

OUTDOOR ALASKA



THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE ALASKA OUTDOOR COUNCIL
"PROTECTING YOUR HUNTING, FISHING, TRAPPING, AND ACCESS TO PUBLIC LANDS SINCE 1955"

Alaska Superior Court Sides With State of Alaska Board of Game Upholding Internationally Renowned Kodiak Brown Bear Management System

ANCHORAGE, June 1, 2022— Today the Alaska Professional Hunters Association (APHA) reacts to the Alaska Superior Court supporting wildlife conservation in issuing summary judgment in favor of the Alaska Board of Game.

On December 23rd, 2020, Robert Cassell filed suit on constitutional grounds against the Alaska Board of Game claiming resident hunters are required to have access to (i.e., a chance to win) 100% of the permits for all brown bear hunting opportunities. Cassell's lawsuit seeks to strike down Kodiak's carefully developed and implemented brown bear management plan. Nonresidents are required to hire a guide or hunt with a close relative to hunt brown bears in Alaska.

In territorial days cattle ranchers on Kodiak proposed extirpating brown bears on Kodiak to protect and increase a nascent cattle ranching industry. Hunting guides at the time fought hard to protect Kodiak's large bears and ultimately prevailed by showing Kodiak bears were ten times more valuable than cows. Since that time Hunting guides on Kodiak have worked to protect and conserve bears on the island. In 1976 the current management plan was adopted by the board of game. Kodiak's bear management system is held up as a success story by wildlife managers from across the country and the world.

Sam Rohrer, president of the APHA and a second-generation hunting guide and native of Kodiak, responded to the Superior Court decision:

"Growing up I listened to my dad and the other hunting guides discuss the health of bears on the island in

hunting camp and between seasons in town. I started to attend public meetings as a young boy where the guides and others weighed in on how the bears were doing and how best to manage hunting and problem bears. Today's decision from the court affirms the public's work but most importantly it is a win for the bears".

APHA filed briefs in support of the Board of Game and participated in oral arguments in December of 2021. The Alaska Outdoor Council and Safari Club International also filed briefs in support of the Board of Game. The advocacy group Resident Hunters of Alaska supported Mr. Cassell where he sits as a board member.

Sam continues; "APHA represents guides across the state but there was never any hesitation to support APHA defending Kodiak bears, this case is a matter of principle. Wildlife conservation is a core value of APHA's because it is a core value of hunting guides

Continued on page 2



2021 Raffle Winner, Paul Donaldson with his trophy Kodiak Brown Bear

IN THIS ISSUE

Presidents Message.....	3
Board of Directors.....	3
Policy Director Report.....	4
AOC Sponsors Shooting Park.....	7
Executive Director Report.....	8
Raise'em Outdoors Children's Camp.....	8
AOC Sponsors Rabbit Creek Shooting Range.....	9

AOC Files Amicus.....	9
Taku River Mining Cleanup.....	10
Welcome New Members.....	11
The Hunt.....	12
Sustaining Business Members.....	15
Members Clubs.....	15

Continued from page 1

across Alaska. But this is bigger than guiding, wildlife conservation is a core value of hunters who place sustainability above allocation as shown by the broad coalition APHA is a part of."

Mr. Cassell may appeal his case to the Alaska Supreme Court. Mr. Cassell is a retired dentist who is well known in hunting circles having traveled the world hunting.

According to research commissioned by APHA, 86% of hunting guide business in Alaska are Alaskan owned with 95% of guide businesses on Kodiak being Alaskan owned. Many Kodiak hunting guides also guide wildlife viewing and photography trips during the summer.

Alaska Outdoor Council and Safari Club International Amicus Brief Argument

(The Court should reject Plaintiff's interpretation of the Alaska Constitution, which seeks to impose a requirement for the benefit of resident hunters not the benefit of Alaska's citizens overall.)

Cassell asks this Court to interpret Article VIII of the Alaska Constitution in an entirely novel way—for the benefit of resident hunters alone, instead of for the benefit of Alaskans. In so doing, Plaintiff seeks to dictate the "public interest" identified in Article VIII. But it is not Plaintiffs role, nor this Court's, to determine the public interest. The Constitution grants this authority to the legislature. Plaintiffs interpretation is inconsistent with the Constitution and the public trust doctrine.

Under Article VIII, section 1, it is "the policy of the State to encourage the settlement of its land and the development of its resources by making them available for maximum use consistent with the public interest."³ Plaintiff admits that this section, with sections 2 and 3, "codify the 'public trust doctrine' in Alaska, which 'imposes on the State a trust duty to manage the fish, wildlife and water resources of the state for the benefit of the people. Plaintiff also admits that "'the people' in this context mean[s] Alaskans."⁵ Yet Plaintiffs interpretation of these constitutional provisions would not benefit Alaskans on the whole. Instead, it would create a super-priority for resident hunters and mandate that wildlife be managed for their maximum benefit alone. This super-priority would arise at the expense of the Alaskan public, who benefits from the conservation and economic contributions of non-residents including through low hunting license and tag fees;⁶ it would also arise at the expense of Alaskans who utilize wildlife resources as professional hunters and guides.⁷ The cases cited by Plaintiff do not support this interpretation; rather, they hold that wildlife is a public-trust resource and should be managed by the State as a trustee for the benefit of the state's citizens—but they do not require the selection of any particular group of citizens as most favored.

In addition, Plaintiffs interpretation of these provisions would improperly transfer responsibility for determining "the maximum benefit of the people" to Plaintiff, and to this Court. That reading is unsupported. Article VIII, section 2 unambiguously

empowers the legislature with this authority, and, as discussed below, the legislature has delegated the authority to regulate hunting of wildlife to the Board of Game; in exercising its delegated authority, the Board has considered the whole picture instead of narrowly focusing on the interests of resident hunters alone. That picture reveals that non-resident hunters contribute significantly to the conservation, development, and use of wildlife in Alaska. For all these reasons, the Hunting Coalition respectfully requests this Court reject Plaintiffs erroneous interpretation of the Alaska Constitution.

Judge Denies Cassell's Summary Judgment

This case presents a challenge to the constitutionality of 5 ACC 92.061(a)(1), a regulation that establishes an allocation between residents and nonresidents for drawing permit to hunt Kodiak brown bears in Game Management Unit 8. The plaintiff, Robert Cassell, is an Alaskan resident and hunter. Cassell complains that the existing allocation of not less than 60% of permits to resident hunters is unconstitutional. The Alaska Board of Game ("Board") is responsible for the allocation. The Board, is an agency of the State of Alaska, created by the Alaska State Legislature through the enactment of AS 16.05.221(b), and tasked with "the conservation and development of the game resources of the state[.]" Under both AS 16.05.241 and AS 16.05.255, the Board has the authority to adopt rules and regulations governing the taking of game.

