

# **Alaska Department of Fish & Game Predation Management Summary, 2007-2009**

Prepared by the Division of Wildlife Conservation, February 2010



## BACKGROUND

Harvesting wild game is extremely important to many Alaskan families. Participating in the hunt and sharing the bounty of economical, wild-grown meat are long-standing traditions.

In 1994, recognizing the importance of wild game meat to Alaskans, Alaska lawmakers added provisions to state law that require the Alaska Board of Game to identify moose, caribou, and deer populations that are especially important food sources for Alaskans, and to insure that these populations remain large enough to allow for adequate and sustained harvest. These changes to state law, compiled in a bill called Intensive Management of Game Resources, guide department actions regarding intensive management.

If moose, caribou, or deer populations drop below what the Board of Game (Board) determines is needed for continued harvests by people, the Board directs the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) to undertake intensive management of that population. Intensive management is a process that starts with investigating the causes of low ungulate numbers, and then involves steps to increase those numbers. This can include restricting hunting seasons and bag limits, evaluating and improving habitat, liberalizing harvest of predators, and predator control.

ADF&G is committed to maintaining healthy populations of all wildlife resources, including moose, caribou, deer, wolves, and bears. We will continue to manage Alaska's wildlife populations with the health of all wildlife, sustainable harvests, and conservation as our guiding principles.

Currently, predation control occurs on approximately 10% of land in Alaska. Regulations adopted by the Board of Game (5 AAC 92.125) require that biologists manage the following six separate predation management areas in Alaska:

- Units 12/20E (Upper Yukon-Tanana) – to increase both the Fortymile Caribou Herd throughout its range and the moose population in Unit 12 north of the Alaska Highway, the Board authorized a wolf reduction program in this 18,750 mi<sup>2</sup> area. To increase moose numbers in central Unit 20E, the Board also authorized a brown bear reduction program in approximately 4,050 mi<sup>2</sup> of the area.
- Unit 13 (Nelchina Basin) – to increase the moose population, the Board authorized a wolf reduction program in this 15,413 mi<sup>2</sup> area.
- Unit 16 (Upper Cook Inlet) – to increase the moose population, the Board authorized both wolf and black bear reduction programs in this 11,000 mi<sup>2</sup> area.

- Unit 19A (Middle Kuskokwim) – to increase the moose population in the 3,913 mi<sup>2</sup> Central Kuskokwim Moose Management Area, the Board authorized a wolf reduction program.
- Unit 19D East (McGrath) – to increase the moose population, the Board authorized wolf, black bear, and brown bear reduction programs in this 8,513 mi<sup>2</sup> area.
- Unit 9D (Southern Alaska Peninsula) – to increase the Southern Alaska Peninsula Caribou Herd, the Board authorized a wolf reduction program in this 3,819 mi<sup>2</sup> area.

## **RECENT AND UPCOMING ACTIVITIES**

In 2008-2009, in five of six predator control areas, wolf and bear control activities continued as they have for several years. In spring 2009, to help facilitate higher black bear harvests in Unit 16, the Board of Game enacted a new provision allowing for foot snaring of bears in the Unit. Just over 500 black bears were removed in the 2007-2008 and again about the same number was removed with the addition of foot snaring in 2008-2009. This is still about half of the target objective, but, together with reduced wolf levels, we hope to see increased moose survival in this area. At its January 2010 statewide meeting, the Board reclassified black bears as furbearers, thus providing future opportunities to allow trained trappers to snare bears in areas where the Board establishes trapping seasons and bag limits.

Achieving reduction targets for wolves and bears can be challenging. Snow conditions greatly affect the ability to locate and remove wolves and locating bears is also challenging on the ground. Nonetheless, with the assistance of specially-permitted pilots and gunners, and, in two locations (Units 9 and 12/20E), with department staff in helicopters, wolf removal rates were achieved in all of the intensive management areas during 2008-2009.

Moose numbers and/or calf survival have responded favorably in Units 12 and 20E, 13, 16, 19A, and 19D East, and, in Unit 9, the Southern Alaska Peninsula Caribou Herd has increased from 700 to 800 animals in the past year.

For more information on predator and prey populations, see the table on the following pages summarizing the department's predation management efforts over the past two regulatory years (fall/winter/spring 2007-2008 and 2008-2009). For each of the six predation control areas, the table includes the numbers of wolves and bears harvested; population estimates for wolves, bears, and the relevant prey species; as well as population objectives for those species. The table also includes information on progress to date, as well as plans for 2010.

