MEMBERS PRESENT

Representative Beverly Masek, Co-Chair
Representative Bob Lynn
Representative Nick Stepovich
Representative Kelly Wolf
Representative Beth Kerttula
Representative David Guttenberg

MEMBERS ABSENT

Representative Nancy Dahlstrom, Co-Chair
Representative Cheryll Heinze, Vice Chair
Representative Carl Gatto

COMMITTEE CALENDAR

CS FOR SENATE BILL NO. 329(RES)
"An Act relating to control of nuisance moose."

- MOVED CSSB 329(RES) OUT OF COMMITTEE

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE ACTION

BILL: SB 329
SHORT TITLE: NUISANCE MOOSE
SPONSOR(S): SENATOR(S) BUNDE BY REQUEST

02/13/04   (S)  READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
02/13/04   (S)  RES, FIN
03/24/04   (S)  RES AT 3:30 PM BUTROVICH 205
03/24/04   (S)  Moved CSSB 329(RES) Out of Committee
03/24/04   (S)  MINUTE(RES)
03/26/04   (S)  RES RPT CS 5DP SAME TITLE
03/26/04   (S)  DP: OGAN, DYSON, WAGONER, STEVENS B,
03/26/04   (S)  SEEKINS
04/01/04   (S)  FIN REFERRAL WAIVED
04/08/04   (S)  TRANSMITTED TO (H)
04/08/04   (S)  VERSION: CSSB 329(RES)
04/13/04   (H)  READ THE FIRST TIME - REFERRALS
04/13/04   (H)  RES
04/19/04   (H)  RES AT 1:00 PM CAPITOL 124
WITNESS REGISTER

LOUIS "TEX" EDWARDS, Director
Alaska Zoo
Anchorage, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: During discussion of SB 329, answered questions.

GARY OLSON, Chair/Founder
Alaska Moose Federation
Anchorage, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Related the problems with growing moose populations on school grounds and the surrounding neighborhoods in the Anchorage area.

VIC VanBALLENBERGHE
Anchorage, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Drawing upon his 30-year experience as a biologist, expressed concerns with SB 329.

KAREN DEATHERAGE, Alaska Program Associate
Defenders of Wildlife
Anchorage, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Expressed concerns with SB 329.

MARIE WARNKE
Anchorage, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Urged the committee to hold SB 329.

LINDA DONEGAN
Anchorage, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Expressed concerns with SB 329.

TOM HARRIS, President/CEO
Alaska Village Initiatives
Anchorage, Alaska
POSITION STATEMENT: Testified in support of SB 329.

MATT ROBUS, Director
Division of Wildlife Conservation
Alaska Department of Fish & Game
Juneau, Alaska
ACTION NARRATIVE

TAPE 04-23, SIDE A
Number 0001

CO-CHAIR BEVERLY MASEK called the House Resources Standing Committee meeting to order at 1:37 p.m. Representatives Masek, Lynn, Stepovich, Wolf, Guttenberg, and Kerttula were present at the call to order.

SB 329-NUISANCE MOOSE

CO-CHAIR MASEK announced that the first order of business would be CS FOR SENATE BILL NO. 329(RES), "An Act relating to control of nuisance moose."

Number 0104

LOUIS "TEX" EDWARDS, Director, Alaska Zoo, related that the Alaska Zoo has partnered with the Alaska Department of Fish & Game (ADF&G) for over 35 years, during which the department has cared for a number of orphaned moose calves. Therefore, the Alaska Zoo has developed the expertise to care for young moose calves. He informed the committee that at the end of the summer, the Alaska Zoo shifts a number of moose calves to a variety of zoos in North America as well as the Moose Research Federation at the Kenai Peninsula. Mr. Edwards concluded by relating that the Alaska Zoo will continue to work with ADF&G as well as with the Moose Research Federation.

Number 0340

REPRESENTATIVE LYNN inquired as to the risk a moose being transported faces. He inquired as to the danger of a moose dying from the tranquilizer.

