



Alaska Wildlife
Conservation Center

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P.O. Box 110001
Juneau, AK 99811-0001

May 6, 2009

Dear Governor Palin,

This is a letter of support for a project that the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Center started 2 years ago; the BEARS (Bear Education Awareness Research Sanctuary) of Alaska Interpretive Center. Since 2001, 3 brown bears and 2 black bears have lived with my family on the 200 acre AWCC homestead near Portage Glacier. These 5 orphaned bears live their wonderful lives in 2 large semi-wild enclosures. The brown bears have the largest bear habitat in the United States -18 acres rolling brush land with coniferous trees and a large pond. The black bears enjoy a 14 acre mountainous habitat with a active stream.

Over 200,000 visitor's each year enjoy the company of these bears. The BEARS of Alaska Interpretive Center will provide much sought after bear viewing along with quality, interactive education.

Using Cruise Line Head Tax Capital Funds for this project is appropriate. Over 80,000 cruise line passengers visit AWCC each year. The cruise lines bring more people to AWCC than any other developed attraction in Alaska. For 12 years, all cruise lines received free admission to AWCC. It was not until the summer of 2008 that a modest fee of \$1.70 per passenger was implemented. The cruise lines will be the one of the main users of the BEARS Interpretive Center when it opens.

There are quality interpretive centers in Alaska all with great causes. What I find curious is how a Bear Education and Interpretive Center has not been developed already. Bears are the #1 type of wildlife visitors want to see when they visit Alaska. Bears are in Alaskan news almost daily year round. Every living person has their own beliefs and thoughts about bears.

AWCC is asking for a one time appropriation of State Funding for this BEARS Center. The remaining funds will come from other sources. BEARS has broad appeal and cruise lines, sport hunting groups, wildlife conservation groups, native corporations and watchable wildlife groups have already indicated their willingness to support this project.

AWCC has never received State funding. AWCC has contributed about ¼ million dollars in direct funds to the State of Alaska's Wood Bison Restoration Project. For 6 years, AWCC has willingly managed the States herd of wood bison. We do so eagerly because we value wildlife and the need for conservation.

If you believe as we do that the BEARS of Alaska Interpretive Center will be a great asset to the State of Alaska, please approve the appropriation.

Thank you for your consideration,

Mike Miller
AWCC Founder/Executive Director