

FINDINGS OF THE BOARD OF GAME

IMPLEMENTATION OF WOLF POPULATION REGULATION IN GAME MANAGEMENT UNIT 13

Introduction to Written Findings: During the publicly convened Board of Game meeting Nov. 9-19, 1992, the Alaska Board of Game heard and considered public testimony, ADF&G staff reports and advisory committee reports and deliberated in regard to the Game Management Unit 13 wolf management implementation plan. Based on this information, the Board passed a regulation authorizing wolf population regulation within portions of the unit. This implementation plan outlines a management program addressed to increasing yields of moose and caribou for hunters. Additionally, the Board found the following:

1. Game Management Unit 13 (GMU 13) is one of the most important areas for uses of wildlife in the state due to its large wildlife populations and proximity to much of the state's population in southcentral and interior Alaska.
2. There are not sufficient sustainable yields of moose and caribou in GMU 13 to meet present consumptive demands for subsistence and other uses. While current populations of moose and caribou are fairly large, recent yields, particularly of moose, are small. Many Alaskans depend on these populations to meet their nutritional needs and those needs are addressed by the implementation plan.
3. Public testimony prevailed toward strong support for intensive management of GMU 13 wildlife populations to provide high yields of moose and caribou for humans.
4. The Department management goal for GMU 13 is to conserve all populations of wildlife; to produce high yields of moose and caribou for humans and to provide the maximum opportunity to participate in hunting for these species; to maintain all populations of wildlife, including predators, at significant and visible levels to provide for a broad spectrum of uses was found to be appropriate. Also found to be appropriate were recommended population and harvest objectives for moose, caribou, wolves, and grizzly bears as follows:

SPECIES	POPULATION OBJECTIVE	HARVEST OBJECTIVE
Wolf	150-200	50-150
Moose	25,000-30,000	2,000-3,000
Caribou	40,000-60,000	4,500-6,500
Grizzly Bears	Reduce Significantly	>125

5. Wolf and bear predation on moose and caribou is a mortality factor which can be managed through the regulation of wolf and reduction of bear population levels in portions of GMU 13. However, benefits from wolf regulation are more immediately measurable than bear reduction which would take several years to have a measurable effect. Additionally, because of the Board's calendar for dealing with different species, bears don't come up until the Spring 1993 meeting so they cannot be dealt with on a regulatory basis until then. Delaying wolf regulation in a portion of GMU 13 until that time would place additional pressure on moose and caribou and force more extreme wolf regulation and bear reduction in the future.

6. The Department's five-point management proposal for increasing moose and caribou yields which includes habitat enhancement, wolf population regulation, grizzly bear population reduction, more sophisticated harvest strategies, and expanded research is appropriate.

7. The appropriate management emphasis for GMU 13 is on high yields of moose and caribou; however wolves and grizzly bears are important wildlife resources and must be managed on a sustained yield basis and maintained at viable levels. Management for high grizzly bear populations is emphasized in other areas of the state; GMU's 4, 8, and 9 in particular.

8. Wolf packs that reside primarily within Denali National Park are an important resource and are appropriately provided protection outside of the park in GMU 13 by zoning changes in the area-specific plan. Wolves primarily residing with Wrangell St.-Elias National Park were also considered and felt to be adequately protected based on the GMU 11 and 13 boundary, the Copper River, the forested terrain along the boundary, and the history of past wolf harvests in the area. The Department will work with appropriate federal agencies to ensure that wolves

residing primarily on federal land will be excluded from regulation programs.

9. The GMU 13 wolf population has been regulated over the past 20 years primarily by public land-and-shoot hunting techniques. It has been demonstrated that ground trapping and hunting are incapable of regulating the wolf population at the desired level. It was recognized that some object to public participation in wolf control activities. Land-and-shoot hunting was successful in achieving desired harvest levels and under the stringent permit conditions of the strategic wolf management plan, public control is appropriate.

10. During some years wolf control may not be appropriate in all or any portions of GMU 13. The Department will evaluate if wolf control is appropriate by considering wolf abundance, prey population size and trend, prey recruitment, success in meeting harvest objectives, and winter severity.

11. An annual report of implementation activities, plans to implement wolf control, and the status of prey and predator populations will be presented at fall board meetings.

12. A wide range of values and uses of wildlife is accommodated within GMU 13 through zoning in the Area Specific Plan.

13. The Department has developed this implementation plan based on sound principles of wildlife management, consistent with the constitutional and statutory mandates for sustained yield management. This plan is consistent with the Strategic Wolf Plan for Alaska adopted by the board on October 30, 1991, and the area specific for Southcentral and Interior Alaska adopted by the board on November 16, 1992. This plan will maximize the likelihood of success in reaching the program objectives and will provide the department with invaluable knowledge of the relationship of wolf predation and sustainable yields of prey for humans. The data gathered from this program will become an important part of the expanding knowledge base used by wildlife managers to provide benefits to people.

14. The implementation and area specific plans covering GMU 13 provide extensive descriptions of the geographic area, wildlife populations, and human uses of wildlife as well as wildlife population and harvest objectives and the rationale behind them. The implementation plan also contains methods and means allowed for the regulation of wolf numbers, pursuant to 5 AAC 92.110.

15. Extensive public input over the past two years was a critical component in the development of the strategic, area specific, and implementation plans.

16. All oral testimony, written comments, staff reports, and previous board findings were considered and incorporated by reference.

Adopted November 18, 1992



Richard Burley, Chair
Alaska Board of Game