

## Michelle Webb

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**From:** Julie Cozzi  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 05, 2014 3:04 PM  
**To:** Michelle Webb  
**Subject:** FW: proposed heli-skiing "photo competition"  
**Attachments:** Seaba photo contest; ULCAC comments to Hsn Boro re Heli Request 3514[1].doc; ADFG\_comments\_heliski\_3.4.14.pdf

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**From:** Lynn Canal Conservation [<mailto:lynncanalconservation@gmail.com>]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 05, 2014 2:38 PM  
**To:** Dave Berry; Debra Schnabel; Diana Lapham; George Campbell; Joanne Waterman; Jerry Lapp; Stephanie Scott; Julie Cozzi; Eric Holle  
**Subject:** proposed heli-skiing "photo competition"

Dear Mayor Scott, Assembly members, and Interim Manager Cozzi,

Please accept the attached comments from LCC, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, and the Upper Lynn Canal Fish and Game Advisory Committee:

Eric Holle  
President  
Lynn Canal Conservation  
PO Box 964  
Haines, AK 99827  
766-2295  
[lynncanalconservation.org](http://lynncanalconservation.org)

Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
Upper Lynn Canal Advisory Committee

Recommendation to the Haines Borough regarding the recent request to open currently closed areas 1, 2, 8, 9, and 21 of the 2014 Heli Ski Map for a special event  
March 21- April 21, 2014

March 5, 2014

The Upper Lynn Canal Advisory Committee supports the Alaska Dept of Fish and Game's position to deny any expansion of Heli-Ski boundaries.

Also for your consideration, please find the following comments made by residents with local knowledge of bear activity associated with Areas 1 and 2:

Local guide, Steve Fossman, has documented denning brown bears in Haska Creek and Pyramid Valley for more than 15 years, frequently observing tracks of bears emerging from their dens during spring where they may remain for a few weeks before departing the area (pers. comm.).

Chip Lende observes from 3 to 4 dens annually between Pyramid Creek and Haska Creek each spring and notes bears remaining at dens anywhere from 2 to 3 week before abandoning them. Emergence is usually in April but can be earlier depending upon the timing of snow pack breakup (pers. comm.).



THE STATE  
of **ALASKA**  
GOVERNOR SEAN PARNELL

**Department of  
Fish and Game**

DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION  
Southeast Region

802 3rd Street  
P.O. Box 110024  
Juneau, Alaska 99811-0024  
Main: 907.465.4265  
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March 4, 2014

Haines Borough  
c/o: Michelle Webb  
Interim Clerk  
P.O. Box 1209  
Haines, Alaska 99827

Haines Borough Assembly:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on SEABA's proposed expansion of sections 1,2,8,9, and 21 on the heli-skiing map.

Increasing helicopter tourism in the Haines/Skagway area prompted the department to begin research on how mountain goats were being impacted and to identify key summer and winter habitats, estimate reproduction and survival rates, and monitor population composition and abundance. The department has been reluctant to making direct recommendations concerning changes to the heli-skiing map but is providing some specific survey data in this document for the areas under consideration. Research on mountain goats in the Haines area is projected to be complete in 2015. The department supports the recommendation made by interim manager Julie Cozzie to not open areas 8 & 9 on Takhin Ridge based on the request from the Chilkat Indian Village of Klukwan. The department appreciates comments from the affected communities and believes community involvement is imperative in these types of discussions and requests. In addition, the department lacks sufficient data about other species that might be affected by this expansion because no species-specific studies, other than mountain goats, have been conducted. The department will defer to comments from the community about locations of bear (brown and black) dens, as well as whether these locations provide important habitat for wolverine. We encourage the Assembly to consider all species that could potentially be affected by this change.

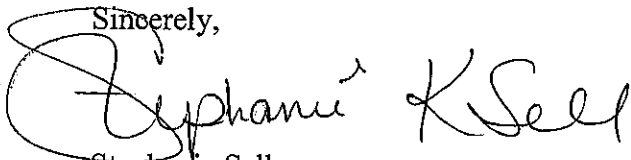
The department conducted aerial surveys in proposed areas 1 (Pyramid Harbor valley), and 2 (Haska Creek) in September of 2013, which resulted in a minimum mountain goat count of 22 animals (areas 1 & 2 combined). Surveys are compositional counts for total number of goats seen and are broken down by number of adults and number of kids observed. Three goats were captured and fitted with GPS collars from the Haska Creek area, which allows wildlife biologists to more accurately estimate mountain goat numbers through sightability models, reproduction, and survival. During the winter mountain goats are physically and nutritionally stressed and demonstrate strong site fidelity to localized areas. Severe winters alone can result in significant population declines due to exhausting energetic reserves, movement impediment due to deep snow, and other events such as avalanches. Mountain goats may incur additional stress due to disturbance at a time when they are already stressed due to winter weather. Mountain goats have a slow reproductive rate, and females do not start breeding until about 4 years of age. Nannies seek out rugged, isolated sites prior to birth but soon join up with other nannies with newborn kids to form nursery groups. Mountain goat kids are typically born in mid-May. The time

period being proposed (March 21-April 21) overlaps with a period when pregnant female goats are in late-term pregnancy and begin moving to nursery locations; additional stress on pregnant females, and other winter-stressed goats during this period should be avoided.

The department conducted an aerial survey in the Four Winds area (proposed area 21) in September of 2013. A total of 68 mountain goats (55 adults and 13 kids) were observed. Three goats have been equipped with GPS collars again to assist with sightability estimates during surveys and to monitor reproduction and survival. Due to the high number of goats observed in the Four Winds area, and the consideration mentioned above for areas 1 and 2, the department encourages the Assembly to retain the current authorized heli-skiing areas and dates.

Thank you again for allowing us to comment on this proposed change.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stephanie K Sell". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the word "Sincerely,".

Stephanie Sell  
Assistant Area Management Biologist

Cc: Tim McDonough, ULC AC chair