiar with the area, and to the Area Biologist who manages it, knowing the exact number of moose is not critical. For management biologists, simply knowing that harvest is way down, that calf: cow and bull:cow ratios are down and that there is lots of unused winter browse is enough information on which to base the beginnings of a management program.

For practical wildlife management, there is no substitute for the knowledge acquired by a seasoned Area Biologist. Relying on this kind of knowledge is good science. However, once a predator management program begins, it is necessary to increase the level of monitoring to ensure that the program can be modified and evaluated to make it as effective as possible and provide information that will be useful for future evaluation. How much additional research and monitoring is needed is a judgment call based on available funding, availability of relevant data from other areas, and potential applicability of the work to other areas in the future. Without adequate monitoring, a program that was intended to be thoughtful "adaptive management" turns into inefficient trial and error, with the likelihood that the old wheel will be reinvented the next time around.

Because ADF&G is short of money and experienced staff, it is reasonable, and necessary, to prioritize and limit the number of predator management programs. Priorities for predator management are largely determined by the Board of Game, and this is where public testimony is important. The Board will reconvene in May and decide whether to approve revisions to final implementation plans (proposals 162-165). They will also decide if predator control should be expanded from GMU 16B into parts of 16A and 14B. Written testimony can still be submitted on these proposals until the Board meeting resumes. Comments can be faxed to: BOG Comments at 907-465-6094.

Hunt Cleanly, Eat Safely: What AOC Members Need to Know about Asian H5N1 Bird Flu

By Sarah Gilbertson, Special Assistant to the Commissioner of Alaska Department of Fish and Game.



Sarah Gilbertson, boxing last winters supply of Bristol Bay salmon.

By now, you've probably seen the stories on the nightly news about the spread of Asian H5N1 (A(H5N1))avian influenza to many countries in Asia, Europe, and Africa. To date, this particular strain of bird flu has not been found in Alaska or North America. However, millions of migratory birds will soon begin arriving in Alaska from all over the world, and many wonder whether the birds could bring this particular strain of bird flu with them.

Sampling efforts to detect this strain of bird flu have been underway in Alaska since 1998. Since then, thousands of samples have been tested and the strain has not been found. This year, state and federal officials will increase their sampling efforts to aid in the early detection of A(H5N1), should it arrive. Sampling efforts will focus on hunter-killed birds, live birds, bird habitat, sick or dead birds, and domestic birds.

Right now, A(H5N1) remains a bird disease. It is deadly to poultry and some wild birds, has only rarely infected people.



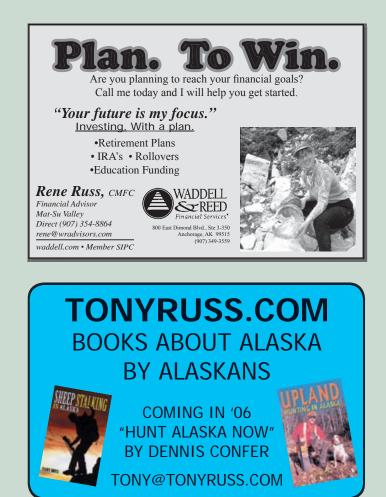
Lewis Cates age 6 of Eagle River; 39 1/2" pike his biggest one yet. The fishing for pike in SC Alaska has been great this winter. AOC thanks Lewis Cates and his dad, Jason, for helping to save salmon fry from the jaws of pike.

In face, documented human cases have been from contact with poultry. As a result, there is no need to stop hunting or eating wild birds. However, since wild birds carry many kinds of viruses, bacteria and parasites, it is always wise to avoid sick or dead birds and to practice these safe cooking and handling guidelines:

- Use rubber gloves when handling and cleaning birds
- Keep your hands away from your mouth while cleaning birds
- Do not eat, smoke, or drink while cleaning birds
- Wash your hands, tools, and cleaning surfaces with soap and water or disinfectant after cleaning and preparing birds
- Cook birds until they are done all the way through
- Do not eat smoked bird meat unless it is cooked to 165 degrees Fahrenheit

If you find sick or dead birds, and no obvious cause is apparent, do not touch the birds. Instead, please call 1-866-5-BRD-FLU (866-527-3358) as soon as you can so that cooperating agencies can coordinate a response.

For more information, please visit www.avianflu.alaska.gov



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<u>tylercook@auroramotors.com</u>	459-7085	<u>mpotter@alaska.net</u>	479-3523	Valley Landscaping	
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*Dr John Bast, DDS		Pacific Rim Geological Consultin	ıg, Inc.	PO Box 82703	
570 University Avenue		Tom Bundtzen	-	Fairbanks, AK 99708	
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jbast@acsalaska.net	479-2206	Fairbanks,AK 99708			
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