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RHAK
Resident Hunters of Alaska

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RHAK At The Fairs 2016 & Membership Update!

RHAK had a very successful membership drive at the fairs this fall. We spoke with hundreds of people from all walks of life and our message of a resident hunting priority is one that resonates among Alaskan hunters. It resonated so well that we are now approaching 1,000 RHAK members!

To our new members, welcome! We met some of you at the fairs and some have signed up online. Thank you for your support!

And to our members who donated RHAK booth materials and volunteered their time to work shifts at our RHAK booth over 25 days at the Tanana Valley and Palmer State Fairs, we could not have pulled it off without you; thank you so much! Every single RHAK Board member, our lobbyist Frank Bickford, and our Executive Director also worked shifts at our booth, and we were grateful for the opportunity to engage with so many about what RHAK is all about and share stories and camaraderie.

Legislative Candidate Questionnaire

RHAK is asking all candidates to fill out our legislative candidate questionnaire, [which you can read here](#). We will publish any responses in a member email the first week of November. We encourage you to ask your own questions to candidates on resident hunting and wildlife management issues.



Travis Drake and Ethan Williams at the Alaska State Fair in Palmer.



Britt Larson & Darcy Etcheverry at the Tanana Valley State Fair.

UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS

> BOARD OF GAME SPECIAL REGULATORY MEETING – OCTOBER 23, 2016

Teleconference special Board meeting at request of Ahtna Tene Nene' regarding Copper Basin Community Subsistence Harvest (CSH) hunt for moose and caribou; not meeting subsistence needs, and other nonregulatory items. [Click here to read RHAK's comments to the Board of Game on this sudden special meeting.](#)

> ALASKA BOARD OF GAME REGION V MEETING IN BETHEL – JANUARY 5-9, 2017

RHAK has several proposals before the Board and will attend this meeting.

> ALASKA BOARD OF GAME REGION III MEETING IN FAIRBANKS – FEB 17-25, 2017

RHAK has several proposals before the Board and will attend this meeting.

RHAK 1ST ANNUAL BANQUET & FUNDRAISER THIS WINTER IN ANCHORAGE!

Details coming soon

Quarterly Member Recognition

RHAK would like to recognize two members for their help in setting up and taking down our RHAK booth at the fairs.

Founding member Shawn Davis helped in dismantling and loading our RHAK fair booth after the Tanana Valley State Fair for shipment down to Palmer. His carpentry skills came in handy when we could not fit two of the ten-foot long floor sections into the cargo van. Thanks so much Shawn!

New RHAK member Rick Polzin from Palmer helped to set up and take down our booth at the Palmer fair, and his carpentry skills also came in handy when putting back together the two floor sections we had to cut in Fairbanks. Thanks so much Rick!



Lori Richards, Bob Cassell, Tracy Polzin and **Rick Polzin** at the Alaska State Fair in Palmer. **Shawn Davis** sheep spotting.



Alaska BOG Appointment

Governor Walker and Boards and Commissions Director John Hozey held a teleconference meeting with RHAK Executive Director Mark Richards on September 15 to discuss Board of Game appointment for the seat vacated by Pete Probasco from Palmer.

RHAK continues to promote four individuals we feel would provide more balance to the Board and who support a clear resident hunting priority. As Mark told the Governor, "we want you to choose someone that resident Alaskan hunters will cheer for." As of this writing, the Governor has still not announced his choice for the vacant seat.

BOG Members & Term Dates

Ted Spraker.....	6/30/2017
Stosh Hoffman	6/30/2017
David Brown	6/30/2017
Teresa Sager Albaugh..	6/30/2018
Kip Fanning	6/30/2018
Nate Turner	6/30/2019
Vacant	6/30/2019



Beyond The Swag *Column by RHAK Executive Director Mark Richards*

At the fairs and other events, I'm often asked by potential RHAK members, so what do I get beyond a hat, shirt or hoodie, and decal? What does RHAK actually do and what can I expect from my hard-earned dollars in supporting this new organization?

