



Alaska State Legislature

Senator Con Bunde
Senate District P

Vice Chair: Senate Finance Committee
Chair: Senate Labor & Commerce Committee

Sponsor Statement for SB 166

“An Act relating to an annual wildlife conservation tag; relating to bond requirements for vendors of fish and game licenses, permits, and tags; and providing for an effective date.”

Senate Bill 166 will create a system to enable those who view Alaska’s wildlife to contribute to fish and wildlife management and eco-tourism programs. SB 166 will require those who take a wildlife viewing tour of any kind (by boat, bus, train, etc.) to purchase a \$5 annual wildlife conservation tag. This modest tag fee will raise about \$2 million per year. Those who are under 16 or over 60 years of age, purchase hunting, fishing or trapping licenses, are disabled vets or blind are not required to purchase the tag.

Some of the revenue received from the sale of wildlife conservation tags will go into a special account in the Fish and Game Fund for “fish and wildlife management programs that directly benefit tag purchasers”, alleviating pressure on the Department of Fish and Game to use hunter and angler dollars for “nonconsumptive” programs.

This revenue will be used to support on-the-ground fish and wildlife management programs as well as construct wildlife viewing infrastructure (e.g., boardwalks) in communities around the state; improve access; develop roadside interpretive signs and other educational programs; and foster viewing-related economic development. These projects enhance the safety and efficiency of interstate and foreign tourism and commerce in Alaska.

About 1.45 million visitors travel to Alaska each year, contributing more than \$1.8 billion to Alaska’s economy. Most cite the opportunity to view wildlife as one of the primary reasons for their trip. Their satisfaction is tied to the opportunity to see wildlife in a natural setting. It’s reasonable and fair that these visitors and the industry that most directly benefits from them help to sustain our fish and wildlife resources.

In response to the national “Teaming With Wildlife” campaign (which over 400 Alaska businesses and organizations endorsed), about \$3 million in new federal dollars are coming to Alaska for “non-traditional” wildlife programs, including conservation of non-hunted species, wildlife viewing, and wildlife-related education. These new federal dollars must be matched with state dollars. SB 166 will provide a way for those who use and enjoy Alaska’s wildlife to help match these federal dollars and ensure that Alaska maintains healthy and productive wildlife populations.