MR. EDWARDS clarified that he isn't the veterinarian or the curator, but offered his experience that the risk to the animals increases with the animal's age. He explained that most moose calves are dropped in the last week of May and ADF&G and the Alaska Zoo have mutually agreed to stop picking up calves by July 4th unless a tranquilizer gun and special equipment is used. When moose have been shipped at the end of the summer, there really haven't been any problems.
REPRESENTATIVE GUTTENBERG surmised that moving calves during the spring or summer is low stress [on the calves]. However, he questioned the stress of [moving moose] during the winter.

MR. EDWARDS said that moose haven't been gathered and brought to the zoo in the winter. He indicated that the highest risk time [to transport and do other things] would be during the rut. In further response to Representative Guttenberg, Mr. Edwards acknowledged that a few calves are lost. However, he noted that usually calves are lost because they were damaged in the event that resulted in them being orphaned. Mr. Edwards clarified that mature moose have not been brought to the Alaska Zoo.

GARY OLSON, Chair/Founder, Alaska Moose Federation, characterized SB 329 as public safety legislation, first and foremost. He related the problems with growing moose populations on school grounds and the surrounding neighborhoods in the Anchorage area. The children of Anchorage are the ones being most effected by the moose problems in Anchorage. Mr. Olson related that private industry and others are lining up in support of this legislation. "We will be funding this entire project and reimbursing the state for any expenses that they have," he stated. The key is that so many moose are ending up on the front of cars; there has been a 75 percent increase in moose-vehicle collisions since 1992 in Anchorage alone.

REPRESENTATIVE WOLF opined that this proposal sounds too good to be true. He suggested including a sunset or look-back provision in this legislation.

MR. OLSON related that of the almost $2.5 million Alaska's congressional delegation brought back to Alaska, there are provisions dedicated to known vehicle wildlife areas to be "fixed with funding from these sources." He indicated that there are a lot of people on board with this plan and it's coming from a federal perspective.

REPRESENTATIVE STEPOVICH surmised that Mr. Olson means that federal funds can be obtained for this proposal.
MR. OLSON replied yes, adding that there is also substantial input from private industry. In further response to Representative Stepovich, Mr. Olson confirmed that the intent is for this legislation to only apply to Anchorage, although the legislation is written such that [any] city that decides not to have a hunt can use this proposal as a tool.

REPRESENTATIVE STEPOVICH drew attention to the language in the legislation referring to "suitable habitat" and the desire to send moose to rural areas where moose are in demand. He inquired as to how [ADF&G] would determine where to send the moose.

MR. OLSON pointed out that ADF&G is given the authority to determine the definition of "nuisance moose." In regard to "suitable habitat," Mr. Olson indicated that such would be areas in which there are predator control programs or programs to increase moose populations.

REPRESENTATIVE STEPOVICH highlighted that the costs would differ for transport of moose due to the distance transported. Therefore, he asked if there would be one cost for everyone.

MR. OLSON informed the committee that private industry is lined up with heavy aircraft similar to a C-130. There is also the possibility of using the railroad for long distance transport and rebuilding populations along the tracks. In response to Representative Stepovich, Mr. Olson specified that there won't be a set cost for [transporting] a moose.

Number 1582

REPRESENTATIVE HEINZE highlighted that the Alaska Moose Federation was created after the Alyeska Pipeline was shot. "Is it the connection to the value of oil and the value of the moose that brought this to the forefront," she asked.

MR. OLSON replied yes, and emphasized the need to properly manage moose as a resource.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO recalled the earlier testimony that there has been a 75 percent increase in the number of moose-vehicle collisions since 1992. However, there was no mention that there has also been an increase in the number of vehicles. Due to the aforementioned, Representative Gatto questioned whether there has really been an increase in the number of moose-vehicle collisions.
MR. OLSON noted that there has also been a tremendous increase in the number of houses and roads. He acknowledged that the total equation looks grim if nothing is done to proactively handle this problem. He said he was sure there is a connection with the increase in the number of cars, not to mention that cars are getting smaller and roads are being built to drive faster. All of the aforementioned heads toward a very poor environment for moose and people without forwarding proposals such as SB 329.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO recalled that in the Mat-Su Valley there's a stretch of road with a sign specifying that 300 moose have been killed this season. He said that's a high number and he didn't know whether the number refers to the moose killed on that stretch of road or statewide. Representative Gatto inquired as to how many moose Mr. Olson felt could be saved with the proposed program.

