

**PROPOSAL 90 – 5 AAC 92.074(d). Community subsistence harvest hunt areas.** Expand the Copper Basin Community Subsistence Harvest hunt area by adding a part of Unit 12.

**PROPOSED BY:** Ahtna Tene Nené Customary and Traditional Use Committee

**WHAT WOULD THE PROPOSAL DO?** Add the portion of Unit 12 within the Nabesna River drainage west of the east bank of the Nabesna River and upstream from the southern boundary of the Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge to the Copper Basin Community Subsistence Harvest (CSH) hunt area for both moose and caribou.

**WHAT ARE THE CURRENT REGULATIONS?** The Copper Basin CSH area includes all of Unit 11, Unit 13, and that portion of Unit 12 including all drainages into the west bank of the Little Tok River, from its headwaters in Bear Valley at the intersection of the unit boundaries of Units 12 and 13 to its junction with the Tok River, and all drainages into the south bank of the Tok River from its junction with the Little Tok River to the Tok Glacier.

The season dates and bag limit for the Copper Basin CSH moose hunt in Unit 11 and Unit 13 are August 20–September 20 with a bag limit of one antlered bull. The current season dates and bag limit for the Copper Basin CSH moose hunt in Unit 12 is the same as the harvest ticket season in this area (August 24–28 and September 8–17; 1 bull with spike-fork antlers or 50-inch antlers or antlers with 4 or more brow tines on one side).

In Units 11 and 13, up to 100 “any-bull” moose (including bulls that do not meet the antler restriction for moose taken by hunters using a harvest ticket in this area) may be taken during the fall season. When area-specific quotas are reached, the CSH bag limit is changed by emergency order to match the harvest ticket season antler restrictions for that area for the remainder of the season.

The Copper Basin CSH caribou hunt is limited to Unit 13 (by discretionary permit hunt conditions and procedures; 5 AAC 92.052), where it is open during August 10–September 20 and October 21–March 31 with a bag limit 1 caribou per household. However, the season dates and bag limit may be changed via emergency order. The caribou hunt is limited to Unit 13 to minimize the risk of harvesting animals from adjacent herds.

Copper Basin CSH moose permittees and household members may not hold state or federal moose or caribou permits outside of the Copper Basin CHS hunt area or hold moose or caribou harvest tickets. Copper Basin CSH caribou permittees and household members may not hold caribou harvest tickets or other state caribou permits. In addition, no member of a household with a Copper Basin CSH caribou permit may apply for state or federal moose or caribou permit hunts outside of the Copper Basin CSH hunt area, and no member of the household may hunt moose outside of the Copper Basin CSH hunt area.

Within the proposed area of Unit 12, the moose season for residents using a harvest ticket is a registration hunt during August 20–September 17 with a bag limit of 1 bull with spike-fork antlers or 50-inch antlers or 3 or more brow tines on at least one side. There is no open season for caribou within the proposed area.

There is a positive C&T finding for moose in Unit 13, and an ANS of 300–600 moose. There is a positive C&T finding for moose in Unit 12, and an ANS of 60–70. There is a positive C&T finding for moose in Unit 11, and an ANS of 30–40.

There is a positive C&T finding for caribou in Units 12 and 13 (Nelchina herd), and an ANS of 600–1,000. There is a positive C&T finding for caribou in Unit 11 (Mentasta herd); however, the board has not made an ANS finding for this herd. There is a negative C&T finding for the Chisana herd in Unit 12.

**WHAT WOULD BE THE EFFECT IF THE PROPOSAL WERE ADOPTED?** The Copper Basin CSH hunt area would be expanded to include a larger portion of Unit 12. Since Copper Basin CSH permit holders and household members are limited to hunting moose and caribou only within the Copper Basin CSH area, this proposal would expand the area in which these hunters could legally hunt moose and caribou (with either state CSH or federal permits).

