



unapologetically **FOR ALASKAN RESIDENTS**

PO Box 60095, Fairbanks, Alaska 99706 **(907) 371-7436**
email info@residenthuntersofalaska.org web www.residenthuntersofalaska.org

April 1, 2016

Nathan Turner – Alaska Board of Game Reappointment

Resident Hunters of Alaska (RHAK) strongly opposes the reappointment of Nathan Turner to the Alaska Board of Game (BOG).

As a licensed registered big game guide, there have been numerous instances during Mr. Turner's six-year tenure on the BOG where he has not recused himself from deliberating and voting on sheep proposals in which he has a clear financial benefit or loss. The chairman of the Board has been complicit in allowing this to happen.

Regarding proposals having to do with Dall sheep, particularly the numerous proposals from the public during Mr. Turner's tenure asking the Board to restrict nonresident sheep hunting opportunities, in his ethics disclosures at the start of every meeting Mr. Turner has said he has guided for Dall sheep for 15 years as an assistant guide. Even at Mr. Turner's hearing in Senate Resources on February 22nd, 2016, he stated that he spends part of the year guiding in the Brooks Range. Both member Turner and Chairman Spraker have somehow come to the conclusion that since Mr. Turner does not "contract" sheep hunters, and only works as an assistant guide for sheep, that Mr. Turner does not have any financial benefit or loss if nonresident sheep hunters are restricted to draw-only hunts or have their seasons limited.

This seems a bizarre twisting of the fact that an assistant guide is paid \$250-300 a day and is very much affected if nonresident sheep hunter opportunities are restricted.

To this day, Mr. Turner falsely and misleadingly advertises on his website that he holds exclusive rights to a guide concession in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, and advertises guided sheep hunts by him for the upcoming 2016 season. From Mr. Turner's website:

"Exclusive Guiding Areas:

We offer hunts across some of America's most treasured lands-its National Parks and Federal Wildlife Refuges. These federal lands are carefully managed and contain some of Alaska's greatest natural treasures. They are located in remote areas of Alaska, maintaining a truly wild and pristine experience for its visitors. We hold exclusive rights to provide guided hunts within a nearly one million acre portion of the *Nowitna National Wildlife Refuge* as well as portions of the *Arctic National Wildlife Refuge*. By working together with others we are also able to provide hunts within the *Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve* and the *Izembek National Wildlife Refuge*."

(<http://www.alaskan-adventures.net/hunts.htm>)

“Northern Brooks Range Hunts

Dall's Sheep – (August 10-19 or Aug. 21-30)
2015 August – 10 days16,500 USD
2016 August – 10 days17,500 USD”

(<http://www.alaskan-adventures.net/Price%20List.html>)

RHAK filed an ethics complaint against Mr. Turner at the start of the Statewide 2016 BOG meeting in Fairbanks last month. Our goal was to point out these facts in the hope that Mr. Turner would recuse himself from deliberating and voting on the numerous statewide sheep proposals before the Board asking, among other things, to limit all nonresident sheep hunters to draw only hunts with a set allocation level.

Mr. Turner spoke to the aspect of our complaint relating to false information on his website shown above, prior to the sheep proposals being addressed. Here is that part of his testimony from the record:

“That’s part of the complaint, is that I still have listing for Dall sheep hunts on my website even though I have said I have no conflict. And I would address that. As I said, my employer, he’s still in business, he still goes up there every year. I know this year he’d like to take one sheep hunter. I’ve worked for him since the beginning of my career. That arrangement hasn’t changed between us that if a hunter came through me and wanted to go sheep hunting I would send him to him if he thought he could viably do it. And uh, but we’re talking about one sheep hunter, probably. And again he’s under federal concessions in an exclusive guide area, he’s the only guide there, has been for 38 years. I think 38 years. And another point was they noted that I continue to offer to provide big game hunts in ANWR even though I don’t hold a concession. They’re technically right that it’s on my website that it says something like we provide big game hunts in exclusive concessions, Gates of the Arctic National Preserve and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. There’s two reasons why that’s still on my website. First of all I just lost the area in December 2015, I haven’t updated my website since January of 2015. If you look on there my price list is 2015/2016 season. That’s an old price list. I’ve already been to one hunting show this year and handed out 100s and 100s of my new price list. Which I have a copy with if the Department of Law wanted to see that. Um, it’s easy to verify that that’s old information that’s on there. And the other thing is, it’s not an uncommon practice for guides to have other guide operations listed on their websites. I reference in there that I can arrange for moose, brown bear and dall sheep hunts in cooperation with other guides in Alaska. And the way that works is that if somebody wants to book with you and you’re fully booked you pass them on to friends, it’s not a compensatory thing, you don’t do it for money, guides help each other out across Alaska, that’s a very normal practice. If you don’t have an available spot they’re going to ask you, do you recommend somebody? That’s a very typical approach for a hunter. And obviously you’re careful who you send people to because it reflects back on you yourself. And I have friends in ANWR, so even though I recognize, I haven’t changed my website is the main point, but even though it’s still on there it’s still technically not inappropriate in my view that it’s on there because it answers the question for the client before they ask it. Do you have possibilities to hunt in this area. The answer is there for them, yeah I can refer you to a friend.”