MR. OLSON indicated his opposition to a sunset clause because it's going to take many years to get the program working to reduce the number of moose-vehicle collisions. He informed the committee that moving 250 moose a year from the downtown Anchorage area merely keeps the moose population constant. He further informed the committee that on average 150-200 moose are hit by vehicles. However, for a heavy snow year DOT&PF statistics indicate the need to multiply that by a minimum of two. He reiterated that it will take many years before the numbers turn around.

REPRESENTATIVE GUTTENBERG related his understanding that Mr. Olson expects 250 moose to be moved per year.

MR. OLSON informed the committee that there are 1,000 moose in the Anchorage core area and a 25 percent recruitment rate. Therefore, 250 moose need to be transplanted merely in order to keep the population stable. If there is a pursuit to reduce the population in order to keep moose off school grounds and away from the ever-increasing population, that 250 number may increase. However, ADF&G will need to identify the safest number. He recommended that the Department of Public Safety participate in the process of determining the acceptable moose population in the area. In regard to the costs of moving moose, Mr. Olson explained that if the intent is to be proactive and follow up with the calves, the moose population reduction effort could be done for a far less cost. He noted that [the Alaska Moose Federation] was just given the go ahead to use a 500-acre
area at Point MacKenzie in conjunction with this program. Mr. Olson emphasized that if this problem is addressed after the harsh winters, the costs are going to be higher than addressing it proactively by relocating calves. Depending upon the time of year, the [relocation] of one animal will be between $600-$1,000. However, he noted that relocating multiple animals [at once] will be cheaper. Given that flight time and other aspects of this process have been donated, the cost will be significantly cheaper than if the state handled this on its own.

REPRESENTATIVE GUTTENBERG asked if the Alaska Moose Federation is willing and able to reimburse ADF&G with regard to its habitat studies and mortality rates. He also asked if ADF&G has released those numbers.

MR. OLSON informed the committee that the Alaska Moose Federation was just given the go ahead to use a Cessna 180 with an optic belly in order to perform moose counts and other data collection. Mr. Olson said that a lot more work needs to be done to reach the goal of the Alaska Moose Federation, which is planning to do much more than is encompassed in this legislation. The Alaska Moose Federation is fully [prepared] to have habitat biologists and wildlife biologists on staff who can perform work such as determining ample habitat and other aspects or the state can perform such work.

Number 2090

REPRESENTATIVE STEPOVICH posed a situation in which a moose is causing a nuisance around an apartment building. In such a situation, he questioned whom - the owner of the land or ADF&G - labels the moose as a nuisance. He also questioned who would pay for the removal of the moose.

MR. OLSON confirmed that the Alaska Moose Federation would pay for the removal of the moose from the property. In further response to Representative Stepovich, Mr. Olson clarified that ADF&G will determine that there is a nuisance moose. The department will determine whether the moose will be removed from an area or destroyed.

Number 2222

VIC VanBALLENBERGHE informed the committee that he has been a moose biologist for 35 years, has captured over 500 moose, and has published 60-70 technical papers on various aspects of moose. He expressed his concern with this proposal, although he
commended the Alaska Moose Federation's proposals to address the moose-vehicle accident problems through the creation of habitat to draw moose from roadways. However, the current proposal to transport moose out of Anchorage has some serious problems, and therefore he urged the committee to hold SB 329 until there is time to address some of the questions and allow the citizens of Anchorage to have some discourse on the matter. Mr. VanBallenberghe related that he has moose in his yard all winter and his neighbors observe those moose and enjoy their presence. After talking with some of his neighbors, he discovered that they hadn't heard of SB 329 and were appalled that they hadn't been informed or allowed the opportunity to provide input. Therefore, he reiterated the need to step back and solve some of the problems with SB 329.