On December 23, 2020, Cassell filed a motion for **summary judgment** asking the court to rule, as a matter of law, that 5 ACC 92.061 violates Article VIII §3 of the Alaska Constitution. On April 1, 2021, the Board filed its opposition and cross-motion for summary judgment. Several amicus curiae briefs have filed on both sides of the issue. The court heard oral argument Dec. 20, 2021. Having considered the briefs and arguments submitted by the parties, the court hereby DENIES Cassell's motion for summary judgment and GRANTS the Board's cross-motion. The court adopts the reasoning set forth in the briefs filed by the Board, by amicus curiae Alaska Professional Hunters' Association and Hunting Coalition. The Board is not required by Article VIII §3 of the Alaska Constitution to allocate to resident hunters more than two-thirds of the harvestable bears in the Kodiak draw hunt. Further, Article VIII §3 protects Alaska hunting guides as well as resident hunters, and the balanced allocation now in place falls well within the permissible bounds set by the regulation and Article VIII §§ 2 and 4.'

The Alaska Constitution does not prohibit allocating a share of the bear hunt to nonresidents, particularly when the hunt takes place largely on federally owned land. Cassell can reasonably disagree with the allocation made by the Board, and he is free to urge the Legislature and/or Board to change the allocation, but he has failed to show why this court should make the decision.

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

By Bill Iverson, Alaska Outdoor Council President (11+ years)

It has been a good year so far, despite the economic, political and health problems.

Covid-19 has made it a trying time, but it is time to get on with our lives and living.

The Sport shows have been a great success. Thanks to all the generous donors, volunteers, and attendees.

Kenai Peninsula Alaska Safari Club International have rejoined the fold. We also have a new member club, **Alaska Snow Machine Alliance**. Welcome aboard. We are stronger as a team than alone.

Alaska Outdoor Council and 6 other conservation minded non-profits formed a coalition to pool our Governor permits into one Super 7 Raffle again this year. When all was said and done, it was successful. Of that, 70% goes to the Department of Fish & Game with the remaining to be used by the coalition for projects related to the Department. The long-term goal, in my opinion, is to make the Department self-sufficient.

I would like to welcome our new board members Carl Nelson from Anchorage and Tammi Linn from Soldotna. See their bio's in this issue.

My wife Pam Iverson, our current Administrative Director, will be retiring from her work with the Alaska Outdoor Council on June 1st. Kendra Edwards is currently training up to replace Pam. Pam has done a great job over the last 11+ years. Wish her well.

Our Board of Fisheries is out of skew again. Too heavily weighted toward the commercial fisherman. No one stepped up to fill the 2 vacant seats, so this is what we got. Thank Israel Paton for his service.

I would like to congratulate Caleb Martin for doing an excellent job, in his position as Executive Director for the Alaska Outdoor Council. His first year was a good one. He will be implementing a new look and feel for us in the social media world and bring us into the 21st century. We welcome his energy.



Please be sure to check your membership expiration date on the back of the newsletter in the address block and renew your membership today!

If you can, please send a donation to the Alaska Outdoor Council or to Alaska Fish & Wildlife Conservation Fund (tax deductible). Perhaps the amount you might have spent at one of our banquets. **If you are doing any estate planning, please remember Alaska Outdoor Council.**

ALASKA OUTDOOR COUNCIL BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

President: Bill Iverson
Soldotna, Alaska
president@alaskaoutdoorcouncil.com

Vice-President Interior: Rob Mathews
Delta Junction, Alaska
vp1@alaskaoutdoorcouncil.com

Vice-President South-East: Jim Cartmill
Juneau, Alaska
vp2@alaskaoutdoorcouncil.com

Vice-President South-Central: Tammi Linn
Anchorage, Alaska
vp3@alaskaoutdoorcouncil.com

Treasurer: Todd Clark
Big Lake, Alaska
treasurer@alaskaoutdoorcouncil.com

Secretary: Carl Nelson
Anchorage, Alaska
secretary@alaskaoutdoorcouncil.com

At Large: (open)
Fairbanks, Alaska
atlarge@alaskaoutdoorcouncil.com

STAFF:

Executive Director:
Caleb Martin AOC/AFWCF
ed@alaskaoutdoorcouncil.com
Cell: 740-1702

Public Policy Director: Rod Arno
aoc@alaskaoutdoorcouncil.com
Cell: 841-6849

Administrative Director:
Kendra Edwards
admin@alaskaoutdoorcouncil.com

Certified Public Accountant:
Warwick & Schikora, CPA
Rick J. Schikora
1416 Gillam Way
Fairbanks, Alaska 99701
Phone: 907-456-1566
schikora@wscpa-ak.com

POLICY DIRECTOR REPORT

Rod Arno | AOC Public Policy Director Report, August 2022

Part I, State Management and Allocation of fish/game in Alaska.

AOC is currently at the table in a number of arenas, both state and federal, regarding major changes in state management and allocation of fish and game in Alaska (Part I) and public surface transportation to fish and game resources (Part II).



Federal laws and policy implementation by DOI:

- Thanks to the Governor, Mike Dunleavy and his administration the state is asking the 9th Circuit Court of Appeals just what authority to manage and allocate fish and game did Alaska give up in 1980 with the signing of ANILCA?

It would be good to have the answer to that question now before the state, willingly or not, concedes more of its management and allocation authority of fish and game over to the Feds.

AOC has filed an Amicus Curiae Brief in support of the state in the SOA v. FSB, case No.3:20-cv-00195-SLG, appealing Judge Sharon Gleason's disastrous decision on the case in federal District Court. Should her decision stand and become case law, the FSB would be free of state interference in federal land managers abilities to manage and allocate fish & game on Federal public lands and waters. AOC argues to throw her whole decision out as moot.

- Thanks to Robert Cassell the Alaska Supreme Court reaffirmed that the Alaska State Legislature turned over allocation of harvestable surplus, brown bear in this case, to the Alaska Board of Game.

The Superior Court of Alaska told Robert Cassell and his ilk that if they wanted to change the current allocation law, they can try and get legislation introduced and passed in the legislature to do so. AOC was provided the opportunity by SCI to join in and file an Amicus in support of the state regulatory process of allocating game in the Robert Cassell v. SOA (case No. 3AN-19-07460 CI).

So far I have not been made aware whether or not Cassell intends to run it on up to the Alaska Supreme Court to appeal.

- Thanks to John Sturgeon's, efforts as President of the Alaska Chapter of SCI, an FSB Coalition of state and national hunting interests has been formed. AOC is one of the participants, Caleb and I speak/

email/text regularly with John on how best to rein in the loss of state authority to manage and allocate fish and game on all of Alaska.

SCI and the FSB Coalition have been able to flood the public virtual and/or phone comment periods on scheduled FSB public meetings with Non-Federally Qualified Subsistence Users (NFQSU). The majority of testifiers were NFQ users opposing numerous Wildlife Temporary Special Action Requests (50 CFR § 100.19). Recent action by the FSB has resulted in closing federal lands to sheep, moose, and caribou hunting in parts of western Alaska and the Central Brooks Range. So far that overwhelming percentage of public testimony by NFQ subsistence users has had little effect on reining the Federal Subsistence Board in. The closures to nonlocal hunters are adding up, deer in SE Alaska is the next battleground.

- What's the roll of ADF&G management and allocation of fish and game on private lands owned by 229 federally recognized tribes (25 U.S.C. 5131) in Alaska.

Governor Dunleavy, pressed by AOC and LHG (Fairbanks) invited Caleb and I, John Sturgeon, Eddie Grasser, and Rick Green to discuss his signing of HB123 providing for the state recognition of federally recognized tribes. The governor insisted the bill did nothing more than recognize that there were native tribes in what became Alaska before statehood.

