



Lynn Canal Conservation, Inc.

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September 2, 2020

To Haines Borough Heli-Ski Map committee members:

At the last meeting of the Haines Borough Heli-Ski Map committee, (on January 20, 2020) Lynn Canal Conservation (LCC) presented a map proposal (attached) that was intentionally broad in scope in anticipation of fine tuning the map with input from the heli-ski industry, Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and other interested parties. At the conclusion of that meeting, Southeast Alaska Backcountry Adventures (SEABA) and Alaska Mountain Guides (AMG) agreed to provide the Map committee with the daily track logs of their most recent ski season operations and most important ski runs. This information, along with specific locations of mountain goats (and denning brown bears) from ADF&G is key to the concept of fine tuning the map to benefit both wildlife and industry. The industry has not provided this information, but the map committee can use the information it has at its disposal.

Updated information is available from ADF&G. Recent declines in local mountain goat populations have prompted ADF&G to issue emergency orders closing large areas of the Haines Borough to goat hunting (see ADF&G attachments). Given the broad scientific consensus that heli-ski operations can have severe and long-term negative impacts to mountain goats (NWSGC, Côté, et. al.) it makes no sense to permit continued heli-skiing in areas where hunting is prohibited due to declines in mountain goat populations. Given the anticipated additional stress caused by climate change (White, K.S., 2018) and possible development of the Palmer project hard rock mine (White, K.S., 2016) and the lack of participation by industry, LCC has no alternative but to advocate closing the two above mentioned areas to heli-skiing. The boundaries of our recommended areas for removal from the Haines Borough Approved Heli-ski Map are thus identical to those on the ADF&G emergency closure notices.

It would also be prudent for the Heli-ski Map committee to remove additional high value habitat from the heli-ski map to protect goat populations in the Haines Borough, (see amended map). The Haines Borough should work closely with ADF&G wildlife biologists to ensure the unique population of mountain goats in the Haines Borough are protected for future generations.

In the management period between 2021 and 2025, should ADF&G announce another goat hunting closure due to population declines, the Haines Borough administration should immediately place the same area off-limits to heli-skiing. This adaptive management approach will help balance heli-ski operations with the needs of area hunters and with protections for goat populations.

We do not wish to close down heli-skiing in Haines and sincerely hope that SEABA, AMG and Alaska Heli-skiing will enter the map discussion in good faith and provide information regarding their areas of operation. LCC continues to support heli-ski tour management that protects mountain goats and denning brown bears from harmful impacts.

Eric Holle
Vice President, LCC

Literature cited:

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