MR. VanBALLENBERGHE pointed out that recently he e-mailed each committee member eight different points regarding the proposed capture and transport program encompassed in SB 329. He highlighted that there are serious issues with regard to the dangers of very potent narcotic drugs laying around. A single drop of the anesthetic used for moose contains enough drug to kill several people. He posed a situation in which a dart misses a moose and is buried in the snow to be discovered during the winter thaw. Contrary to earlier testimony by a biologist, the anesthetic used for moose is highly stable and loses no potency by freezing. Mr. VanBallenberghe turned to the earlier mentioned intent of reducing the moose population in Anchorage, which is a large scale [proposal] requiring a sustained operation over many years and involving hundreds of [folks]. He questioned the real objective of this proposal and the level to which the moose population in Anchorage would need to be reduced in order to significantly reduce car accidents. However, he didn't believe anyone could determine the relationship between taking a certain amount of moose from the Anchorage area in terms of reducing car accidents.

MR. VanBALLENBERGHE opined that there are serious problems with stocking moose in order to increase low-density populations. He related that during a recent discussion with his moose colleagues none of his colleagues could cite an example in North America in which a moose population was augmented by a stocking program. Furthermore, it's a "horse of a different color" for a city moose to be turned loose in winter with deep snow to compete with local residents while not knowing where to go feed or escape predators. He opined that to his knowledge augmenting populations hasn't been done successfully in North America.
REPRESENTATIVE STEPOVICH related his understanding that Mr. VanBallenberghe alluded to some transportation relocation problems.

MR. VanBALLENBERGHE said that he hasn't seen any concrete plans other than those related today regarding building a trailer for vehicle transport and the use of large aircraft. He turned attention to his written comments, which relate that there are serious problems keeping animals anesthetized for long periods. As with humans, the rule is to do it for the minimum amount of time. Transporting animals via aircraft requires an extended amount of time under anesthesia, which places the animals at a high risk of mortality.

REPRESENTATIVE GUTTENBERG related Mr. VanBallenberghe's comments that [maintaining the current] population would [require the removal of] 250 a year. To do the aforementioned would require a much larger program. In some ways it sounds as if the Alaska Moose Federation is willing to take over ADF&G's responsibilities in the Anchorage basin. "Is this as extensive a program as that," he asked.

MR. VanBALLENBERGHE answered that he would hope not, and added that ADF&G must adhere to legal and regulatory requirements to which the department must adhere. He emphasized the need for there to be expertise in administering these drugs, which are the highest category of narcotics. The department is the holder and dispenser of these drugs and those that use these drugs should be trained. In fact, these individuals would preferably be veterinarians. Even if private individuals could eventually do this, these individuals will need training and supervision that ADF&G would have to provide.

Number 2756

REPRESENTATIVE GUTTENBERG recalled Mr. VanBallenberghe's earlier testimony regarding his involvement with numerous relocations. He inquired as to the number of times Mr. VanBallenberghe has missed the moose when using the anesthetic.

MR. VanBALLENBERGHE clarified that he has not been involved in relocating moose, but rather has captured moose for research purposes. Therefore, the procedure with which he has been involved required "knocking them down" with a dart gun, placing a collar on the moose, and gathering some data. In the aforementioned situation, the moose get up and leave under their own power. Mr. VanBallenberghe informed the committee that the
rule of thumb with wildlife capture operations is to be able to immobilize animals with less than 5 percent mortality. He opined that his own personal mortality rate with the capture of moose is around 2 percent. He noted the potential of animals, after being darted, running away and injuring themselves or the dart hitting the moose in a vein or an artery which kills the animal.

REPRESENTATIVE KERTTULA inquired as to how specific the Drug Enforcement Agency's (DEA) regulations are with regard to who is allowed to handle the moose anesthetic.

CO-CHAIR MASEK stated that perhaps the aforementioned question would best be directed to a department official.

MR. VanBALLENBERGHE said that ADF&G typically purchases and dispenses the drug. Furthermore, ADF&G typically has one or more veterinarians on staff who hold the proper licenses. Also, ADF&G has the proper storage facilities, which are carefully regulated. Those to whom the drug is dispensed are typically researchers with training in the use of the drug.

