

To: Board of Fish and Game

cc: Senator Cathy Giessel

Re: Trapping Regulations

From: Robert Bear (Cooper Landing Resident)

SUBMITTED BY KEN GREEN

RC 30

This winter three dogs in Cooper Landing have been caught in traps. One had her front leg amputated. Another had a toe amputated. A third was fortunate and only suffered minor bruising. The first two dogs were caught in road side traps. The third in the middle of a local trail. In the past, a couple heard the scream of their dogs while hiking on a forest service trail only to find their dog dead in a conibear trap a short distance from the trail. Others have been walking their dogs along the roadside not far from their homes only to have their dogs too get caught in traps. This has lead several people to now carry bolt cutters with them when they are out with their pets. Another woman in Moose Pass was skiing out her back door when she found herself tangled in a snare set. Yet Cooper Landing and Moose Pass are not alone. These occurrences are happening in small towns all around our state. It is because of this I write this letter in the hopes that we can get some of our trapping laws changed. I would like you to consider the following changes:

1. Let our trail system stay a trail system all year round. Traps need to be set 200 yards off trail

In this day and age of snow machines and ATV's there is no reason a trapper can't create his own trap line trail off the main trail system. Tappers are already doing this on their own up in Lake Louise, why not everywhere. Trappers also post signs that say trap line ahead giving other users groups a heads up in case they take a wrong turn. This allows everyone to use the main trail safely and warns people not to enter the trap line trail.

2. No Road side traps within x amount of miles of residential Neighborhoods and Institutions

Right now in Cooper Landing we have traps set less than 50 feet off the road between our Girls Camp Fire Site and our Senior Center. It's only a mater of time before a kid gets hurt. There are also traps set in our organic dump site and around the Chugach sub-station. Snug Harbor road has traps all the way up to the snow machine parking lot. Several dogs in the past and the two amputee dogs this year were caught in this area. We also seen trap sets off quartz creek road on the way towards the Crescent Lake trail head. All too close to residential neighborhoods.

3. Traps should be required to have Owners name on it.

If not their name, the trap should have a user tag that can be identified by an enforcement officer. If no tag on trap anyone should be able to pull the trap because most likely they are trapping illegally.

4. Trappers should be responsible for damages incurred.

If traps are deemed to be an illegal set - trappers should be monetary liable for damaged caused by their traps. The two amputee dogs this year where caught in an out of season lynx set and cost the owner \$5,000 in damages.

5. Regulations should be written in accordance to district needs.

The trapping regulation should fit the communities needs for the district. The Cooper Landing/ Moose Pass area and user group is vastly different from villages and towns in the interior. Regulations that seem appropriate on The Kenai Peninsula may not suit the needs for towns in the interior as population centers are different, user groups are different, peoples livelihoods' are different. Fish and Game should work with the communities in the appropriate districts to determine that districts needs.

I thank you for your consideration of these changes. I can tell you that a good deal of Cooper Landing and Moose Pass residents are feeling very frustrated with the current regulations and are feeling "trapped" within their own communities - afraid to go out and use our public lands . People are getting angry and divisions are growing louder and starting to fester. The monetary and emotion effect of trapped loved ones are taking their toll. The last time I felt this sentiment was with the mining issue in Cooper Landing in the early to mid 90's. There were fist-a-cuffs and shots fired. None of us need or want that. What we need is to come together and solve this problem - and indeed it is a problem. Maybe we can bring your number one enforcement complaint, trapping to a minimum. Maybe we can develop a of dialogue of respect between the different user groups so we can all operate safely in the back country.

Some may think I'm against trapping but I'm not. I own furs and have a great deal of respect for the trappers in the interior that are out checking their trap lines at 50 below and selling the pelts to feed their families. But I have to say I have zero respect for the lazy trappers that feel compelled to set traps from their cars in and around our neighborhoods, or those that insist on putting traps in the middle of multiuse trails and winter gateways to public use cabins because they have no regard or respect for the damage or injury to other user groups. This lack of respect is why we need the laws changed and a good dialogue started so that our public lands can be enjoyed by all - included our 4 legged companions.

As our state demographics changed and our population grows, public desire to get out of our cites and enjoy the back country is also going dramatically. Isn't it time our trapping laws change to reflect the communities we now live in?