

HUNTING-TRAPPING

Emergency Order

ALASKA DEPARTMENT
OF FISH AND GAME

Under Authority of AS 16.05.060

Emergency Order No. 01-19-22

Issued at Juneau, Alaska

Effective Date: 4 November, 2022

Expiration Date: 30 June 2023
(unless superseded by a subsequent
emergency order)

EXPLANATION:

This emergency order closes the state resident and nonresident wolf trapping and hunting seasons in Game Management Unit 2. This order is effective at 11:59 PM, 15 December, 2022.

REGULATORY TEXT:

Therefore, the provisions of 5 AAC 84.270 (13), TRAPPING SEASONS AND BAG LIMITS FOR WOLF and of 5 AAC 85.045, HUNTING SEASONS AND BAG LIMITS FOR WOLF, are superseded by this emergency order, and the following provisions are effective for trapping and hunting wolves in Unit 2:

Unit and Bag Limit	Resident Open Season	Nonresident Open Season
Unit 2		
No limit wolves per regulatory year by trapping only:	Nov. 15-Dec. 15	Nov. 15-Dec. 15
5 wolves per regulatory year by hunting only;	Dec. 1-15	Dec. 1-15
.....		

All other hunting and trapping regulations in Unit 2 remain unchanged and are not affected by this emergency order.

Doug Vincent-Lang
Commissioner

By delegation to:



Tom Schumacher
Regional Supervisor

JUSTIFICATION:

Background

Following a two-year public process, in 2019 ADF&G changed the wolf harvest management strategy for GMU 2. Since 1997 harvest had been managed using a quota calculated as a percentage of the most recent population estimate. The new strategy annually adjusts season length to achieve a level of harvest that maintains the wolf population within a fall population objective range of 150–200 wolves established by the Alaska Board of Game. ADF&G worked with the USFS, Fish and Game Advisory Committees, the Alaska Board of Game, the Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Council, and trappers to develop this new strategy that provides trappers with the flexibility and responsibility they desired while sustainably managing harvest of this wolf population.

ADF&G, with support from the USFS and Hyدابurg Cooperative Association (HCA), annually estimates GMU 2 wolf abundance using a DNA-based mark-recapture technique. In fall 2021, ADF&G and HCA collected wolf DNA samples using hair traps within the same large study areas used in 2016–2020. However, in late November deep snow began inhibiting access to some areas and fewer samples were collected than in recent years. Tissue collected with the consent of trappers from 97% of harvested wolves also provided DNA for the population estimate.

Interpreting Estimates and Harvest

Field and lab work for each estimate take about 10 months to complete, so the current year's management is based on the previous year's estimate. For fall 2021 ADF&G estimated the GMU 2 population to be within the range of 216 to 332 wolves (95% confidence interval) with a point estimate of 268 wolves. Within that range of plausible values, ADF&G bases harvest management on the point estimate because that is the value most likely to be correct given the data collected that year. However, ADF&G recognizes that the true number of wolves is likely to be somewhat higher or lower than the point estimate and encourages the public to focus on long-term trends in abundance and harvest, rather than on year-to-year changes in estimates. Those trends indicate the population is stable and that harvest is being sustainably managed.

The 2021 point estimate of 268 wolves is lower than the 2020 estimate of 386 wolves and statistically similar to the 2019 estimate of 316 wolves. A recent analysis by ADF&G found that when fewer data are available for estimates, estimates tend to be biased low. Fewer samples were collected in fall 2021 than in 2020, and that could account for the lower 2021 estimate. A lower estimate could also result from a lower wolf population. ADF&G will continue monitoring the trend of this population.

Wolves can be aged by development of a foreleg bone, and trappers are asked to provide ADF&G with one foreleg bone from each harvested wolf. In 2021 trappers provided leg bones from 38 of 66 harvested wolves. Of those 81% were pups, 10% were yearlings, and 8% were 2 years old or older. Although that was only a partial sample, it indicates the wolf population remains productive and resilient to harvest. ADF&G concludes that the 2021 population estimate is plausible and in fall 2022 the GMU 2 wolf population remains stable and sustainable.

Fall 2021 Harvest Management

Most GMU 2 wolves are taken by trapping, so harvest management focuses on adjusting the length of the trapping season. Setting harvest season length involves considering a variety of biological factors and regulatory guidance. Since first implementing the current harvest management strategy, harvest rate (wolves harvested per day of trapping season) has averaged 2.6 wolves/day and ranged from 2.1 to 3.2 wolves/day. Assuming the average harvest rate, about 81 wolves will be harvested during a 31-day trapping season with a potential range of 65 to 99 wolves. ADF&G will monitor harvest during the season but believes that a 31-day season will result in a sustainable level of harvest.

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