Number 2948

KAREN DEATHERAGE, Alaska Program Associate, Defenders of Wildlife, related that the Defenders of Wildlife have serious concerns with SB 329. She informed the committee that she served on the Urban Wildlife Task Force for Anchorage, the purpose of which was to develop a plan for managing the city's wildlife and to identify priority actions to help enhance the benefits of wildlife to the community while minimizing human-wildlife conflicts.

TAPE 04-23, SIDE B

MS. DEATHERAGE indicated that the plan [for managing the city's wildlife] was completed in April 2000, after exhaustive public input. The aforementioned plan was adopted under the Anchorage 20/20 Anchorage Bowl Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Deatherage explained that the plan recognized that moose provide residents and visitors in Anchorage with exceptional viewing opportunities. A poll conducted in the mid 1990s showed that 87 percent of Anchorage residents believe that while moose can cause some problems, they make life in Anchorage interesting and special. The poll further showed that an even higher percentage of residents take pride in the city's wildlife and believe that people should learn to live with some conflict.
MS. DEATHERAGE related that although the Defenders of Wildlife respect the efforts of the Alaska Moose Federation to reduce conflicts between moose and Alaska residents, Defenders of Wildlife doesn't believe that relocation is a feasible or reasonable solution to resolving the conflicts between moose and people. However, she noted that the Defenders of Wildlife would support the transport of any road killed or dispatched moose meat to rural areas. Still, the Defenders of Wildlife believes that the most effective long-term solution for minimizing wildlife conflicts is public education. The aforementioned has been recently proven with the collective efforts of ADF&G and groups such as Defenders of Wildlife, which have resulted in a large reduction of bear conflicts in Anchorage. She noted that Defenders of Wildlife also partnered with the National Park Service to prevent conflicts with wolves in Denali National Park and Preserve. Ms. Deatherage suggested that perhaps an alternative solution to SB 329 is for the legislature to support the establishment of an Anchorage Moose Planning Task Force, similar to the Anchorage Bear Committee. Under the aforementioned solution, education and conflict resolution efforts can be addressed at a comprehensive level by multiple agencies and the public. "We're just taking a piece of an issue and we're going to try to resolve it with something that will likely be unacceptable to residents. And I think if we look at having just a small task force, we could put out a really good plan and some actions in a very short period of time that will greatly reduce the conflicts between moose and people in the city," she opined.

REPRESENTATIVE GUTTENBERG inquired as to the recommendations of the task force working on this problem.

MS. DEATHERAGE related that in the [task force's] plan a nuisance moose "wouldn't be herded from yards, gardens, school bus tops, roads, or recreational plans but an education program designed to develop and distribute information on these type of situations is a high priority action in this plan." Ms. Deatherage recalled a recent incident in which a young boy [was hurt] by a moose and there was evidence that those children were harassing the moose with water guns and other things. Therefore, more education with regard to how to respect moose, would greatly reduce conflicts. Ms. Deatherage emphasized that the plan never really looked at relocation at the level it is put forth in SB 329. The [recommendations of the plan] haven't been implemented at the level [the Defenders of Wildlife] would like.
Representative Gutttenberg pointed out that there are only so many things that can be done to mitigate the conflicts between moose and people. Therefore, he questioned what can be done with an animal that becomes a nuisance and is dangerous to life and property. He asked if the Defenders of Wildlife believe it's appropriate to dispatch an animal.

Ms. Deatherage replied yes, which is why a nuisance moose in the plan is defined as an aggressive moose. She informed the committee that about 5-10 moose are [classified as aggressive moose], and therefore she wasn't sure that [relocation] would have the impact the Alaska Moose Federation indicates in regard to vehicle collisions. Ms. Deatherage reiterated support for dispatching an aggressive animal, adding that she wasn't sure there would be support for relocating an aggressive animal.

Representative Stepovich opined that due to a moose's size, it doesn't have to be aggressive in order to be dangerous.

Number 2687

Marie Warnke informed the committee that she lives in an apartment complex with six other families. Moose are in the yard all winter and it's a positive experience for all of us. Anchorage is the only metropolitan site in the U.S. with a major population of moose. She opined that most people enjoy the opportunity to see and experience the moose and don't want to reduce the moose population. Although there are occasional problems with moose, she related her belief that ADF&G does a good job managing the problems. Most moose and human contact are preventable with education information. Ms. Warnke said she would be willing to volunteer her time to educate people on this matter. In conclusion, Ms. Warnke urged the committee to hold SB 329 until Anchorage residents could obtain all the facts and provide comments.

