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Comments to the Alaska Board of Game October 20, 2006
Inre: Fall 2006 Proposals
Note: Please see attached letter from SFC Christianson, 172nd SBCT

Proposal 46 - 5 AAC 92.050 Required permit hunt conditions and procedures. Reissuing of permit tags to deployed military personnel.

Support as Amended:

Alaska Backcountry Hunters and Anglers would like to thank ADFG and the Board of Game for responding to the numerous letters and comments about reissuing draw permits to our military personnel, such as those in the 172nd Stryker Brigade who had their tours involuntarily extended and were thus unable to participate in any awarded hunts.

The intent of this proposal is good, however it may go beyond the scope of what was originally suggested. We therefore suggest amendments as follows:

Only resident and non-resident military personnel who, due to **involuntary extension or unscheduled/unknown deployment** to a Combat Zone, were unable to participate in at least half of the allotted season of an awarded **drawing permit** hunt, shall have their permit reissued the following regulatory year. All military personnel eligible for permit reissuance shall provide a photocopy of their original permit, a copy of their travel orders, and a letter of verification signed by their unit commander, to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game prior to being reissued a permit.

Military personnel who are awarded drawing permits with seasons that conflict with known or scheduled deployments are ineligible for reissuance of permits under the terms of this rule.

(The intent here is to re-issue drawing permits only to our military personnel serving in Combat Zones who had their tours involuntarily extended, or who had unscheduled or unknown deployments to Combat Zones. We do not want to create a loophole whereby military personnel who know they will not be able to participate in a hunt, are eligible to apply for one, and should it be awarded, have their permit reissued the following year.

Both resident and non-resident military personnel should be treated equally—if a non-resident member of the military applied for and received a drawing permit, and is eligible for reissuance according to the above, then he or she should also have their permit reissued. Please do not discriminate against any non-resident military personnel who were awarded permits, as they fully deserve the same considerations under this ruling.)

Tier II subsistence permits

All resident military personnel eligible for a Tier II subsistence hunt, regardless of where they are deployed, may apply for and receive a Tier II permit, even if they have prior knowledge they will not be available to hunt during the allotted permit season. Should a Tier II permit be awarded, and the recipient unable to participate due to deployment or other military obligation, the recipient may assign a proxy hunter to hunt in their stead, according to the guidelines of 5 AAC 92.011 – Taking of Game by Proxy, with the added amendment that the trophy value of any antlers from game taken under this rule be destroyed. All military personnel who were awarded a Tier II subsistence permit, but who were unable due to deployment to take part in the hunt, and unable to assign a proxy hunter, shall have their permit reissued the following regulatory year, providing they still qualify under the Tier II guidelines.

(The intent behind the Tier II subsistence permit reissuance or transfer of permit to a proxy hunter is to provide needed game meat to the families of our resident troops who have lost their hunters due to deployment, whether or not these troops are deployed to a “Combat Zone.” Due to the nature of service in the National Guard and Reserves, we do not believe it is fair to limit eligibility for this reissuance or proxy transfer based on where our National Guard troops are deployed. We would like to ensure that no “trophy hunting” by proxy takes place under this rule; the proxy hunter should have only one thing on his or her mind: supplying game meat to dependent military families in need.)

Closing Comments:

We feel it necessary to stress to the Board that our military personnel are proud to serve our country and by and large neither expect, nor want, any special treatment. Time and again, our brave soldiers have related to us that they don't want to create a loophole that would allow other military personnel to take advantage of the permitting process. We cannot adequately express our profound appreciation and admiration for the men and women of our Armed Forces, and most notably the soldiers of the 172nd Stryker Brigade, with whom we have spoken about this issue. While they have expressed gratitude toward the intent of this proposal, they have also stated their willingness to forego their permits if it would mean this proposal would "screw things up" for other hunters or "open a can of worms." Their selflessness speaks to the same honor and sacrifices they have made in serving our country in Iraq. (Note: Please see attached letter from SFC Jason Christianson, 172nd SBCT, in support of these amendments.)

We urge the Board to amend and support this Proposal, as per above, and again we wish to thank the Board and the Department for taking this matter up as soon as was possible.

Sincerely,
Mark Richards
Co-Chair – Alaska Backcountry Hunters and Anglers
Alaskabha@starband.net

Proposal #46 - 5 AAC 92.050 Required permit hunt conditions and procedures

Support as amended

Dear Sirs and Madams; October 22, 2006

My name is Jason Christianson and I am a member of the 172nd SBCT from Ft. Wainwright. I am also an avid hunter and sportsman. I am, among many others, a winner for draw tags DS102 and DM788. As a member of the active duty component in Alaska, I would like to offer my support for re-wording the proposal.

Since January, I have been using my spare time researching and planning for these trips. I have asked many questions and posted many threads on hunting forums, using that type of broad access to Alaskans to assist in my research. I have invested my own time and money to make the best-informed decision about how to plan my hunts. This planning required patience and time, accomplishing it only through persistence. My wife, Heather, assisted me by buying maps, books and gear. She played an active role in the planning process, as she was to accompany me on my hunt. All of our planning was to be set into action upon my return in August.

In July, we received word that our stay in Iraq was to be extended for another four months. This extension has caused many others like me to miss once in a lifetime hunts. All of the soldiers, including myself, understand what our duties as active duty military members entails. This might mean giving up the things that we want the most. Whether it be hunting the lands of Alaska, playing with our children and watching them grow, or having a nice quiet evening with our spouse, these things we are willing to sacrifice for the greater good and because it is our duty.

I have struggled with the thought that the wording of your proposal may leave a loophole for others in the service, whether it is active duty component, or guard and reserve, to abuse the legislation proposed. It is not my intent to oppose the proposal as a whole, but rather offer another that would not allow for abuse. Rewording the proposal would be advantageous to military members, especially those affected by short notification deployments and involuntary extensions.

As for the rewording I am not the one to write that. I will say that I support the proposal as written by the Backcountry Hunter and Anglers Alaska Chapter and will try to include this letter with anything that is submitted by them.

Sincerely
SFC Christianson, Jason
US Army
Platoon Sergeant