

To Members of the Alaska House Resources Committee:

As a year-round resident of Denali Borough and land/homeowner in Healy, I would like to express my support for HB 40, a bill prohibiting traps and snares within 200 feet of trails and certain public facilities. As you are aware, this bill also requires that traps and snares have an identification tag affixed to them.

HB 40 is similar to concerns brought to the Alaska Board of Game in 2010 at their meeting in Fairbanks. Sadly, the proposal failed by a slim margin, despite widespread community support. HB 40 addresses public safety, not resource allocation and therefore is an important legislative issue.

As the population of Alaska grows, there is increasing trapping pressure in and around subdivisions, popular trails, and recreation areas and along the road system. Traps and snares set near homes and neighborhoods have injured and killed numerous pets and even caught humans. It is a public safety issue for humans and our pets. Traps set directly on and adjacent to trails in our area have directly affected my family.

Despite our precautions to avoid traps, my dog was caught in a conibear (a lethal body-gripping trap) while we were on a walk a few years ago. The baited conibear that lured my sweet Siberian husky was located less than 25 feet off the trail. The sounds of her screams and gasps, as my husband and I tried in vain to release her, forever haunt me. I am attaching a photo of her.

On another occasion, my young daughter was mushing with friends to their cabin when a lead dog stepped on a concealed trap directly on the trail. The trail was put in by our non-trapping to friends to access their cabin. The incident happened on an extremely cold evening and put everyone in grave jeopardy as they painstakingly released the panicked dog. This should never have happened directly on a trail. Since the trap was unmarked, we had no idea who to talk to about it.

I had attended a *Share The Trails Workshop* before my dog was caught. Despite learning how to avoid traps and open a conibear, my husband and I were unable to free our writhing dog. It was infuriating that the trap that caught her was not posted or tagged despite being close to a well-used trail. The conibear that caught my dog was out-of-season. We do not know who set it because there was no identification attached to the trap.

One of the pleasures of living in Alaska is the opportunity to enjoy the wilderness and solitude of outdoor walks with one's dog. Yet I feel shutout of the woods and trails around me because of traps and snares, many of which are concealed. One must assume they are there because the consequence of the dog or human encountering one is so great.

Many of us have been skiing and mushing on the trails for years, even before the young emboldened trappers started to claim them as their own. As the law is now, non-trappers are required to give up all of their rights to trappers. Trappers may trap anywhere, even directly on the trails, next to schools, school bus stops, rest stops and roads; and will no accountability.

Most of us keep our dogs on a leash when we go for walks in town. Still, dogs occasionally slip their collar or unexpectedly take off for a run. I support the provisioning in HB 40 that an animal doesn't deserve to be brutally or fatally maimed by a trap just because it was off-leash. Furthermore, dogs that get the opportunity to run off-leash, on occasion, are generally happier and friendlier dogs...a plus for communities.

The abundance of unmarked traps on and adjacent to public trails creates animosity between trappers and non-trappers. HB 40 will enable all Alaskans, no matter how they use the trails, to enjoy the land in a compatible manner. HB 40 addresses a public safety issue and quality of life.

Thank you.

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