The bottom line is that RHAK is a collective voice for resident Alaskan hunters. That's what we do; we represent **you**, our members, across the state at various meetings and venues and in Juneau during the legislative session. We participate in the overall wildlife management process, attend F&G Advisory Committee and Board of Game and Big Game Commercial Services Board meetings, and weigh in on federal land and management issues that affect resident hunters. RHAK has been meeting this fall with legislators and legislative candidates to discuss our positions and goals. Our legislative strategy is intended to address the most fundamental unfair and discriminatory practices that undermine conservation, management, and proper allocation of Alaska's big game resources to resident hunters.

Last month I had a teleconference call with Governor Walker, and Boards & Commissions Director John Hozey, regarding the vacant Board of Game seat, again pushing the names of a few we feel will restore some sense of balance to the board and support a resident priority to our wildlife resources.

A question that inevitably follows and I'm sure is on the minds of many RHAK members is: But what have you actually accomplished so far? And this is why I really wanted to write this column in our newsletter, to give the unvarnished truth on what RHAK members can and should expect from us, and what we're actually doing. Change like the kind RHAK is advocating for will take time.

Remember that the commercial hunting interests have been lobbying in Juneau for decades. That's how we ended up with the system we have now where we split some moose drawing hunts 50/50 with nonresidents, where our chances of drawing a Kodiak brown bear tag are less than nonresidents, and nonresidents are allowed to take 60-80% of our sheep in some areas.

Will the Governor appoint a new Board of Game member who supports a resident hunting priority? We don't know. But we do know that if he doesn't, it doesn't mean that RHAK is somehow ineffective.

At the same time, we don't yet know how the Board of Game will respond to proposals RHAK has before them at upcoming meetings that ask for resident hunting priorities across the board, but the pressure is on and it forces an open discussion on the record about how resident hunters are being marginalized by our very own Alaska Board of Game. At the heart of all this, I've found it's really an education issue. Too many, from our fellow hunters to our legislators, are unaware of what's been going on and how we got to this point. Most are genuinely dismayed when informed. RHAK's message resonates so strongly because we are in the right.

Our RHAK Board and myself entered this with the attitude and passion that we will not fail. Over 100 Founding Members contributed \$1,000 or more each this past spring to get us started, a show of incredible trust in myself and our board. We don't ever take that trust lightly. Since then we've signed nearly another 900 RHAK members from across the state at various membership levels. We now have members from Ketchikan to Barrow and everywhere in between. And we don't take your trust lightly either. Thank you for your support! With numbers will come greater influence and awareness.

Achieving a resident hunting priority and a sustainable wildlife resource that allows for general hunting opportunities for future generations of Alaskans won't happen overnight. But I'm confident that over time our growing collective voice will result in fairness to and a preference for... *Resident Hunters of Alaska.*



BOARD MEMBER BIO

JR Gates

JR Gates grew up in southcentral Alaska where his eight grade science teacher told stories every day about flying around the vast expanses of Alaska hunting, fishing, and experiencing all that life in this state had to offer. His imagination was captured and JR completed his private pilot training within a year of graduating high school in Seward, Alaska.

Now, JR and his wife Rachel raise their three children in Anchorage, where he runs a small business and lives every day thinking of a new place to explore or a logistical challenge to overcome as he passes on his love for Alaska to the next generation. His favorite saying is “there are too many lifetimes to live in this state!”

JR enjoys moose hunting with his bow, solo sheep hunts, Kodiak deer hunts with friends, or whatever adventure gets him into a corner of Alaska that he has never seen before. The hunting highlight of his career was watching his eleven-year-old daughter harvest her very first animal last spring, a fluffy six-foot black bear.



As a founding board member of RHAK, JR feels that the current regulatory system is too easily enticed into needlessly restricting residents when there is non-resident money involved. Without a strong organization and advocacy group like RHAK, hunting liberties and opportunities will continue to erode and his kids may never be able to take off on a crisp autumn morning in their own efforts to experience all this amazing state has to offer.



Landen and Matt Soloy

Member Photos and Stories

Please [email](#) photos from this fall's hunts to share on our website [photo gallery](#) and [Facebook page](#). We also are looking to publish RHAK member hunting stories with pictures. Send yours today!



Rich Flanders

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