John Sturgeon, Eddie, and Rick all agreed with the Governor that signing would be better than having the voter initiative providing for the same federal tribal recognition pass in to law.

I feel the administration and the department of law, either really don't understand what the ramifications of federal tribal recognition, is or they just don't care.

Part II, Public surface transportation access to Public Resources

32nd Alaska State Legislature:

AOC participated in public meetings with both state and federal agencies on numerous pieces of legislation in the state legislature and at public land/water planning meetings advocating for public surface transportation (trails, roads, and waterways) and access to state and federal public lands/waters.

1) Ground transportation and access Bills introduced in the (2021-2022)

Continued on page 5

Continued from page 4

AOC monitored legislation (SB97/HB120 and SB133/HB195) introduced, by request of the Governor, during the 32nd Legislature 2021-22 that if passed into law would increase surface transportation and provide greater opportunities for state public lands to pass into private ownership. AOC actively opposed both bills because they would have allowed prime state recreation areas to pass into private ownership. Private ownership of lands tends to either block or commercialize public use, not advantageous to AOC membership traveling outdoors on state lands.

A question for the Re-elect Mike Dunleavy campaign would be - are there plans to be introducing these same land disposal bills in the 33rd State Legislature if re-elected?

Governor Dunleavy transmitted SB227/HB397 identifying 1,873 water bodies in or near federal areas that belong under state management authority, by virtue of the Submerged Lands Act. If passed this bill would have given state statutory authority to those waters which would force the Feds to prove otherwise, should they choose to. By doing so the state would be advancing the gains made by the Sturgeon wins before the U.S. Supreme Court.

State Lands bills were scheduled late in the second session, March 10th, and never made it out of H(FSH). If re-elected hopefully the Dunleavy team will put greater effort into getting the bill through the legislature.

Representative Geran Tarr (for Anchorage District #19) made sure HB397 never advanced out of H(FIH). Two of AOC's supportive Representatives have seats on the House Special Fisheries Committee, Kevin McCabe (Wasilla District #8) and Sarah Vance (Homer District #31). They are woefully under gunned on the H(FSH) Committee and would most likely appreciate being in the majority of members on the committee next session.



Photo courtesy Jamin Hunter Taylor

2) State and Federal funding for trail use.

Large sums of funding is currently being made available for Recreational trail projects.

- The 32nd Legislature approved \$14,750,000 out of the state's general fund (GF) for the special class of long distance trail hikers, bikers, skiers, ATVers, snowmachiners toward building the Alaska Long Trail from Seward to Fairbanks.

Governor Dunleavy vetoed \$10.5 million out of the state budget (CCs HB281, Section 14) based on protests from AOC and the LHG over concerns for what would be the ramifications to current access across a corridor stretching from Seward to Fairbanks. Who would the managers be? State Parks? Or Feds, if Lisa Murkowski gets her Alaska Long Trail study (up to \$500,000) bill S.1354 through Congress.

Dunleavy did allow \$4.25 million to fund Alaska Long Trail projects. All were non-motorized.

- U.S. Congress appropriated 50% of all the energy development revenue (\$1.9 billion a year) on Federal lands and waters for 2021-25 to go toward maintenance of current outdoor recreation facilities and permanent full funding of the Land and Water Conservation Fund. The Great American Outdoors Act of 2020.
- The March 2019 amendment to the National Trails System Act put recreational trail building and maintenance by the U.S. Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture on notice that scenic and historic travel routes were a priority on Federal lands.

What can AOC do to help make sure this sudden burst of money for outdoor recreation trails benefits it's membership? The Alaska Legislature and DNR's Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation (DPOR) have the authority to say which trail projects will be funded. Funding for Motorized trail building and maintaining is losing out to a well entrenched culture of elite outdoor activists who manage the Alaska Trails Initiative within DNR.

Alaska Trails, a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt nonprofit, lobbied the Alaska State legislature to appropriate \$14.75 million of general fund money for Long Trail projects. The appropriations were successfully championed by Senators Bill Wielechowski and Tom Begich during the last session. AOC has been unable to get legislators to ask for GFs for recreational trails in past year. Conservative legislators were unable, or didn't try, to get the appropriations cut out of the budget. \$4.25 million of non-motorized Long Trail projects were funded in the FY2023 state budget.

Continued on page 6

Continued from page 5

Alaska Trails is also the project manager for the 2023-2027 Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) update, assisting Alaska State Parks with the production of the document and public outreach.

Tucked away within the SCORP project is the SCORP Statewide Advisory Group (SWAG) and the Outdoor Recreational Trails Advisory Board (ORTAB). These boards advise Alaska State Parks on where federal trail grants will be spent. Membership to these boards appointment by the Commissioner of DNR. For years these board members are typically non-motorized trail advocates.

DPOR is also responsible for awarding grants for Snowmachine trail grooming. For FY2022 \$162,065.20 was collected from snowmachiners registration fees. \$168,965.33 in grants were awarded for winter trail grooming in SC region.

AOC Clubs; the Alaska Snowmachine Alliance (ASA) and the Snowmads of Homer, came to AOC Caleb Martin while doing club outreach last spring and provide AOC hard data where motorized users of state trails were being marginalized in the granting program the process by DPOR.

Trail building and maintenance of motorized trails needs better representation in DPOR.

To that end Governor Dunleavy put both Caleb and me on the SWAG workgroup currently updating the SCORP 2023-2027 required by NPS in order for the state to receive both Recreational Trails Program (RTP) and Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) grants for recreation trails. Today AOC has made inroads in making sure motorized recreational trail riding and hunter access are better represented in DPOR's grants program.

August 16th the Deputy Commissioner of DNR, AOC, the Snowmads, ASA, and DPOR staff meet to discuss how DPOR can more fairly grant federal trail funds to increase motorized trail access on state lands. The funding is available, now is the time for AOC to lobby the new acting Commissioner of DNR, Akis Gialopsos to bring the motorized public outdoor users into the State Parks's trail granting process.

At the August 16th meeting, which the Acting DNR Commissioner also attended, the next meeting was announced, September 1st, regarding Snowtrack funding.

ADF&G Hunter Access Grant Program granted hunter access projects of \$1.76 million in FY2022 to ADF&G DWC and City or Boroughs only, no NGOs. AOC was instrumental in getting this access grant program started in Alaska over the last few years.

This is another trail funding source that AOC Clubs could get involved in.



Photo courtesy Jamin Hunter Taylor

3) Update the Susitna Basin Recreation Rivers Area Plan.

By the request of Governor Dunleavy HB120/SB97 State Land Sales and Leases was introduced in the 32nd Alaska Legislature. Section 19 of the bill would repeal the legislatively created Recreation River corridors in the Susitna Basin. The bill died in H(FIN).

No doubt the DNR Commissioner took the opportunity to open the 30-year-old management plan for the Rec. Rivers up for public review to accommodate administration's desire to open development in the Susitna basin. AOC has provided written and oral testimony supporting the Susitna Basin Rec. Rivers area during the early scoping period this summer. The creation of the Rec. River Areas was to establish corridors along 6 rivers whose primary purpose was the maintenance and enhancement of lands/waters for recreation by the public, AS41.23.400.

