

# Director's Message

| *Bill Gottmeier ~ Alaska Trappers Association Director*

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Do you enjoy trapping? Do you want to see it preserved? If you answered “yes” to these questions, here are some suggestions on what you can do to help.

Our membership numbers float around 800 to 900 members. The larger our organization is in terms of membership the more our elected officials will listen to our voice. What can you do? A good start would be to renew or extend your own membership. But the bigger contribution is to get new members to sign up with ATA. Do you have friends or family members that trap? Are they members of the organization? I urge you to reach out to them and discuss why it is important to join ATA. Maybe think of giving a membership as a birthday or Christmas gift to a non-member as a way to get them involved.

Get kids and young people involved. They are the future of trapping. Yes, someday we will all be too old to head out on the ‘line. If you want to see trapping survive, we all need to get young people involved. Be the proactive person and invite someone on your ‘line. If you know someone who enjoys hunting but has never trapped, invite them out. Chances are they will enjoy the experience and want to get involved. I know there are plenty of young soldiers and airmen stationed at military bases in our State who would welcome a chance to get out and do something “Alaskan”.

I know some trappers are hesitant to invite others out for fear the person they take will tell people about their ‘line or try and move in on their ‘line. My suggestion is have the frank discussion with that person before you take them out on your ‘line. Explain to them some of the ethics involved in trapping and courtesies customarily extended to other trappers. I have been invited out on several other trapper’s ‘lines. Each time they had a form of this discussion with me, which I had no problem with and thought it to be totally appropriate.

Another suggestion I have is what I call leadership by example. If you want to improve the view of trapping in the eyes of the non-trapping public, practice good ethics. Be a positive example in all you do. First and foremost, obey the state trapping laws in your GMU. If you know a trail or area is frequently used by skiers, people walking dogs or mushers, then avoid that area. Alaska is 2.5 times the size of Texas. There is plenty of land out there to trap. It is not worth it to set a trap on or immediately off a frequently used trail and chance a negative public experience with the non-trapping community. Make the assumption that people will let their dogs run loose on the trails. Right or wrong, it is common practice. Injuring or killing a person’s pet is a traumatic experience and energizes those opposed to trapping.

Lastly put your name in to run for the Board of Directors. We are always looking for people to run and it often comes down to the BOD brain-storming who they can ask to run. It would be great if members approached the BOD asking to get involved by serving a term on the BOD. New people on the BOD bring new energy, new ideas and are healthy for the organization.

Here in the Interior, we have recently been blessed with a healthy dump of snow. The trails are in great shape. Get out and enjoy these conditions. I hope to see you on the trails.

