**Suggested Talking Points on the Proposed Kenai Regulations**

**Courtesy of Defenders of Wildlife**

**Brown Bear Baiting**

* The rule is a departure from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s decades-old position that baiting brown bears conflicts with the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge’s purposes and therefore may not take place on the refuge. Brown bear baiting has never been permitted on the refuge, and it should not be now.
* Unlike black bears, brown bears are generally not eaten. Baiting brown bears is about getting trophies, not food.
* Allowing people to bait brown bears encourages more people to participate and makes shooting brown bears easier. After the state of Alaska started allowing brown bear baiting on state lands on the Kenai Peninsula in 2014, the number of bears killed increased dramatically, prompting the closure of brown bear hunting on the Kenai refuge for two seasons.
* Kenai brown bears are a genetically distinct population because of their geographic isolation from mainland Alaska. Kenai brown bears are already struggling because of increased mortality on state lands and human expansion on the Kenai Peninsula. Permitting brown bear baiting on the refuge will place the already vulnerable Kenai brown bears at further risk.
* In 1998, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game identified Kenai Peninsula brown bears as a “Species of Special Concern,” recognizing that the population “is vulnerable to a significant decline due to low numbers, restricted distribution, dependence on limited habitat resources, and sensitivity to environmental disturbance.” The state of Alaska later eliminated the “Species of Special Concern” designation but the facts haven’t changed.
* Opening the refuge to brown bear baiting is part of an effort by the Alaska Board of Game to keep predator populations artificially low and is not consistent with the refuge’s mandate to conserve wildlife, including bears, in their natural diversity.
* Brown bears allowed to feed on human food at bait stations can become problem bears endangering recreationists and oil field workers.

**Trapping**

* Abolishing the requirement for a federal permit for trapping opens new areas of the refuge to trapping—including areas within a mile of campgrounds and publicly accessible trailheads. This puts other refuge visitors—for example, people hiking with their dogs—at greater risk of accidentally encountering a trap.
* Eliminating the requirement for a federal permit for trapping also means that trappers need not periodically check traps – so animals could be inhumanely left trapped for long periods of time; that trappers need not identify their traps and snares, avoiding accountability; that trappers may use methods that are more likely to increase trapping of nontarget species, and that trappers may use steel leg hold traps with teeth, spikes or serrated jaws. These changes place both human health and wildlife at risk.
* Eliminating the refuge’s permit requirements eliminates provisions to control take of fox, beaver, lynx and marten.