Repealing the legislatively created area to allow for private ownership of land within the corridors would most likely be a detriment to public use. Supposedly there are 430 private parcels already located in the corridors, which should provide for adequate commercial recreational services as the economics of recreational development becomes profitable.

AS 41.23.400 does not preclude DNR from permitting river crossings or the construction of boat launches near new roadways. AOC supports road construction permitting within the limits necessary to minimize habitat disturbances.

AOC will continue participating in the public scoping process updating the 1991 Susitna Basin Rec. Rivers Plan advocating for conservation of fish and wildlife habitat along with regulated motorized use consistent with DNR generally allowed uses. To date DNR has

Continued on page 7

Continued from page 6

provided scant information on how effectively the 1991 management plan has been implemented in the Susitna Basin.

4) The West Susitna Access Road proposed by the Alaska Industrial Development and Export Authority (AIDEA) and the Mat-Su Borough.

AOC supports construction of the 100-mile road to ore deposits located on state lands on the west side of the Susitna Basin - only if it's ultimately open to public use and at the end of the mining development the road is not destroyed and returned to its natural habitat.

So far, May 2022, AIDEA has filed its 404-permit application to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for a Multi-use West Susitna Access Project.

AOC has commented in writing and orally of its support for the access road construction across salmon bearing rivers, when necessary and the creation of boat launch sites next to those crossing bridge locations.

Also AOC's PPD is a board member of a new nonprofit NGO, "Friends of the West Susitna Road" that brings business, developers, and outdoors folk together advocating publicly for the building of the multi-use access road. www.friendsofwestsusitna.org

5) Motorized Access on Federal lands and waters in Alaska.

Governor Dunleavy claimed a victory for the state on July 8th when the BLM dropped its claim to 91 river miles of the North and Middle Fork of the Forty-mile River. I consider it a shallow victory in light of the fact that it would have left the state a more valuable victory had DOI challenged the ownership in federal court and lost. The state spends millions of dollars doing field surveys and

data gather on each navigability determination. There is no way the state can afford the expense of preparing for the thousands of rivers that the Feds won't willing handover authority to the state on. Apparently DOI has no intentions of honoring the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in the Sturgeon cases without a fight. Which will cost the state in legal fees time after time to gain management authority of navigable waters in Alaska.

As a member of the BLM Resource Advisory Council (appointed by Sec. Department of the Interior under Trump, representing Dispersed Recreation, term ending in 2024) I have been able to bring attention to the Supplement to BLM Manual 2920 regarding winter trapper cabins BLM lands, 17(b) Easements, RS2477s, and Federal Subsistence Program actions this past year during BLM RAC meetings (5/25/2021, 5/17/2022). Some improvements were made to the permits for winter Trapper Cabins and BLM is reportedly busy mapping, marking, and maintaining 17(b) Easements. I feel Alaska BLM does little more than it deems necessary to fulfill its duties and responsibilities to the BLM RAC under FLPMA and FACA.

FLPMA - Federal Land Policy and Management Act, 43 U.S.C. 1739.

FACA - Federal Advisory Committee Act. 5 U.S.C. appendix 2.

As BLM is the federal agency responsible for reviewing the Ambler mining district road access project, I do have an opportunity to advocate for public access to public state and federal lands along the proposed road right-of-way.

ALASKA OUTDOOR COUNCIL SPONSORS 7TH SUMMIT SHOOTING PARK

When completed, 7th Summit will be the largest facility of its kind in the state, with 200 acres of land that will facilitate training youth primarily in clay target shooting sports, but will also include archery, biathlon, camping, among other various outdoor activities.

With a focus on youth clay target sports, 7th Summit aims provide training for local athletes and competition for teams from all over the state.

For more information, visit www.akyess.org, or Alaska YESS and 7th Summit Shooting Park Facebook pages. 7th Summit is located at the end of Carmel Road off Knik-Goose Bay Road.



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

By Caleb Martin, Executive Director

Greetings AOC Members and Fellow Alaskans,

The days are getting shorter, and Hunting Season is again drawing near! As we progress this season, we have continued a year of growth on many fronts while we have experienced loss on others. It becomes more apparent each day the importance of Alaskans uniting on issues and resolving our differences.



Outdoor Education

This year Alaska Outdoor Council focused on the future of our great state by investing in our youth. We partnered with Raise 'Em Outdoors to bring 51 campers and their families together to learn more about shooting, fishing, and camping. It's our hope that this education will create experiences and memories that will turn into passion for the outdoors. It's ways like this that will help us to shape the future of Alaska in a positive manner. As always, an investment in our youth IS an investment in our future. In total at the time of this publication, Alaska Outdoor Council has help raise over \$40,000 dollars in 2022 for Outdoor Education for our youth. We will continue to work diligently to support and progress shooting sports and our competition committee specifically. If any Alaskans, have suggestions or are involved in outdoor education, I'd like to encourage them to reach out to use as we turn this corner in educating future generations of Alaska.

Federal Land Closures

Unfortunately, we haven't gained a lot of ground this year on the federal closures on federal lands. We started off the year by bringing strong opposition to Unit 26 and Unit 23. Despite the massive amount of opposition to both these closures, Millions of acres were again closed to non-rural users. The closures continued as Unit 26 and 24 were closed to sheep hunting. Alaska Outdoor Council committed \$50,000 into federal litigation to try to find a resolution to these closures. We are now waiting on the court to make a decision on these cases, but want to stress the importance of Alaskans remaining involved and voicing their opposition when the opportunities arrive.

Growing the community

With so many different management issues and population issues, it is as vital as ever to bring our outdoor community together and encourage growth whenever the opportunity presents itself. It's very clear there are more and more folks that are looking to harvest their food and experience the outdoors. There is no better way we can help our way of life and outdoor community than to take someone outdoors or teach them the importance of our natural resources. It seems there has been a growing number of pushbacks from experienced hunters to teach and educate. This pushback is often seen online driving away new hunters. This inadvertently hurts our community and only makes us a smaller minority. As it sits right now, only roughly 15% of Alaskans hunt. As we move into hunting season, I would encourage us to help new hunters in the field and educate on good practices.

ALASKA OUTDOOR COUNCIL SPONSORS RAISE'EM OUTDOORS CHILDREN'S CAMP

The **Raise 'Em Outdoors Alaska Camps** were a resounding success!

It was great to not only sponsor these camps, but also to partner with such a great organization. We truly look forward to being a part of this program again next year and continue to watch it grow.

Great job to The Hoffman Life for spear heading this experience and allowing us to be a small part of it. **Alaska Outdoor Council** was able to help raise **\$15,300 dollars for the Raise 'Em Outdoors Alaskan Camps** that brought over 55 campers to this year's camps!