Number 2564

Linda Donegan said that she was unclear as to the purpose of and beneficiaries of SB 329. She pointed out that if [SB 329] is addressing nuisance moose that ADF&G would normally destroy, that's only about 10 animals a year. Ms. Donegan said that she didn't oppose destroying [nuisance moose], and furthermore she said she hasn't heard any public outcry against the practice. "It appears that the purpose of this legislation is to provide hunting opportunities with these moose in a suitable, designated
hunting area," she opined. However, transporting 10 moose a year that may not even survive a transplant and predators won't significantly influence the harvest rate. She also mentioned that the meat may be tainted by drugs. If the purpose is to remove moose posing a significant risk to the health, safety, or economic well being of persons in the area, then why does the legislation include a disclaimer against lawsuits for damages or costs that arise from the practice. Ms. Donegan pointed out that if the definition of "nuisance moose" is to extend to a population reduction program for Anchorage and the moose were transplanted to areas where more moose are desirable, the motivation becomes clear. However, the majority of Anchorage residents don't want the moose population reduced. When Anchorage residents were surveyed in 1997, 78 percent claimed that they saw the right amount of moose or would like to see more moose. In fact, a planning group following [the survey] found that the tolerance for moose was for far greater numbers than the habitat could support. Additionally, two-thirds of [Anchorage] residents tolerated encounters with moose in neighborhoods, on trails, and in their garden. The aforementioned is why there is no moose hunt in Anchorage. Ms. Donegan said that she didn't need Senator Gary Olson, who represents a minority viewpoint, doing thinking for her. She related that there are other options, besides removing moose, to reduce moose-vehicle encounters. The moose population in Anchorage is stable and controlled by the habitat.

REPRESENTATIVE HEINZE related her understanding that Ms. Donegan believes the habitat supports the moose population [in Anchorage]. She inquired as to where Ms. Donegan is obtaining her information.

MS. DONEGAN clarified that socially the residents of Anchorage would accept a higher moose population than the habitat could support. The population is controlled by the amount of food available. In further response to Representative Heinze, Ms. Donegan specified that she obtained that information from the planning group, Living with Wildlife Planning Group for Anchorage, that followed the 1997 survey. All of the statistics came from ADF&G, she confirmed.

Number 2314

TOM HARRIS, President/CEO, Alaska Village Initiatives, informed the committee that Alaska Village Initiatives represents Bush organizations and rural communities throughout Alaska. The aforementioned areas are experiencing a significant reduction in
the moose population. The Alaska Village Initiatives exists to help rebuild those economies because the reduction of moose in a community requires approximately $4,000 to replace that protein. Alaska Village Initiatives supports SB 329 since it allows new stock to be brought into areas that have been depleted. Mr. Harris stated that the habitat is part of the issue, the moose population [in Anchorage] isn't stable but rather is very dynamic. The development of subdivisions is forcing moose into traffic areas, which he predicted will cause more collisions. Furthermore, because of the planting of certain plants in these subdivisions more moose are being attracted to these areas. Mr. Harris characterized the current situation as the beginning of the problem and highlighted Anchorage's approach to the Canadian goose problem. Mr. Harris urged the committee to take a close look at this issue.

CO-CHAIR MASEK closed public testimony.

Number 2081

MATT ROBUS, Director, Division of Wildlife Conservation, Alaska Department of Fish & Game, turned to the immobilizing agent, anesthetic, used for moose. He said that it's a high order narcotic that's extremely potent. The drug is used in a high concentration because it's used to immobilize a very large animal quickly. The aforementioned is advantageous because the large animal can't go very far and can't cause much damage to itself, others, or property. However, the drug is extremely potent and requires much care.

REPRESENTATIVE KERTTULA inquired as to the training required to administer this drug. She questioned whether there are any DEA rules regarding this drug.

