

Introduced by: Martin  
Date: 02/15/05  
Action: Failed as Amended  
Vote: 4 Yes, 3 No, 2 Absent

**KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH  
RESOLUTION 2005-015**

**A RESOLUTION URGING THE ALASKA BOARD OF GAME TO OPPOSE  
PORTIONS OF PROPOSALS 129 AND 137 TO OPEN BEAR HUNTING IN THE  
KAMISHAK SPECIAL USE AREA AND SUPPORT PROPOSAL 30 TO PROTECT  
MCNEIL RIVER AND KATMAI COAST BEARS**

- WHEREAS,** the Alaska Board of Game will review and vote on proposals to open the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary and surrounding areas to brown bear hunting at its spring meeting beginning on March 4, 2005; and
- WHEREAS,** written comments must be submitted to the Board of Game by February 18, 2005; and
- WHEREAS,** in 1967, the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary was established by the legislature to “provide permanent protection for brown bear and other fish and wildlife populations and their habitats, so that these resources may be preserved for scientific, aesthetic, and educational purposes” (AS 16.20.162); and
- WHEREAS,** bear viewing continues to grow as a popular tourist activity, which contributes not only to the borough’s economy but also to Homer’s, as it is the major access hub for visitors to McNeil River Sanctuary and the surrounding area; and
- WHEREAS,** according to the Homer Visitor Information Center, there were over 4,200 visitor inquiries for bear and wildlife viewing trips between January and September 2004; and
- WHEREAS,** during the past 20 years, using a state lottery system the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary has had nearly 4,500 visitors, most of whom arrive and depart from Homer; and
- WHEREAS,** National Park Service statistics show an increase in bear viewing along the Katmai coast from 1,900 tourists in 2000 to 2,975 in 2003; and
- WHEREAS,** bear viewing customers not only provide income to the owners and operators of transportation businesses, they also contribute to the borough’s economic growth by utilizing many other businesses and services including fishing charters, restaurants, lodging, gift shops, car rentals, art galleries, and grocery stores; and

**WHEREAS,** many of the bear viewing operators and guides are year-round residents of the Peninsula utilizing local businesses and services, which include aviation, marine, and professional services; and

**WHEREAS,** bear viewing as an industry is increasing, and bear viewing companies have seen up to a 200 percent increase in business over the past five years; and

**WHEREAS,** bear viewing is an environmentally sound and sustainable business capable of bringing in revenue to the borough for many years to come; and

**WHEREAS,** the McNeil River Sanctuary is the world's premiere site for viewing and photographing wild brown bears; and

**WHEREAS,** the Kenai Peninsula Borough's economy benefits by attracting film and television production companies like IMAX and the BBC from around the world, the crews of which stay in the borough for extended periods, often returning, using the borough as a base of operations while filming; and

**WHEREAS,** the Alaska Center for Coastal Studies of Homer is now in its second year of offering a college credit field study class for educators on brown bear biology and behavior in this area; and

**WHEREAS,** the 2004 McNeil River Field Report states that "the numbers of bears show the lowest count of bears in more than 20 years"; and

**WHEREAS,** McNeil River brown bears are known to range over large areas within and outside the sanctuary including areas within the refuge, the national park, the Little Kamishak River, and the Douglas River; and

**WHEREAS,** opening these areas to hunting would decrease the quality of the bear viewing experience that has attracted many visitors to the borough and would adversely affect the borough's economy;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE ASSEMBLY OF THE KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH:**

**SECTION 1.** That the Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly urges the Alaska Board of Game to oppose portions of Proposals 129 and 137, which would open brown bear hunting in the Kamishak Special Use Area and the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary.

**SECTION 2.** That the Kenai Peninsula Borough Assembly urges the Alaska Board of Game to support Proposal 30 to provide reasonable protection for brown bears living in these areas.

**SECTION 3.** That copies of this resolution shall be provided to Governor Murkowski all members of the Alaska Board of Game and to the Commissioner of the Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

**SECTION 4.** That this resolution shall take effect immediately upon its adoption.

**ADOPTED BY THE ASSEMBLY OF THE KENAI PENINSULA BOROUGH THIS 15TH DAY OF FEBRUARY 2005.**

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Gary Superman, Assembly President

ATTEST:

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Linda S. Murphy, Borough Clerk