## ADF&G Predation Management Summary, 2007-2009

Area	Fall/Winter/Spring 2007-2008							Fall/Winter/Spring 2008-2009						
	Wolves Harvested			Bears Harvested	Population Estimates			Wolves Harvested			Bears Harvested	Population Estimates		
	Control	Hunt/Trap	Total	Total	Wolf	Bear	Prey	Control	Hunt/Trap	Total	Total	Wolf <sup>(a)</sup>	Bear	Prey <sup>(b)</sup>
Units 12/20E (Upper Yukon-Tanana)	27	70	97	brown: 11 (5 hunting; 6 control)	366-398 (fall 07)	brown: 114-141	4,700-6,600 moose; 42,000 caribou	133 (c)	87	220	Brown: 10 (8 hunting; 2 control)	393-431 (fall 08) 152	brown: 114-141	3,900-5,500 moose; 46,500 caribou
Unit 13 (Nelchina Basin)	33	57	90	N/A	140-170 (spring 08)		(d)	55	63	118	N/A	130-160		(d)
Unit 16 <sup>(e)</sup> (Upper Cook Inlet)	20	13	33	black: 501 (hunting, control)	72-80 <sup>(f)</sup> (post pupping spring 08)	black: 2,500-3,000	6,000 moose	24	9	33	black: 510 (hunting, control)	53 - 72 <sup>(f)</sup>	black: 2,000-2,500	6,900 moose
Unit 19A (Middle Kuskokwim)	15	16	31	N/A	59-93 (fall 07)		3,200-5,300 moose	20	11	31	N/A	58	N/A	3,200-5,300 moose
Unit 19D East (McGrath)	29	23	52	black: 4; brown: 2 (all hunting)	86-114 (fall 07)	black: 70	5,500 moose	19	9	28	black: 7 (hunting); brown: 5 (2 hunting, 3 control)	47-71	black: >70	5,500 moose
Unit 9D (Southern Alaska Peninsula)	28	0	28	128	33 <sup>(g)</sup> (spring 08)	brown: 1600	700 Caribou	8	0	8	0	0 <sup>(g)</sup>	brown: 1600	800 caribou
<b>Totals</b>	152	179	331					259	179	438				

- (a) Spring 2009 estimates.  
 (b) Fall 2008 estimates, except Unit 19A is a spring 2008 estimate and Upper Yukon-Tanana caribou is a spring 2009 estimate.  
 (c) Includes harvest of 84 wolves by ADF&G staff using helicopters.  
 (d) Every fall, biologists count moose in eight areas totaling 3500 mi<sup>2</sup> of the 23,000 mi<sup>2</sup> GMU. Counts for 2000, 2008, and 2009 were 3549, 4484, and 5046, respectively.  
 (e) The predator control area includes all of Game Management Unit (GMU) 16B and part of 16A.  
 (f) Within GMU 16B only.  
 (g) Within the calving grounds of the Southern Alaska Peninsula caribou herd only.  
 EMMA = Experimental Micro-Management Area.

## ADF&G Predation Management Summary, 2007-2009

Area	Population Objectives			Plans for 2010	Progress
	Wolf	Bear	Prey		
Units 12/20E (Upper Yukon-Tanana)	88-103	N/A	8,700-11,000 moose; 50,000-100,000 caribou	Remove up to 196 wolves using aerial shooting and land and shoot by qualified and specially-permitted members of the public. Also, use department staff in helicopters to remove wolves if permitted shooters are unsuccessful in achieving desired numbers. This will be dependent on snow and weather conditions.	Program began January 2005. Moose population in southern Unit 20E increased during 2004-2008, cause uncertain. Caribou up from 38,500 in 2007 to 46,500 in 2009.
Unit 13 (Nelchina Basin)	135-165	brown: 350	17,600-21,900 moose	Remove up to 60 wolves using aerial shooting and land and shoot by qualified and specially-permitted members of the public.	Program began March 2000. Moose count areas up 42%, 2000-2009. Moose harvest up 44%, 2000-2009.
Unit 16 <sup>(e)</sup> (Upper Cook Inlet)	22 - 45 <sup>(f)</sup>	no population objective; harvest objective only	10,000-11,500 moose	Remove minimum number to achieve wolf population objectives using hunting, trapping, land and shoot, and aerial shooting by qualified and specially-permitted members of the public. Retain department-authorized black bear control (including snaring, control baiting, and same-day- airborne take) with snaring extended through October. Retain existing bear baiting and harvest allowances. Continue to allow for permitted sale of black bear hides and skulls.	Program began March 2004. Moose calf survival up from 10% in 2005 to 23% in 2007 and 17% in 2008. Foot snaring of black bears began in 2009 (81 were harvested using this method).
Unit 19A (Middle Kuskokwim)	30-36	N/A	7,600-9,300 moose	Remove up to 60 wolves using aerial shooting and land and shoot by qualified and specially-permitted members of the public.	Program began December 2004. Moose population in eastern Unit 19A up from 0.28/mi <sup>2</sup> in 2005 to 0.44/mi <sup>2</sup> in 2008.
Unit 19D East (McGrath)	40	lowest possible within the bear control area	6,000-8,000 moose	Remove up to 65 wolves using aerial shooting and land and shoot by qualified and specially-permitted members of the public. Allow snaring of black bears in the EMMA by qualified and specially-permitted members of the public.	Program began December 2003. Moose population in 5,313-mi <sup>2</sup> survey area increased from 2,774 in 2004 to 3,889 in 2008.
Unit 9D (Southern Alaska Peninsula)	0 <sup>(g)</sup>	maintain high density	3,000-4,000 caribou	Continue radio collaring and survival tracking of neonate SAP caribou and continue the use of department staff in helicopters to remove wolves encountered on the SAP's calving grounds.	Program began June 2008. Caribou calf survival up from <1 calves per 100 cows in 2007 to 39 calves per 100 cows in 2008 and 43 calves:100 cows in 2009. Calf survival 73%, summer 2009. Population up from 600 to 800.
<b>Totals</b>					

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