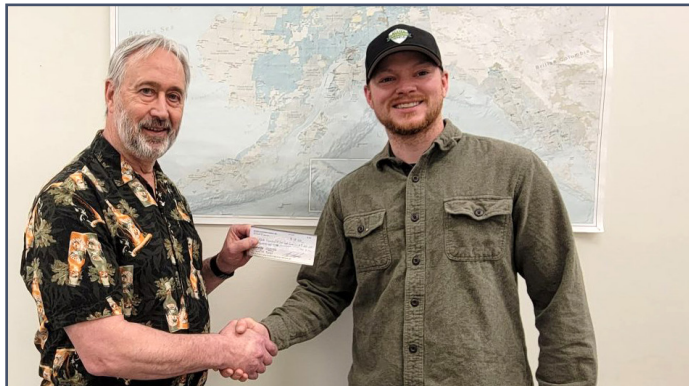
ALASKA OUTDOOR COUNCIL SPONSORS RABBIT CREEK SHOOTING RANGE REMODEL

"Today, I got to visit Director of The Division of Wildlife Conservation, Eddie Grasser to pass along funds for improvements at the Rabbit Creek Rimfire Range. It is located at Rabbit Creek Shooting Park". - Caleb Martin- Executive Director

A major component of the RCSP is hunter education and training. To this end, the RCSP has a special building with two classrooms where a wide variety of classes are offered for basic safety, shooting, and hunting skills by the Alaska Department of Fish and Games Hunter Information and Training (HIT) Program.

A major goal of RCSP and the HIT program is to introduce Alaskan youth to the heritage of safe and fun shooting. To this end the RCSP hosts two Youth Shotgun Leagues, one in the fall and one in the spring. Girls and boys ages 10 to 15 are invited

to come and experience the fun and friendly competition while developing skills shooting moving clay targets. Additionally kids 16 to 18 may shoot in a "Senior Youth League" to further hone their skills



ALASKA OUTDOOR COUNCIL FILES AMICUS IN STATE VS FEDERAL SUBSISTENCE BOARD

In a continual effort to protect All Alaskans' rights to access their natural resources, Alaska Outdoor Council has filed an Amicus Curiae Brief in the State's case. An amicus curia is an individual or organization who is not a party to a legal case, but who is permitted to assist a court by offering information, expertise, or insight that has a bearing on the issues in the case. The purpose on this brief is to show the vast amount of Alaskan's not being represented in FSB decisions and lack of procedural basis in Federal Closures

Under current federal law, Title VIII of Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA), that's not how it's done in Alaska. Unlike any other state in the union the U.S. Congress created their own regulatory body to manage and regulate hunting and fishing on federal lands in Alaska, +60% of the state. If you don't know it yet there are 2 hunting/fishing regulation books out for Alaska each year.

One by the state that includes both General and Subsistence bag limits & seasons on state lands, private lands (Alaska Native lands), and federal lands.

The other regulations book is for federal lands only and the Federal Subsistence Board (FSB) adopts its rules.

AOC went to the trouble and expense of having expert legal counsel prepare a brief to the 9th Circuit Court in support of the state's efforts to overturn the U.S. District Court of Alaska decision in case No. 3:20-cv-00195-SLG because if that ruling is left to stand as caselaw the FSB could easily eliminate all non-subsistence hunting on federal lands based on competition with non-locals.

That's a pretty low bar for the FSB to have to justify closing federal lands to non-local hunters. The majority vote of the 8 board members, all appointed by the U.S. Secretary of the Interior (with the concurrence of the

US Secretary of Agricultural) could close federal lands to nonlocals without any discussion of "times of shortage" (scarcity) coming up. A conservation concern of the game population is not necessary to enact the closures to nonlocal hunters.

AOC views many of the FSB's closures to nonlocal hunters as unnecessary in order to continue subsistence uses consistent with those living a subsistence lifestyle. AOC would much prefer to have fish and game managed and allocated under one unified statewide system. Alaskans are best suited to work through fish and game allocation conflicts among beneficial users.

Actions taken by the FSB need scrutinized in Federal Court. Just tell us now, did Alaska lose its authority to manage/allocate fish and game on federal lands/waters with the passage of Title VIII of ANILCA back in 1980 or not? If so Alaskans need to consider how fish and game management is to be implemented on state and private lands interspersed among the majority federal lands in Alaska.

AOC continues to advocate for state authority to manage and allocate fish and game by filing an Amicus Curiae brief in support of the State of Alaska Appeal Requesting Reversal of the District Court Order in the SOA v. FSB case. The Federal Court Judges do take note of public positions on legal challenges before them. That's why AOC participate in the federal courts process on memberships behalf.

If you are not an AOC member join now online. It's an important time for Alaska hunters to participate in the public rulemaking process.

Read the Brief in it's entirety on the Alaska Outdoor Council Website.

ALASKA OUTDOOR COUNCIL REQUESTS DUNLEAVY SEEK ACTION ON TAKU RIVER MINING CLEAN UP.

The Alaska Outdoor Council (original AOC) views the time is finally ripe to work with the Province of British Columbia (B.C.) and start a remediation/reclamation program to mitigate further mineral discharge from mining operations at the Tulsequah Chief mine in B.C.

A number of AOC members and members of AOC Clubs fish the Taku River. As a statewide conservation organization in Alaska AOC is supportive of what actions the state and Alaska's Congressional delegation can take to minimize the current down trend of Chinook salmon stocks in Southeast waters.

AOC asks that the State of Alaska and Alaska Congressional delegation step up efforts to take advantage of the August 2022 closure of the receivership process ordered by the Canadian court regarding the transfer of ownership of the Tulsequah Chief Mine.

The B.C. Mines Minister declared the Tulsequah Chief mine's pollution unacceptable in 2015. The mine is located upstream on the Taku River from where it flows across the Alaska border. Since 2015 Chinook salmon on the Taku River have been listed as a Stock of Concern, (5AAC 39.222 Policy for the management of sustainable fisheries) by the Alaska Board of Fisheries. Seven years of delay in clean up of toxic discharge from the Tulsequah Chief mine into the Taku River watershed can not be advantageous to chinook salmon.

AOC understands that Ocean acidification, heat blobs, released hatchery chum and pink production, and predation on chinook salmon, plus other causes unknown to us all are significant factors that could affect the recovery rate of Chinook salmon in Southeast Alaska.

Reducing toxic minerals from reaching the Taku River watershed is something the state and Alaska Congressional delegation should help achieve this next month. The time is ripe, support from Canada's First Nation in cleaning up the mine site will have sway with the government of B.C.

Fisheries abundant enough to provide Alaskans with a dependable source of food is in Alaska's best interest.

The number of salmon stocks in Southeast Alaska listed as stocks of concern could be increasing next year. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game has recommended the addition of some king, sockeye and pink salmon populations from around the region to the list of those already seeing chronically low returns.

A stock of concern listing means that population is repeatedly falling short of state goals for the number of fish that surviving and making it back to spawning waters. In Alaska, most of those are chinook salmon stocks. In Southeast three already listed king stocks are on the Chilkat River near Haines, King Salmon River south of Juneau and the Unuk River north of Ketchikan.

"With the current situation in Southeast Alaska I would say that the proposed recommendations, are more than warranted and unfortunately it comes at a cost of opportunity to the user groups and it's just the way the ball's rolling right now," said Ed Jones fish and game coordinator for the agency's sportfish division. "The one thing that I will say about these king salmon stocks is that history's shown that when they do turn the corner and come back, they do so pretty dramatically. They usually, it doesn't take them very much time at all to turn around and be in high production mode."

