

## **Summary of Public Comments on the Proposed Temporary Closure of Brown Bear Hunting on Kenai National Wildlife Refuge**

On August 12, 2014, Kenai National Wildlife Refuge announced a proposed temporary closure to sport hunting of brown bears as a resource protection measure to ensure consistency with Refuge purposes. Written comments on this proposal were accepted through email, fax, postal mail, and personal delivery through August 27, 2014. Two public hearings were held to provide public input and involvement on the proposed temporary closure. One public hearing was held in Anchorage, Alaska on August 26, 2014, and a second public hearing was held in Soldotna, Alaska on August 27, 2014.

- A total of 29,585 public comments were submitted during the public comment period. Of these, 29,558 were in support of the closure. Twenty-seven were opposed.

Those who opposed the temporary closure primarily expressed the beliefs that: a) the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service lacks the legal authority to close hunting and/or that the authority to manage hunting of resident wildlife rests with the State of Alaska; b) hunting is a right that should not be infringed upon; and/or c) there are too many brown bears on the Kenai Peninsula

Those who supported the temporary closure, primarily expressed the beliefs that: a) continued harvest is unsustainable; b) conservative management is necessary due to population factors; c) bears are valuable for tourism/viewing opportunities; and/or d) brown bears should not be hunted at all on the refuge.

- Of the total comments, one hundred nineteen were considered unique; these comments were received from 103 individuals and 16 agencies or organizations.
- Of the 119 unique comments, 92 supported the closure; 27 opposed. Eighty-eight unique comments were submitted by email, 2 through postal mail, 2 via fax, 2 in person, and 25 through the public hearing process.
- During the public hearings, a total of 14 testifiers, either representing individuals or groups, spoke in opposition to the proposed closure. A total of 7 testifiers, either representing individuals or groups, spoke in favor of it.

**List of Agencies and Organizations that Submitted Comments**

Alaska Department of Fish and Game – Opposed

Alaska Board of Game – Opposed

Citizens Advisory Commission on Federal Areas - Opposed

Clearwater Homeowners Association – Opposed

Safari Club International - Opposed

Women on Target – Opposed

Alaska Wildlife Alliance - Support

Center for Biological Diversity – Support

Defenders of Wildlife – Support

Friends of Alaska NWRs – Support

Friends of Kenai NWR – Support

Humane Society – Support

Kachemak Bay Conservation Society – Support

National Wildlife Refuge Association – Support

Wilderness Society – Support

Wilderness Watch - Support