**BACKGROUND:** A portion of the Nelchina caribou herd migrates through the proposed hunt area of Unit 12 in the spring and fall, and caribou from the Mentasta caribou herd may be in the area at any given time of the year. The Mentasta caribou herd population estimate averaged 293 animals (range 155–445) annually during RY02–RY10, and the most recent Nelchina caribou herd population estimate was 49,500 animals.

In Regulatory Year 2012 (RY12; that is, RY12 is 1 July 2012–30 June 2013) the resident moose hunting season dates and bag limit were changed from a 15-day (August 24–28 and September 8–17) any-bull season to a 29-day (August 20–September 17) season with a bag limit of 1 bull moose with spike-fork antlers or 50-inch antlers or antlers with 3 or more brow tines on 1 side. This aligned season dates and bag limits for moose along the Nabesna Road and created a registration hunt that included portions of Units 11 and 12.

The moose bull-to-cow ratio was 35 bulls:100 cows (90% confidence interval: 26–44 bulls:100 cows) in the portion of Unit 12 proposed to be added in 2011 and was above the management objective of 25 bulls:100 cows. The observable moose population estimate within this proposed added area was 1,261 moose (90% confidence interval: 1,041–1,481 moose), and the harvestable surplus is estimated to be 50 moose in this portion of Unit 12 (4% of the population estimate). Harvest during RY12–RY16 averaged 21 bulls (range 19–23) per year, which is slightly greater than the RY07–RY11 average of 15 bulls (range 5–24) per year.

The CSH program was initiated in RY09 with only one participating community/group for both moose and caribou. The CSH program was not offered in RY10, but in RY11 the hunt was reinstated with separate participation opportunities for moose and caribou. Since the first year of the Copper Basin CSH program in RY09, only 1 moose has been harvested by CSH hunters along Nabesna road in Unit 11. Hunt participation and harvest is summarized in the table below:

**Table 90-1. - Community Subsistence Harvest participation, RY09–RY16**

Regulatory Year	CSH Moose (CM300)			CSH Caribou (CC001)		
	# of Groups	# of participants that hunted	Harvest	# of Groups	# of participants that hunted	Harvest
2009	1	293	100 (70 any bulls)	1	288	127
2011	9	311	91 (64 any bulls)	6	176	87
2012	19	358	101 (76 any bulls)	17	238	150
2013	45	842	162 (88 any bulls)	28	308	114
2014	43	599	148 (76 any bulls)	25	266	144
2015	43	593	171 (92 any bulls)	26	254	191
2016	73	*	192 (113 any bulls)*	45	*	221*

\*2016 data as of 10/3/2016; reports are still being filed

A comparison of results from household harvest surveys of a combined 21 Copper Basin communities conducted by the department during the 1980s and 2010s shows use of portions of the proposed area for both moose and caribou hunting by the surveyed communities. During the 2010s, efforts by the surveyed communities to harvest both moose and caribou expanded further into the proposed portion of Unit 12. These results are summarized in figures 90-1 through 90-4, below.

**DEPARTMENT COMMENTS:** The department recommends this proposal be **DEFERRED** to the March 2017 special meeting on Copper Basin hunting and subsistence.

The department is **NEUTRAL** regarding the allocative nature of this proposal, including expansion of the Copper Basin CSH area to include a larger portion of Unit 12 and regarding opening a CSH moose season in the proposed portion of Unit 12. We have no biological concerns regarding this moose portion of the proposal. The most recent bull-to-cow ratio was above management objectives and reported harvest during recent years is below estimates of harvestable surplus.

However, the department is **OPPOSED** to opening a CSH caribou season in the current or proposed portion of the CSH area that lies within Unit 12 due to biological concerns regarding the Mentasta Caribou Herd. The Copper Basin CSH caribou hunt is restricted to Unit 13 due to concerns for adjacent herds. Expanding the CSH caribou hunt to include portions of the home range of the Mentasta herd may result in unsustainable harvest of Mentasta caribou.

