

RC 099

To: Alaska Board of Game

Re: Comments on proposals 92 and 93

Fm: Bill Murrin, Founder of American Falconry Conservancy (AFC)

As the founder of AFC, and having recruited officers to help establish this association, I take great offense to [redacted] defamatory accusations toward us. I am not aware of any single member who helped establish this organization having done anything illegal or having been convicted of any wildlife crime. Certainly, none of them have gone to Alaska and done anything illegal to my knowledge, and I know all of them very well. [redacted] needs to cite whom he is referring to and what alleged crimes AFC founders have committed and have been convicted of. Otherwise I think his entire comment needs to be discarded due to the lack of integrity he has shown.

To support this position, I submit for the Board of Game's consideration, the possible retaliation [redacted] feels is due AFC for our Board of Directors rejecting his application into our organization in the recent past. I think the appropriate term is "sour grapes." Given the falsehoods he has presented to the Board of Game about AFC in order to retaliate against us, it can only be assumed that his comments are full of falsehoods. I will discuss [redacted]'s libelous accusations with our Board of Directors to determine if legal action against him is in order.

An example of his misrepresentation of our intentions is his contention that AFC's primary purpose to open Alaska is for the pursuit of white gyrs, which is blatantly false. This is mere speculation on his part (since he mistakenly identifies us as some sort of raptor breeding organization) and it demonstrates that he is willing to claim, with absolute certainty, something he knows nothing about - revealing a serious character flaw. AFC has opened numerous States to nonresident take for all falconers - including those who are not part of our organization - with no particular species of raptor in mind when we pursued this - except Minnesota where goshawk migration is concentrated around Duluth. This was of special interest to some, but not all, AFC members, in the same way white gyrs are perceived by some of our members.

AFC is made up of falconers who have diverse interests and the white gyr is simply one of many that our members have an interest in. Personally, I have not heard from a single member who was interested in white gyrs, even though those who took an Alaska gyr last year took white gyrs. It is perhaps a fad that will fade away shortly after those willing to take the time to trap one got the bird of their dreams. I say, *good for them!* It's like a hunter who always wanted to take a grizzly bear and finally got one. Alaska is the only State that offers this experience so there certainly will be those who will visit Alaska exclusively for that purpose. [redacted] paints this as an evil that must be stopped. If this is the case, then I suggest the Board stop Alaska falconers from performing the same evil; for surely, they are just as guilty as any falconer from the lower 48 for having a desire to practice falconry with various raptor species.

\_\_\_\_\_ also needs to keep in mind that Alaskans come to the lower 48 to harvest wildlife (some Alaska falconers come down to trap redbill hawks). Does that mean Alaskans must be viewed with the same contempt when they visit other States and be painted as wanton destroyers of wildlife as he attempts to do when he says "The lack of stewardship for the resource as demonstrated by nonresidents is with precedent"? Or are Alaskans different from all other human beings, with no selfishness or criminal activity ever having come forth from citizens of this State?

He also alleges that AFC wishes to decimate gyrfalcon populations with 6500 falconers raping Alaska resources. AFC has made it perfectly clear that we want *biology* to determine harvest numbers – not *politics* like \_\_\_\_\_ is applying. This is obviously a man with no scruples and will say anything that serves his self-serving interests.

I am utterly unaware of nonresident raptor breeders visiting Alaska and illegally taking raptors as \_\_\_\_\_ alleges, though I have no way of knowing one way or another unless there has been a conviction – innocent until proven guilty is something he needs to keep in mind (an important point to make is that we are not a raptor breeders' organization; we are a falconry organization). It is **extremely** risky business for anyone who might attempt taking raptors illegally and we would encourage Alaska Game & Fish to pursue such illegal activity and prosecute offenders with extreme prejudice. Having said this, one way to minimize the potential for such illegal activity is to open up take of desirable species within sensible management parameters so that legal harvest is far more attractive than the risks of prosecution and incarceration that would be attendant with illegal activity. It is simply common sense.

I have been a falconer for many more years than \_\_\_\_\_ is 16 (47 years to be exact) and I am still amazed at the lengths some falconers will go to deceive the public and government officials just to protect their self-serving interests. They seem to be ignorant of the fact that when they attack other falconers, they are discrediting themselves since they are part of this group of citizens.

Thank you,

Bill Murrin  
AFC Legal Liaison