Jones said some of the stocks have trended upward slightly in recent years but still do not have a good outlook.

Another already listed stock is sockeye salmon that spawn in MacDonald Lake between Wrangell and Ketchikan. And that's one that's been on and off the list in the past two decades.

Listing a stock results in an action plan for management measures meant to reduce harvest of those fish and aimed to help a stock rebound. That has meant close areas and shortened time for commercial, sport and subsistence fishing. The designations are reviewed every three years as part of the regular Board of Fisheries cycle. Stocks that rebound and start meeting goals can be delisted and action plans removed. But the department says none of the four currently listed have improved enough for that change.

And it has recommending six others be added. Those are king salmon on the Stikine River near Wrangell and one of its tributaries, Andrews Creek. Other recommendations are for king salmon on the Taku River near Juneau and the Chickamin River northeast of Ketchikan. The department's also recommending listing sockeye salmon on the Klukshu River, a tributary of the Alsek River southeast of Yakutat. Three of those recommendations are for waterway that cross the border with Canada and are governed by the Pacific Salmon Treaty between the two countries.

Continued on page 11

Continued from page 10

"You know obviously for those systems, both countries are going to take management measures to meet escapement," said Troy Thynes, Fish and Game's region one management coordinator for commercial fisheries. "We have been doing that in the U.S. fisheries, Alaska fisheries for the past several years and have been taken some fairly major restrictions already in those fisheries, the sport, commercial and subsistence fisheries."

Department officials said those steps have dramatically reduced harvest. For example on the Taku River kings Fish and Game's Jones said the harvest rate has been cut from 20-25 percent of a king run, down to around two percent in recent years.

"So although the runs still aren't doing well at all, we've done a very good job in my opinion of passing what few fish are coming back to the spawning grounds to ideally help future production out," Jones said.

And those fishing restrictions could continue with these listings. But fishery managers are also nearing the limits of measures they can take to help out those stocks.

Commercial fishing industry groups support the state agency's efforts to protect these underperforming salmon stocks.

Alaska Trollers Association executive director Amy Daugherty said king salmon returns this year were a real disappointment.

"We default back to our managers and we truly want our stocks, those stocks, those local rivers to improve and we'll just have to hope that some real research is done to find out what is going on," Daugherty said.

Kathy Hansen, sounded a similar note. She's

executive director of the Southeast Alaska Fishermen's Alliance, which represents multiple commercial fishing gear groups.

"Do I think the chinook stock will rebound, yes I do think they will eventually rebound, the question is, how soon what other mitigating factors are affecting the runs that we just haven't yet pinpointed," Hansen said.

Hansen's not expecting a big change for fishing opportunity with the additional listings since conservation measures have already been in place.

Susan Doherty is executive director of Southeast Alaska Seiners Association, which represents purse seine fishermen. She thinks Fish and Game has done a good job of taking steps to reduce catches of those fish.

"It's Fish and Game's due diligence and the Board of Fish's due diligence to make sure we're managing for sustainable yield and part of that is you have to have a return that will perpetuate another return," Doherty said. "So I applaud Fish and Game for their effort and yeah, they're just doing their job. There's just so much information we don't know."

The board is expected to take up those listing recommendations at the next Southeast finfish meeting, which is now scheduled for next April.

A sixth recommendation is for pink salmon on the inside waters of the northern panhandle. The Board of Fisheries has decided not to consider that listing however. Pink salmon return to spawn every two years and don't fit well into this type of longer term listing and action plan. As it is, Fish and Game has already curtailed seine fishing on those stocks during many recent even years

ALASKA OUTDOOR COUNCIL WELCOMES NEW MEMBER CLUBS

The Alaska Snowmachine Alliance supports snowmachining throughout the State of Alaska and all snowmachine activities including racing and vintage, snowmachine trails, the SnowTRAC program and it's funding, snowmachine Search and Rescue and the betterment of snowmachining throughout the State of Alaska



The Caribou Hills Cabin Hoppers is a Non-profit volunteer organization established in 1987 to promote, develop and secure safe recreational trails for public use. Our common goal is to preserve these trails for future generations to enjoy year round. Hikers, hunters, bikers, backpackers, cross-country skiers, dog mushers, snowmachiners or anyone who desires to enjoy our great public lands. Proceeds are used to purchase and maintain our equipment, provide public access and develop safe trails.



THE HUNT

Successful hunts are perfect conspiracies of preparation and good luck. | By Ken Marsh

I'd arrived late in the day, after a long drive followed by a hike into the hills. By the time my tent was pitched and camp organized, little time remained for hunting, maybe half an hour at most. Already dusk rose from the ground shadows, muting the light around me and gathering overhead like campfire smoke. Still, it was worth a look; moose move on windless September evenings like this one, the kind that promise a full moon and hard frost. I thought I might spot a bull, if I were very lucky, in the meadow before dark.

So I picked up my rifle, a decades-old bolt-action Remington 30.06 purchased new with paper route money when I was a boy, and left camp, walking slowly, quietly toward a point overlooking the meadow nearby. I'd scouted the place the previous fall and discovered promising signs: moose trails worn into the duff, generations of antler rubs marking the saplings, a wallow where bulls had rolled during the rut. Drained by a brook and set in a small spot burn, the meadow was backed on its far side by a grass- and alder-covered mountainside that swept up into crags 3,000 feet high. Bulls would file down to this place from their high-country summer ranges with the cooler days of fall. On my side of the meadow, a forest of aspen and spruce stood where the burn tapered off, providing cover for moose and safe places for them to bed.

I found an opening among some charred stumps and settled in to watch. My riflescope would gather the light remaining and allow me to scan the meadow edges for a bull. Around me the country was still, the air cold and tangy with the sweet-and-sour smells of autumn-ripe berries.

A hunter remembers best his first bull moose and his last, and even as those past bulls flashed their antlers in my mind, each with a rack distinctive in spread and symmetry, a shadow in the meadow filled my scope. The shadow vanished when I lifted my head and peeked over the rifle, so I looked back into the scope and found it again – and this time recognized the smoky-gray shoulder hump and unmistakable flowing stride of a moose. At nearly the same time, I spotted the antlers.

The bull was headed for thick cover at the meadow's edge, so calculations on its rack had to be hastily made. Pause for much more than a heartbeat and the moose would vanish, perhaps forever; shoot before determining whether or not the antler width made the bull legal – 50 inches was the minimum – and I would risk breaking the law.



I measured the antler spread against what I figured to be the foot or more of space between the bull's ear tips. The beams were tall and the palms flared widely, extending far beyond the ears, and I reckoned the animal was just legal.

Flame shot from my rifle muzzle, blinding me momentarily. I ejected the spent cartridge and shoved in a fresh round. When I brought the scope back up, the bull appeared unscathed and had almost reached cover. At stake now was a comfortable winter of good eating – delicacies like back-strap steaks with mushrooms and Dijon, stroganoff over brown rice, and roasts braised in red wine. So with the bull quartering away, I placed the crosshairs near the top of its head, squeezed carefully, and fired again.

By the time I picked my way through the burn rubble to where the bull lay, its 52-inch-wide rack reflected the light of a full September moon.