**COST ANALYSIS:** Adoption of this proposal would not result in additional costs for the department.

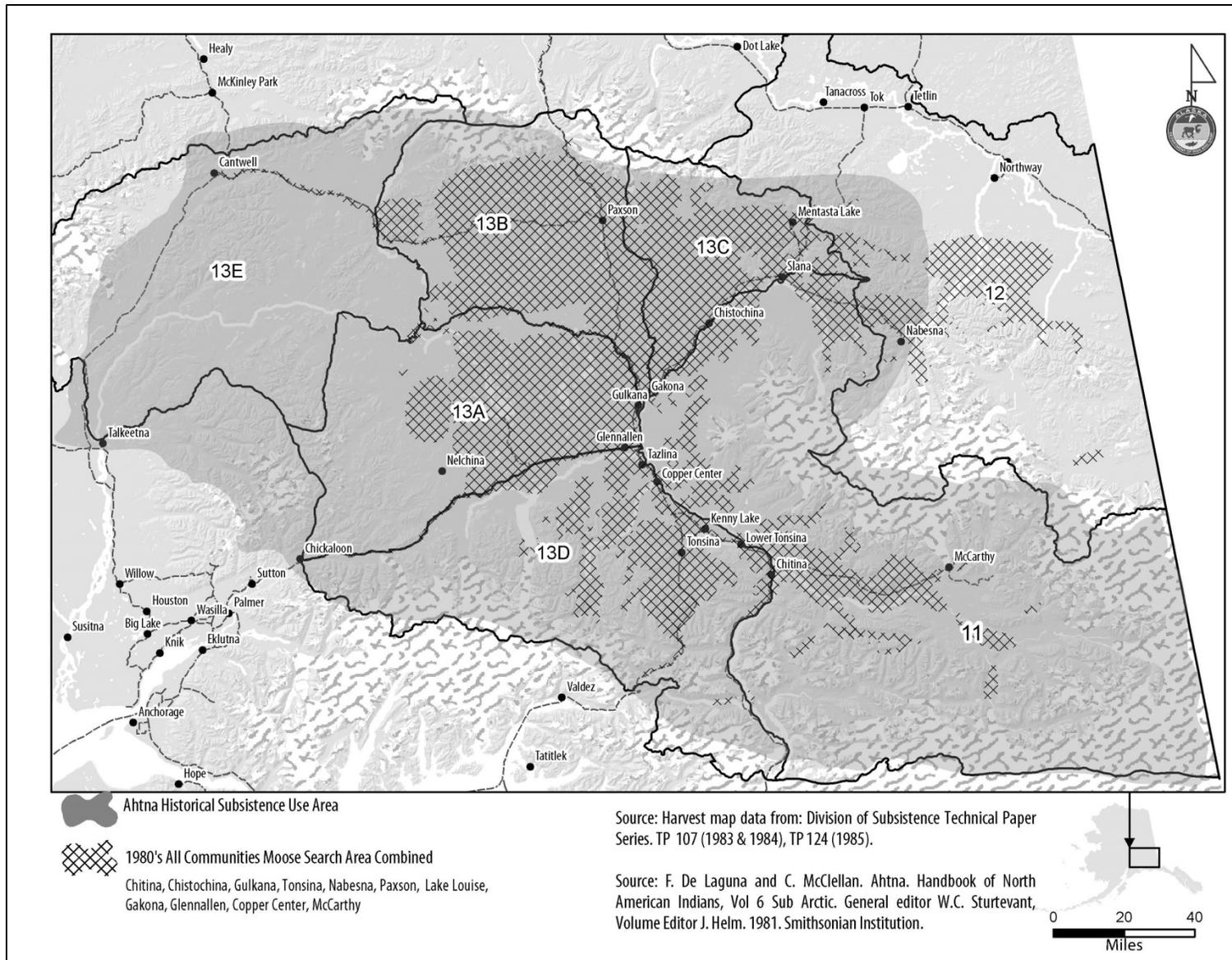


Figure 90-1.—All communities moose search areas, combined, 1980s.