MR. ROBUS explained that [ADF&G] has its staff attend training courses with regard to properly handling this drug, which he assumed would be the case for any third party staff involved in the captures. The department and its veterinarian have the authority to procure, store, and dispense this drug. Under the aforementioned authority trained staff are allowed to use the drug. Mr. Robus said that many of the details have to be worked out, but noted that [the use of this drug] would either fall under ADF&G's authority or the third party organization's authority.

Number 1918
REPRESENTATIVE KERTTULA inquired as to how long the tranquilizer stays in an animal's system. She related her understanding that any animals that are transported will have to be tagged so that it couldn't be taken for human consumption. However, she questioned what would happen to an animal that ate moose meat [before the tranquilizer had left the moose's system].

MR. ROBUS informed the committee that with this tranquilizer the animal goes down and is stable for a long time, when those effects need to be reversed another drug is injected and within a few minutes the animal is back to normal. In terms of the drug being in the moose's system, he related his understanding that the drugs would be fairly well metabolized out of the system. However, due to federal government guidelines and sensible guidelines the department [requires] a 45-day period before the meat can be consumed. Therefore, animals being relocated that could potentially be taken during a hunting season are tagged with information specifying that the meat can't be consumed until a certain date. The aforementioned is commonly done with black bear in Juneau. In further response, Mr. Robus said he thought it would be highly unlikely that a moose would face predation three days after being handled. He said he didn't have an answer with regard to the effects on a predator eating tainted meat.

REPRESENTATIVE GUTTENBERG turned to the information saying that 250 or more moose need to be moved from the Anchorage basin annually. He asked if Mr. Robus viewed [SB 329] as a reduction in ADF&G's workload or an increase due to additional monitoring.

MR. ROBUS said that those were primary concerns during the initial discussions of SB 329, which is why CSSB 329(RES) isn't going to cost the department anything. In one scenario there could be a third party that could be trained and certified to go out and perform these [relocations] without any cost to the department. This third party would work with the department to determine which moose are targeted and where the moose would be released. There could also be a scenario in which ADF&G personnel are involved, but the expenses could be reimbursed by the third party organization. He specified that there are many details to be addressed. In further response to Representative Guttenberg, Mr. Robus confirmed that ADF&G was involved with the Living With Wildlife study. In fact, he related his belief that the study was either sponsored or partnered by the Division of Wildlife Conservation. After the plan went through the entire process, it was incorporated into a larger municipal planning process.
REPRESENTATIVE GUTTENBERG asked if Mr. Robus saw a conflict with this growing from the public involvement [of the aforementioned study and plan]. He also asked if this relocation program would mesh with anything [in the Living With Wildlife study].

MR. ROBUS said that he isn't equipped with the details of the plan. However, the identification of whether a moose is a nuisance or a valuable piece of Alaska is controversial and will have to be addressed. Furthermore, some moose will not survive the relocation efforts, which will also create some controversy. Mr. Robus characterized SB 329 as an alternative to the current status in which ADF&G and the Department of Public Safety face dispatching a moose or advising people to give it space.

REPRESENTATIVE GUTTENBERG recalled earlier testimony regarding a city moose having difficulty once located in a rural environment.

MR. ROBUS indicated that's a challenge, which led the department to request that it be involved with determining the destination habitat. A moose placed in an area where the moose population has been driven down due to factors in the area, such as predation, deep snow, and hunting pressures, is unlikely to be very successful. However, placing a moose in an area where the state is involved in active management, predation levels are low, the habitat is of high quality, the moose may have a fair chance of succeeding. Like much of this, it will depend upon the implementation of the program, he said.

REPRESENTATIVE GATTO remarked that moose are in yards because they are looking for a good, nutritious source of food that's easy to get. However, now the desire is to force them out. "Are we doing something that's helpful and beneficial and are we looking at it from the moose's point of view or are we just trying to protect ourselves," he asked. He noted the enjoyment he has with the one to two moose a year he has visiting.

CO-CHAIR MASEK pointed out that it's illegal to feed or attract moose into an area.

MR. ROBUS commented that a high-density moose population has been created in urban areas where the moose come down from the
mountains when the snow is deep, where there isn't much predation, and there are yard plants that attract moose. The department and law enforcement have to deal with these large wild animals and their public safety implications no matter the decision on this legislation.

