

My name is **MARK W. BELL** *Resident of Alaska for 53+ years and raised in Soldotna since 1960*

The Kenai Peninsula, west side of Cook Inlet and west side of the Alaska Range has been my place of work and playground for the past 37 years.

As co-owner of High Adventure Air and a commercial pilot, I've spent thousands of hours flying these areas.

Also being a registered hunting and fishing guide most of my adult life, I don't consider myself an expert, yet I feel I have a considerable amount of knowledge of Unit 16B and it's resources.

IN REGARDS TO:

Proposal 107-5 ACC 85,020 *Brown Bear Season & Bag Limits*

I have flown, for many years, Alaska Department of Fish & Game biologists on many surveys and projects regarding our natural resources. Likewise, I have been permitted on predation-control programs for Unit 16B and 17B.

My point is that to have a bag limit of two (2) bear and basically no closed season for this unit, there must have been surveys, numbers of bear, and data to justify this kind of action taken for bear harvest in a game management unit. This is extremely uncommon.

I haven't seen this information, but if accurate numbers show that the bear population is way out of balance, then I am in agreement with the current regulations.

As for the portion of Unit 16B between the Kustatan River and south to Drift River and Redoubt Bay (critical habitat area), the brown bear population has decreased in numbers alarmingly over the last two (2) to three (3) years.

As an air taxi and guide/outfitters, our bear viewing trips to the west side and Wolverine Creek are a big portion of our business. Over a lifetime of viewing bear in these areas, the average number of sightings had been high and acceptable on any given day of the season. However, these last couple of years, a bear viewing trip would be considered marginal at best

and some days not seeing any bear at all. (Unheard of in the past years.) In years past, aerial bear viewing on the grass flats in Redoubt Bay could be inspiring with five (5) to thirty (30) bear being seen in June and July at any given time. However, during the summer of 2012 very few were seen, and at times none at all. In this area, at times, breeding was even observed. But in 2012, definitely not.

Regarding this area, I find it unethical and down right unsporting to be hunting bear from an area where they are used to seeing humans and over time, not relating danger with humans.

As a hunting guide, bear hunts are part of my income and Unit 16-01 is one of my hunt areas. But this specific area, in my opinion, is unacceptable for the sport of brown bear hunting.

And for the mid summer hunt, the "No Bear Hair Hunt"... come on!!

My proposal is to leave a buffer zone on brown bear hunting around Wolverine Creek from the Kustatan River, south to Drift River, west to the park boundary and east of the shore line of Cook Inlet for four (4) consecutive years. In 2017 if the bear population has rebounded to normal numbers, return to harvesting one (1) bear every four (4) years as is seen in most game units. Even a LIMITED amount of harvest in this small area would help. At that time, allowing a five (5) mile radius buffer zone around Wolverine Creek for a game sanctuary. Protected areas like this are seen in most bear viewing locations throughout Alaska.

I realize a bear's home range can be much larger than this, but I feel this would be a good start.

Thanks for considering my opinion and proposal.

Sincerely,

**Mark W. Bell
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