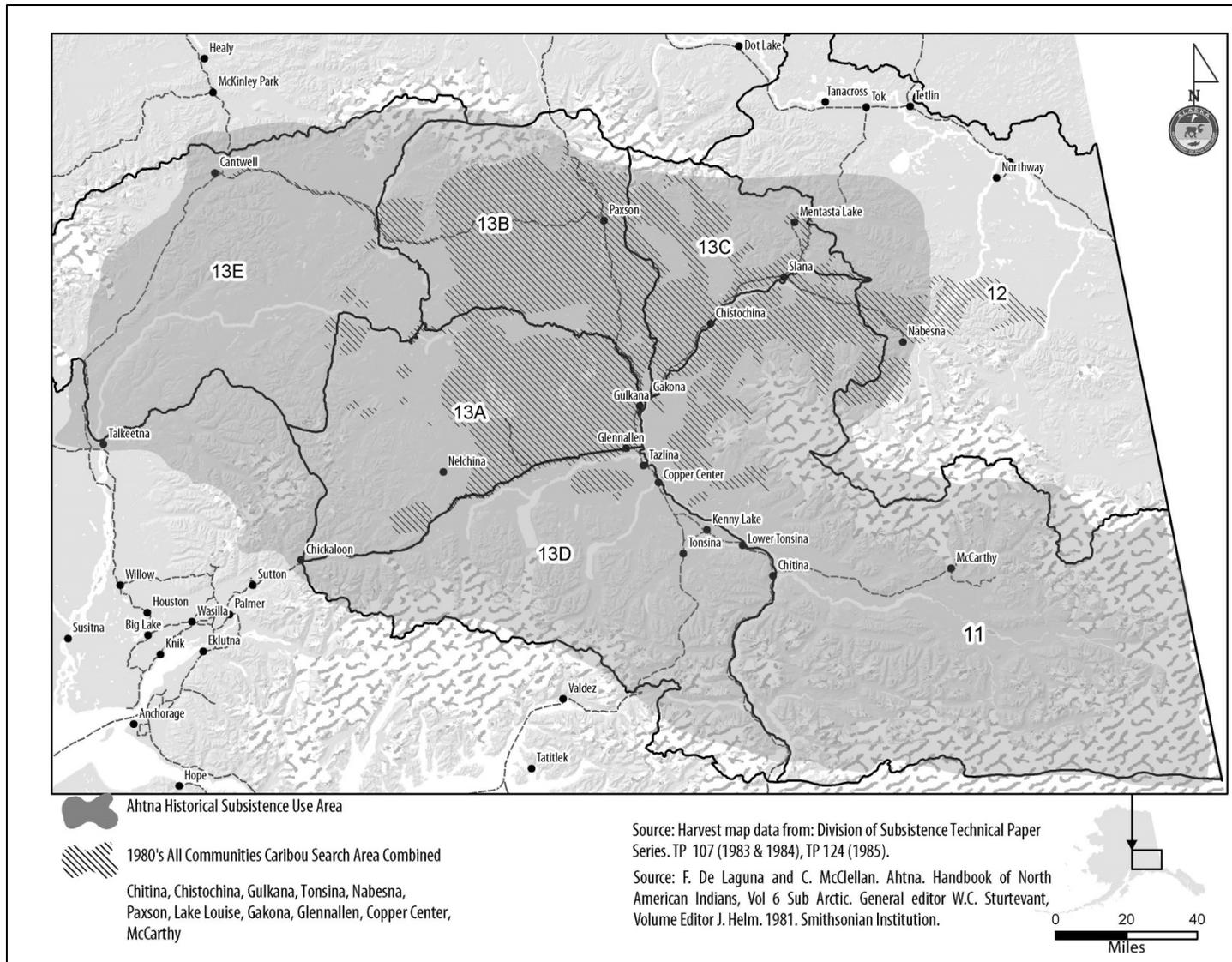


Figure 90-2.—All communities caribou search areas, combined, 1980s.