Successful hunts are perfect conspiracies of preparation and chance. The best hunters, the alleged 10 percent said to consistently take 90 percent of the game, are those who prepare thoroughly to maximize their odds of success. These hunters cultivate their own "good luck" by studying the game they hunt, scouting the country to be hunted, owning quality equipment, and spending adequate time in the field hunting.

As a young man, I spent many Septembers hunting moose in the forests near my home in Southcentral Alaska. I refined my tracking skills along the way, learning not only to find hoof prints in the mud and moss, but to gauge how much time had passed since a moose made them. I learned to look for the bone-white trunks of saplings left bare after a bull scraped off the bark while rubbing the velvet from its antlers

Continued on page 13

Continued from page 12

– the antler-scraping bull, and others too, usually lingered nearby. I discovered that moose trails worn along the open edges of lakes and swamps were places to watch only in the late evenings and early mornings; by day, the moose were mostly bedded out of sight in tall grass shadows and hilltop alder thickets.

I learned these truths and many others about moose in my region and eventually began bringing home meat consistently. By taking some of the mystery out of finding a bull, I'd become a lucky moose hunter. Even so, I still had much to learn. You need only butcher in the field with a 4-inch Swiss Army knife one 900-pound bull moose to ever after carry not one but at least two proper sheath knives or large folding knives with skinning blades. You need only burst shirtless once (OK, twice in my hard-headed case) from the cool September forest, your bare chest crisscrossed with devil's club scratches and white-sock bites, because the shirt you'd worn had to be cut into strips and hung from trees to mark a route from the kill to the road. These days, I never hunt moose without bringing along a roll of survey tape for that purpose; more sophisticated hunters use handheld GPS units to pinpoint their kills.

Unlike that bull in the burn, most of my moose have fallen with a single shot from my 30.06 Remington BDL loaded with 180-grain silvertip bullets. Some hunters swear by more powerful rifles and heavier bullets, but really, I've learned, there's no substitute for proper shot placement. Conventional wisdom suggests Alaska big game hunters' riflescopes be sighted to place bullets two inches high at 100 yards. This is because hunting over the state's open tundras and treeless mountain ranges often calls for longer-range shooting. But for hunting in my Susitna Valley forests and thickets, where moose are most frequently encountered at close range, I dial in my rifle to punch out a dime at 100 yards. The lesson here is not to tear down conventions, but to know



your game, your distinctive terrains and equipment, and to hunt accordingly.

News in the Nelchina basin travels in the wind, rain, and snow. One night in mid-September, I heard wolves howling near my camp and knew the last of the caribou were passing through. Wolves follow caribou herds, picking off the straggling old, lame and unlucky; as I lay in my sleeping bag listening, a cold rain pattering against the tent fly, I wondered if perhaps I'd come too late.

Earlier that day, I'd stood on the shore of a lake near camp, watching bands of caribou, mostly cows and calves, hustle through the stubby spruces on the lake's far side. Hoping for a bull, I let them all pass. I would settle for a barren cow, given no other choice. But a bull would provide more meat for my effort.

Next morning, the rain had stopped and the wolves were no longer howling. The temperature had fallen sharply, and I realized as I awoke that my nose was cold and a peculiar brightness glowed outside the tent. I dressed warmly, picked up my rifle, and opened the fly to newly fallen, shin-deep snow.

Alaska hunters live for September. The month, or at least the better part of it, marks our brief autumn, a season that for most of us slides too quickly into winter. That brevity has a way of heightening one's sense of mortality. Even as we enter September's cool days and brittle-cold nights, the willows and aspens gold against scarlet hills of bearberry and dwarf birch, it's difficult to escape a profound sense of urgency. Time simply doesn't linger the way it does in January's post-solstice darkness, or during late June's endless days. Instead, life in September accelerates, the days measured as grains in an hourglass, falling ever faster as winter's shadow grows long and dark.

From a breezy hillside a short hike beyond camp, I scanned the country that morning for game. Nothing. Even the cows and calves had moved on. Lunchtime came and went; I grew cold and impatient. Finally, I decided to take a walk and, within a mile or so, left the open country and entered a section of broken timber. The Nelchina basin's taiga – a botanical edge formed where boreal forests dissolve into open tundra – can be problematic to hunt. Thickets of willow and weather-stunted black spruce (a particularly tall tree might exceed 12 feet high) limit visibility, and caribou blend well into the black, gray, and white mosaics of spruce, shrubs and early-season snows.

In the timber, tracks marked the fresh snow and it

Continued on page 14

Continued from page 13

was clear that several bands of caribou had passed that morning without me seeing them. Not that caribou are especially sneaky creatures, but instinct serves them well. On open tundra they tend to follow natural convolutions – subtle seams and gullies – that conceal them from distant, meat-hungry eyes. Timbered stretches hide them equally well.

I'd paused over some moose tracks, and was considering following them, when antler tines appeared bobbing through the trees nearby. Caribou. I saw them in flashes as they bounced through openings in the brush, a group of heavy-racked bulls headed east toward winter range in Canada, like the cows and calves before them. Unable to find an open shot, I chased the bulls, like a two-legged wolf, to the timber's edge. The closest bull trotted broadside less than 50 yards away, jaw tipped slightly skyward, tall rack cradling its back. I raised my rifle, found the heart, and ended my hunt with a single shot.

After that the work began, the skinning and butchering and packing meat to camp. But it was good work, the kind that follows successful hunts and sheds warm light against the darkness of the coming winter.

At its most remote, Alaska resembles Stanley's Dark Continent. The state is unfathomably huge and mostly roadless; many mountains, valleys, streams and lakes remain tucked away in distant corners, unnamed and unvisited. As hunters we are drawn to the mystique of it all, to the promise of seeking game in North America's last, great unspoiled wilderness.

In this sense, to hunt Alaska is to embark on safari. Reaching the dream venues – places like the Brooks Range for Dall rams, the high Arctic tundras for caribou, the rocky coasts of the Inside Passage for bear and black-tailed deer, the Interior's trackless forests for moose – requires travel. And travel over endless miles of hummocks, muskegs, bays, mountains, rivers, and interminable jungles of devil's club and alder requires imagination, research and, often, more than a little money.

Hunters here frequently step off passenger jets at regional hubs – Dillingham, Yakutat, Kotzebue, Fairbanks, Ketchikan, and others – and onto small commuter-type flights (Alaskans call them "puddle jumpers") to remote villages and outposts. From these isolated communities, hunters may climb into even smaller planes, chartered in advance, or perhaps riverboats, for further 50-, 100-, or 200-mile shuttles into the backcountry. For many, even that won't be the final destination; as the engine hum of the plane or boat fades into the distance, some hunters turn to

long, hard climbs into the heart of the country, where the big grizzlies den, or the Dall sheep feed, or where the mountain goats await. Get this far and you'll have traveled back in time. You'll experience complete wildness, and get a sense of North America as it was before Lewis and Clark, or even prior to Christ and the Crucifixion.

You'll see that reaching Alaska's hinterlands is rarely easy or inexpensive (hunters seeking Dall sheep, grizzly bear or moose with a guide may spend \$15,000 to \$25,000); weather is always a complicating factor and gasoline in the Bush is a particularly precious commodity. But for many hunters, getting there is half the battle. For the rest of us, it is half the charm.