For Mr. Turner to state on the record that it's not inappropriate for him to falsely claim on his website that he holds exclusive guiding privileges in ANWR is by itself cause to question his ethics. Mr. Turner's response above to our ethics complaint also brings up a host of other questions as to why he has not fully disclosed his involvement in guided sheep hunting and as a hunt booker for other guides in Alaska during his tenure on the Board of Game.

Mr. Turner did not recuse himself on the sheep proposals at the Statewide 2016 meeting that would have clearly affected him and the guides he works with as a hunt booker. He again was able to skirt conflict of interest ethics rules based on incomplete, incorrect, or false testimony. As a big game guide with affiliations with guides across the state Mr. Turner was able to vote on and help pass proposals that were submitted by the Alaska Professional Hunters Association that restricted nonresident next-of-kin hunters and placed burdens on their Alaskan relatives who take them hunting in our great state.

Meanwhile, Mr. Turner voted no on proposals from the public to limit/restrict nonresident guided sheep hunters, or otherwise give a priority to resident sheep hunters.

We don't believe Mr. Turner's excuse to part of our ethics complaint that "my website has not been updated" in any way absolves Mr. Turner from legitimate concerns that he has not been fully truthful with his ethics disclosures all along and has still been allowed to vote on proposals that clearly – if any reasonable person is to believe his website, which is still live today – present a financial benefit or loss to his business and the businesses of the other contracting guides he helps book hunts for.

Mr. Turner also should never have been one of 3 Board of Game members chosen to be a BOG-representative on the Dall Sheep Working Group formed by the Board and ADFG. There are two licensed big game guides currently serving on the BOG. Both of those guide members were chosen for the Sheep Working Group. During the Sheep Working Group meetings over three weekends Mr. Turner did not play an objective role as a member of the BOG or the public; he clearly played the role of a big game guide with a vested interest in seeing nonresident sheep hunting opportunities continue unabated.

It should also not be lost on legislators that Mr. Turner's website promotes the Alaska Professional Hunter's Association "Non-Resident Hunting Preservation Fund." This fund has one purpose and one purpose only, as Mr. Turner explains on his website: "*This fund is the means by which all nonresident hunters can participate in helping to preserve their hunting opportunities within Alaska. The APHA has been leading these efforts for many years. Please help the APHA represent you by contributing to this fund. Click on the link above to learn more.*"

How is any of this fair to the public and why has it been allowed to happen?

We want to make clear that we believe there is nothing wrong with having a guide sit on the Board of Game. Or someone with a guiding background. Guides and those with a guiding background have a valuable perspective and experience to share. There is also absolutely nothing wrong if a guide member of the Board of Game should have a conflict with certain proposals before the Board. That is why we have ethics disclosures and rules about conflict of interest. But a guide like Mr. Turner who also books hunts for other guides and whose booking services include nearly all big game species creates a negative set of

circumstances whereby most of the proposals that come before the Board more than likely will create a conflicted environment.

The most troubling aspect of Mr. Turner's reappointment to the BOG is his continued insistence in not recusing himself on matters that clearly present a conflict of interest to his livelihood and the livelihood of the guides across the state he works with. This breaks the public trust which he has sworn to uphold. We ask that you oppose Mr. Turner's reappointment to the Alaska Board of Game.

Sincerely,
Mark Richards
Executive Director – Resident Hunters of Alaska
info@residenthuntersofalaska.org