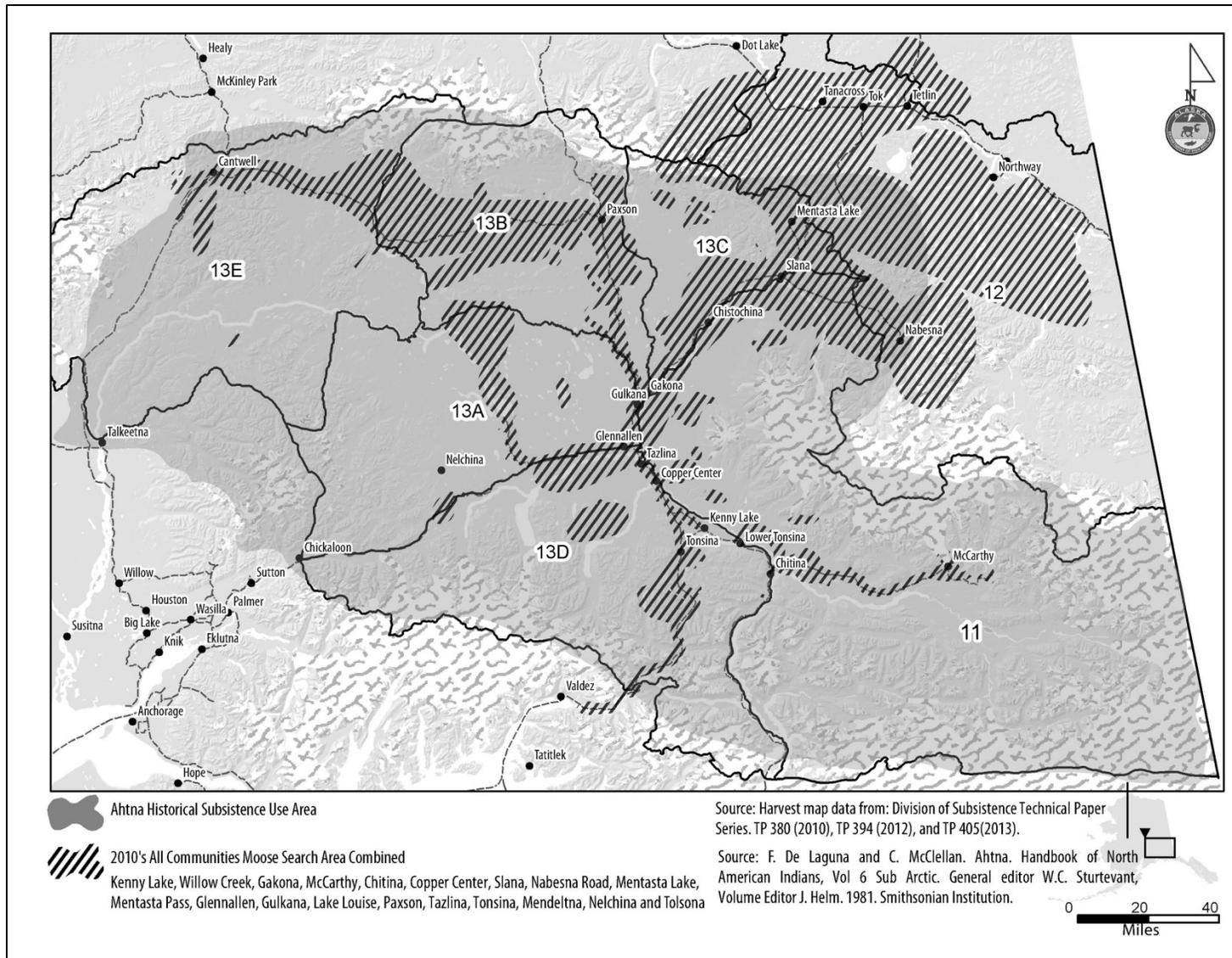


Figure 90-3.—All communities moose search areas, combined, 2010s.