Your hunt began two days ago, at a port along Alaska's Southcentral coast – someplace like Whittier, Cordova, Valdez, or Yakutat; or perhaps a venue much farther southeast, out of Ketchikan, Petersburg, or Craig. You stepped into a friend's open fishing boat (really an oversized dory) and, framed by the world's most exquisite scenery, traveled the coastline in a rare stretch of still weather and sunshine. Already a dozen black bears have shown themselves, trundling along remote mountainsides, out of reach. Even so, you've found sport in the searching and finding, in the visual pursuit. You're aware, of course, that spotting bears is only one phase of the game.

Around mid-morning on your third day, a coal-black silhouette appears on a mountainside high above you. You raise your binoculars and feel your heart speed up; a tickle flutters in your chest as you realize that this bear is a possibility. The animal is meandering north along the mountainside, stopping to feed and sun as it makes its way casually toward a shallow ravine a half-mile or so beyond. That ravine is your

Continued on page 15

Continued from page 14



key; it will provide you a pathway up the mountain to an open bench the bear must cross, and allow you to stay out of sight as you move. Now the real stalk begins.

Soon you're scrambling up a fan of broken shale – it's like climbing a mountain of poker chips – your lungs heaving as you suck thin air. Your sprint will take you 2,500 vertical feet up from the beach, beyond a belt of hemlocks, through barriers of clutching alders and clawing salmonberry brambles, and finally into broken alpine tundra. If you're lucky, if you've been quick enough and quiet, and the wind hasn't betrayed you, you'll reach the bench first.

You've heard of more creative stalks. A friend once recounted the time his father climbed after a large, berry-feeding black bear on a Kenai Peninsula mountainside, only to have his approach blocked by a flock of wandering Dall sheep. Figuring the bear would flee if the sheep spooked, your friend's father reached into his pack and wrapped himself in white toilet paper. On hands and knees he crept unnoticed

by the feeding sheep and, without further incident, killed the bear.

You're exhausted by the time you reach the bench at the top of the ravine, your thighs worn from the fast-paced climb. Worse, there's no bear in sight. Not to worry, a little rest will be good, allow you to steady your breathing and better place your shot when the bear does arrive.

But the bear does not arrive. You wonder if perhaps you're too late, or maybe the bear changed course for, an hour later, the animal has not appeared. Still sweating from the climb and feeling a little defeated, you figure it's time to descend back to the skiff.

You've started picking your way down the mountain, wondering what might have gone wrong, when a strange feeling makes you stop. You turn to look back up the mountain and, by god, there the bear stands, so close you could hit it with an easily-chucked stone. You're startled, and for an instant you hesitate. Then your body acts, even as your mind looks on, as in a dream.

The first shot sends the bear tumbling toward you down the slide, and you figure that it is dead, your hunt over. But it catches itself suddenly and springs with incredible agility to all fours. Your second shot is a reflex directed at the fleeting target that vanishes too quickly into thick brush in the center of the ravine.

Stillness.

There's nothing to do now but wait. Wait a half hour or so, like the professional hunters in Africa do for lion and Cape buffalo, for the animal to weaken. Wounded bears are best approached with backup, but you've done this before. Stay sharp and calm, work slowly, and you'll be OK.

When the time comes, you are locked and loaded, wondering. The blood spoor is easily found and, to your relief, the trail is short. The bear is lying dead in knee-high grass. Your shots were solid and now you may savor the afterglow, as would a mountain climber on reaching a summit, or an athlete scoring a winning goal.

Later you will linger in the sunlight on a boulder above the beach while a friend climbs another mountain for another bear. Rufus hummingbirds will flash among the salmonberries and you'll watch a pair of black-tailed deer feed along the base of a mountain. The air will smell strikingly fresh, slightly fishy, as it always does near the sea. And in the skiff, the bear's meat and hide, rolled and tucked out of the sun, will mark a spiritual gain snatched from an intangible passing.

SUSTAINING BUSINESS MEMBERS

- Alaska Connections/Shelter Lodge
- Alaskan Gun Guard, LLC.
- Alaska Remote Guide Service
- Arctic RV
- Bickman Builders
- Bliss Construction
- Captain Greg's Charters
- Chimo Guns
- Cruz Companies
- Fairbanks Fur Tannery
- Fishtale River Guides
- F & E Taxidermy & Rental
- Frontier Outfitters/Sentry Hardware
- Glacier Guides Inc.
- High Country Alaska
- Hutch's Mobile Service, LLC
- Lynx Construction, Inc.
- Matsu Events, LLC
- Ninilchik Charters
- Price Gregory International, Inc.
- Premier Electric LLC
- Pacific Rim Geological Consulting, Inc.
- Skyline Sales & Service
- Team CC
- Warwick & Schikora, PC

UPCOMING EVENTS

Alaska Outdoorsman Banquet
AK State Fair Grounds-Raven Hall
Palmer AK
October 15, 2022

Fairbanks Banquet & Fundraiser
Westmark Hotel-Goldroom,
Fairbanks, AK
November 5, 2022

MEMBER CLUBS

- Territorial Sportsmen, Inc.
- McKinley Mountainmen Muzzle Loading Rifle Club
- Chitina Dipnetters
- Alaska Waterfowl Association
- Sitka Sportsman's Association
- Cook Inlet Archers
- Alaska Outdoor Access Alliance
- Houston Chamber of Commerce
- Alaska Wild Sheep Foundation
- Tanana Valley Sportsmen's Association
- Snomads, Inc.
- Delta Sportsman's Association, Inc.
- Alaska Interior Marksmanship Committee
- Alaska Professional Hunters Association
- Juneau Rifle and Pistol Club, Inc
- Golden North Archery Assoc.
- Personal Watercraft Club of Alaska
- Interior Airboaters Association
- Caribou Hills Cabin Hoppers
- Alaska Rifle Club
- Safari Club International, Kenai Chapter
- Alaska Snowmachine Alliance
- Tok Shooters Association
- Matanuska Valley Sportsmen, Inc.
- Alaska Charter Association

AOC MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/DONATION FORM

Name #1: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Optional: Ph: _____ Fax: _____

E-mail: _____

Name #2: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Optional: Ph: _____ Fax: _____

E-mail: _____

PAYMENT: ☐ Check ☐ Visa/MC: _____

Exp: _____ CVS (3 digit code) _____

Signature: _____

I would like to:

- ☐ Renew my membership
- ☐ Become a new member
- ☐ Make a donation



Membership Catagory:

- ☐ Annual Individual \$25 ☐ Annual Family \$30
- ☐ 3-year Individual \$60 ☐ 3-year Family \$70
- ☐ 5-year Individual \$100 ☐ 5-yearl Family \$110
- ☐ Club membership \$50 annual
- ☐ Sustaining Business \$150 per year
- ☐ Sustaining Business - life \$1500 one time
- ☐ Life membership \$400 one time
- ☐ Lobbying donation \$ _____

TOTAL \$ _____

☐ Option out of Newsletter to view online instaed.

For membership and lobbying donations, please make payable to "AOC".

Lobbying donations are not tax deductible; Mail to: 310 K St., Suite 200, Anchorage, AK 99501