Number 1026

REPRESENTATIVE HEINZE inquired as to whether a moose would have a long, happy life coming down into the bowl or being relocated.

MR. ROBUS said that's difficult to answer. The department's basic job is to provide wildlife for the people of the state to use. Urban moose [serve the purpose] of being enjoyed, except when that's not the case, while those moose in hunting areas are used in a different manner. "From our perspective, ... our greatest purpose is not to prolong the moose's life for the most time, it's in order to provide moose for people to use," he clarified. If conflicts can be minimized along the way, that would be great.

REPRESENTATIVE KERTTULA asked if most of the moose that are relocated would be placed in areas where they would be hunted.

MR. ROBUS answered that such as been worked out. However, he related his understanding that one of the purposes behind the legislation is reducing problems at the municipal end while allowing the animals to be available for harvest.

Number 0669

CO-CHAIR MASEK asked if ADF&G is prepared to authorize a third party organization or individual to carry out the proposal in SB 329 and determine the designated habitat area.

MR. ROBUS pointed out that all of the tasks for the department rely on a written application and proposal. He surmised that organizations would approach the department with their ideas regarding how this should be done and ADF&G would work them in an attempt to strike an agreement. He highlighted that ADF&G will always be involved in what moose will be moved or not moved. Mr. Robus said the department is prepared to take on the tasks. In response to Representative Stepovich, Mr. Robus indicated that the notification process could happen in a variety of ways.
REPRESENTATIVE GUTTENBERG asked if there is a public process for evaluation or a private contract without oversight.

MR. ROBUS read the language to be in the nature of a cooperative agreement in which the state and the party would negotiate with regard to what's agreeable. Once the department agreed, it would go into effect. Therefore, he didn't envision it as a large public process.

REPRESENTATIVE GUTTENBERG inquired as to how an individual would be able to influence the department that a moose in his or her yard isn't a nuisance.

MR. ROBUS said that would have to be determined in the agreement. He emphasized that the moose is the property of the state and thus is managed by ADF&G no matter whose property it's on. However, he acknowledged that there are access issues and the private property owner would be involved in determining what happens with a state animal on private property. In further response to Representative Guttenberg, Mr. Robus suspected that this transfer of authority to a third party does exist elsewhere. He noted that there is a new nuisance wildlife statute that allows ADF&G to authorize others to handle other nuisance wildlife, but most of those are done under permits or licenses.

CO-CHAIR MASEK closed public testimony.

Number 0093

CO-CHAIR DAHLSTROM moved to report CSSB 329(RES) out of committee with individual recommendations and the accompanying fiscal notes.

REPRESENTATIVE GUTTENBERG objected. Although he applauded the Alaska Moose Federation and it's goal, there are many unanswered questions.

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REPRESENTATIVE GUTTENBERG opined that the Anchorage area has done a lot of research on this matter and it seems that needs to be coordinated with this legislation.

Number 0082
REPRESENTATIVE LYNN commented that this is legislation for which the case can be made either way. He noted that although he has some [concerns] with this legislation, he applauds the efforts of the sponsor.

REPRESENTATIVE STEPOVICH related that his friend was killed when a moose ran across the road. This legislation seems to be a step in addressing the issue of moose crossing the highways.

REPRESENTATIVE HEINZE agreed that this legislation is a large step in the right direction because she would rather see a moose in a better environment where it is away from harassment.

REPRESENTATIVE KERTTULA said that she has some questions, which she believes ADF&G can address. She also said she believes if the third party doesn't create a practical alternative and there aren't areas with suitable habitat that the proposal won't happen. She expressed that both sides of this issue can find a solution so that the moose aren't automatically destroyed. Although she noted her skepticism, she said she is willing to give the proposal a chance.

Number 0542

REPRESENTATIVE GUTTENBERG withdrew his objection.

CO-CHAIR MASEK, upon determining there was no further objection, announced that CSSB 329(RES) was reported out of the House Resources Standing Committee.

The committee took an at-ease from 3:20 p.m. to 3:22 p.m.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the committee, the House Resources Standing Committee meeting was adjourned at 3:22 p.m.