

ACTION ALERT

ADFG Pushing “Open to Everything” Policy in Critical Habitat Areas

Background: An [important news story](#) recently told about the efforts of ADFG Habitat Division Director Randy Bates to rollback commonsense protections in some of Alaska’s most important public lands – our critical habitat areas, our game refuges and our wildlife sanctuaries. Follow-up information confirms a disturbing process where Bates is trying to completely re-write the rules governing our special areas without involving Alaskans in the process until it will be too late for meaningful input. If Bates has his way, there will be one limited public comment for more than a dozen critical habitat area management plans across the state by September 2014. Importantly, these rollbacks are gaining traction as Governor Parnell pushes to undermine citizen participation and strip away the rights of Alaskans to protect fish and game through the [“Silencing Alaskans Act \(HB 77\).”](#)

Why is ADFG Trying to Undermine Habitat Protection Rules? According to ADFG [internal meeting notes](#), certain “controversies” have led Bates and his team to gut special area rules statewide. The overarching theme for these rollbacks is to ensure virtually any activity can obtain a permit in a special management area. Here are a few examples of the “controversies” driving these sweeping policy changes:

- **Mining in the Redoubt Bay CHA:** When an oil company wanted to resume storing oil at the base of an active volcano (Mt. Redoubt), it received a special area permit from ADFG Habitat to mine boulders and fill a salmon stream to reinforce revetments around its facility. Cook Inletkeeper [appealed that decision](#), noting the management plan for the area prohibited such mining operations. ADFG [denied the appeal](#), stating everyday Alaskans did not have standing to challenge the illegal decision – only the oil company could challenge it.
- **Drill Rigs in Kachemak Bay:** After the drill rill *George Ferris* plowed through crab pots and later got stuck and caused a sizable spill in Kachemak Bay in the 1970’s, local residents and state biologists agreed to prohibit the long term storage of drill rigs in the Kachemak Bay CHA. When an Australian company wanted to store a jack-up rig in Kachemak Bay, [ADFG violated its own rules](#) and allowed the rig to remain in the CHA for over a year. Bates & [ADFG also refused to inspect](#) the rig (which came from Asia), despite the presence of invasive species.
- **Jetskis in Kachemak Bay:** In 2001, local citizens from southcentral Alaska secured a ban on jet skis in the Kachemak Bay Critical Habitat Area. Over 1850 people testified on the issue and a super majority – over 70% - supported the idea of protecting Kachemak Bay from the noise, pollution, disruption and safety concerns of personal watercraft. But [now Bates and ADFG’s Al Ott consider this management safeguard to be “overreach,”](#) and they are supporting the “access everywhere” positions of the Alaska Outdoor Council, the Personal Watercraft Club of Alaska and others.

Special areas that will likely be affected by ADFG's new "open to everything" policy direction:

State Game Refuges

- [Anchorage Coastal](#)
- [Cape Newenham](#)
- [Creamer's Field](#)
- [Goose Bay](#)
- [Izembek](#)
- [McNeil River](#)
- [Mendenhall Wetlands](#)
- [Minto Flats](#)
- [Palmer Hay Flats](#)
- [Susitna Flats](#)
- [Trading Bay](#)
- [Yakataga](#)

State Critical Habitat Areas

- [Anchor River/Fritz Creek](#)
- [Chilkat River](#)
- [Cinder River](#)
- [Clam Gulch](#)
- [Copper River Delta](#)
- [Dude Creek](#)
- [Egegik](#)
- [Fox River Flats](#)
- [Homer Airport](#)
- [Kachemak Bay](#)
- [Kalgin Island](#)
- [Pilot Point](#)

- [Port Heiden](#)
- [Port Moller](#)
- [Redoubt Bay](#)
- [Tugidak Island](#)
- [Willow Mountain](#)

State Wildlife Sanctuaries

- [McNeil River](#)
- [Stan Price](#)
- [Walrus Islands](#)

State Ranges

- [Delta Junction Bison](#)
- [Matanuska Valley Moose](#)

What YOU can do: Send an email TODAY to the decisionmakers below, and share this alert with friends and lists.

Suggested Talking Points:

- According to state law, the purpose of our critical habitat areas is to "protect and preserve habitat areas especially crucial to the perpetuation of fish and wildlife, and to restrict all other uses not compatible with that primary purpose."
- Alaskans deserve an open and transparent process if any management plans need revision;
- It's very discouraging to read about ADFG working to suppress public information and threaten its biologists simply to further political ends that will erode commonsense safeguards in our special areas;
- Alaskans want predictability around their special management areas, so they don't have to respond every time a new group or company wants to conduct activities that will harm our fish and game resources;

Send your comments to:

Governor Sean Parnell
Mike Nizich, Chief of Staff to the Governor
Cora Campbell, ADFG Commissioner
Randy Bates, ADFG Habitat Director
JoeBalash, DNR Commissioner
Brent Goodrum, DNR Mining, Land & Water Director

To send email to all above, copy and paste:
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