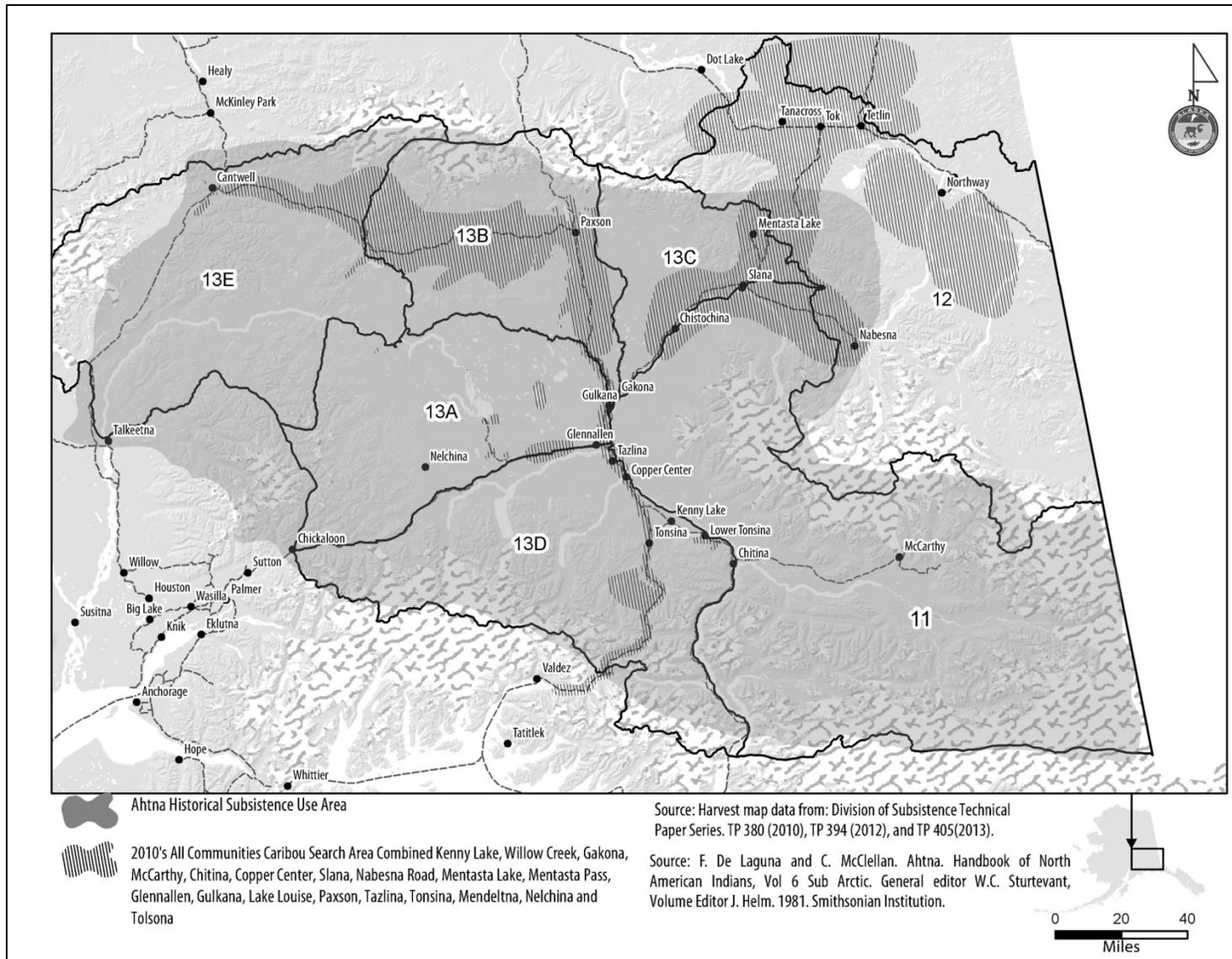


Figure 90-4.—All communities caribou search areas, combined, 2010s.

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