Citizen Participation in Developing a Wolf Management Plan for Alaska: An Attempt to Resolve Conflicting Human Values and Perceptions

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The subject of wolves and their management evokes diverse and polarized opinions, making this issue one of the more difficult for wildlife managers to resolve. We review the history and results of Alaska's recent attempt to develop a wolf management plan acceptable to most of the state's residents. A citizen participation process including a citizen planning team, forums, open houses, and discussions with civic groups was used to attempt to reach consensus. Despite early success, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game was unable to maintain a process that was widely perceived as fair. The public and media were not kept sufficiently informed about the planning effort or wolf biology and management, and the public was not kept adequately involved. Combined with an unwillingness on the part of some interests to compromise, this prevented the department from developing a wolf management plan acceptable to most Alaskans. We discuss problems encountered and make recommendations for others wishing to attempt such a public process. Despite the outcome, we believe this public process provides a promising vehicle for agencies seeking acceptable solutions to complex and controversial issues.

Introduction

Alaska has so far accommodated moderate human impact on the land without, for the most part, jeopardizing its wildlife, including large carnivores. Alaska's wildlife managers are striving to maintain this careful approach to wildlife use and management, while recognizing the need to accommodate different personal, cultural, and economic values within the context of biological and ecological realities. However, predator management, especially wolf (*Canis lupus*), remains contentious and continues to be one of the most difficult challenges facing wildlife biologists.

Alaska is home to an estimated 6,000–7,000 wolves. They are neither threatened nor endangered, and in most of the state are as plentiful as their food supplies allow. Alaska encompasses approximately 145 million hectares of which ownership is about 60% federal, about 20% state, and about 10% private (Alaska Dept. of Nat. Resourc. 1992). There are approximately 600,000 people, of whom about 10% live in rural areas (U.S. Dept. of Commerce 1990).

Lifestyles and cultures in Alaska range from those who depend on wild resources to those who obtain food from supermarkets. Alaska resource values reflect the diversity found in the lower 48 states, ranging from preservation to management and use to benefit human needs and desires. A Yale University study (Kellert 1985a) showed that Alaskans as a group were more knowledgeable about wolves and more committed to coexisting with wolves than any other group. However, Kellert also found that Alaskans possess a more utilitarian attitude toward wolves, as opposed to more preservationist attitudes elsewhere in the United States.

Due to the large amount of federally managed land in Alaska and its expanse of wilderness, there is a strong interest in resource management by those living outside Alaska. Resource management debates in Alaska include not only Alaskan rural, urban, hunting, nonhunting, commercial, resource exploitation, conservation, and preservation voices, but also non-Alaskan voices.

The last 20 years of wolf management actions and public reactions in Alaska (Harbo and Dean 1983, Stephenson et

al. this volume) caused groups that should have been united in ensuring the future of wildlife habitat to work against one another to influence management decisions involving less critical issues. This history of confrontation eroded public trust in the Department of Fish and Game (department) and/or some individuals within it.

Historically, the department has communicated more with the hunting than the nonhunting public. Staff have struggled to understand and accommodate diverse, and sometimes conflicting, wildlife values among the public. This dilemma is not unique to Alaska (Wagner 1991). The personal values of some people are so deeply held that it is difficult, if not impossible, for them to recognize and fairly accommodate other interests.

History of the Planning Effort

During spring 1986, the last wolf control program conducted by the state was halted by concerned citizens who used political sensitivities to their advantage. Some staff, who had seen many apparently sound management programs stopped for nonbiological reasons, realized that department programs, and the system for involving the public in management decisions, had not kept pace with changes in societal values. It appeared that new approaches would be needed if the department were to retain the latitude to enhance some wildlife systems for benefits to people. An open planning process that fairly addressed the values and concerns of all Alaskans seemed to be the best means for meeting the legal mandate of providing a wide array of uses of wildlife.

In August 1987, the director of the Division of Wildlife Conservation endorsed the concept of broad public participation in planning the management of predator-prey systems, with a focus on wolves and wolf management. However, progress was slow. Frustrated by the controversy and its impact on other programs, some staff were hesitant to address the wolf management issue, or did not feel a solution was possible. Others sought to develop a management plan that most of the people in Alaska could accept. Nearly two years were required to build staff support for this idea.

In November 1989, the department requested support from the Board of Game (board), the seven-member public body responsible for enacting wildlife regulations in Alaska, for a public planning process. The problem was stated as follows:

> The wide range of public desires for wolves and their prey is not adequately satisfied by Alaska's current management practices and policies. This has caused a continual series of conflicts as opposing groups attempt to unilaterally influence management decisions.

After gaining the board's support, the department consulted with its traditional constituency as well as other individuals and organizations in an effort to better understand what people wanted for wildlife in Alaska. The department invited people to help find areas where compromise might be possible. Support from some of the public was slow to develop. Many of those contacted were hesitant to embark on a long public process. Some feared the process would either further delay management actions, or lead to hasty decisions. Others seemed reluctant to engage in a dialogue that would entail mutual respect or foster compromise.

A needs assessment (Bleiker and Bleiker 1981) was conducted to identify effective ways to find out how people wanted wildlife managed and to involve them in the process. Four methods seemed most promising: a citizen planning team, forums, open houses, and presentations to civic groups. We describe the planning team approach in some detail, as it proved particularly effective and was well received by the public. The other methods were not as fully implemented and a fair comparison is not possible.

Wolf Management Planning Team

The Alaska Wolf Management Planning Team (team) represented many of the diverse values held by Alaskans regarding wolves and wolf management. It consisted of 12 members selected from a list of 60 people recommended by the public, a representative of the department, and a representative of the board. The department tried to create a team that included all major interests. Individuals were selected based on their ability to both represent their personal values and work effectively with people whose values were different.

The men and women comprising the public members were a diverse group not only in values, but also in lifestyle, residence, age, and ethnicity. Members represented rural and urban hunting, nonhunting, guiding, and trapping interests. There were members of local and national environmental and hunting organizations, members of Fish and Game Advisory committees, and educators. All shared the goal of ensuring viable wolf populations throughout Alaska in the future. The team was charged with making recommendations to the department and the Board on how wolves should be managed.

At the team's first meeting on 14 and 15 November 1990, the framework and ground rules for the group were established. The department hired the Keystone Center, a nonprofit organization specializing in mediation of difficult issues, to facilitate and chair all meetings. The team used a process in which members strove for consensus, while allowing each individual to maintain their basic values. To promote the open exchange of ideas necessary to reach consensus, the group adhered to these basic rules:

- Each person was to articulate their own interests and concerns.
- Each was to try to understand the interests and concerns of others, listening and keeping an open mind throughout the process.

- Each was to try to fashion solutions that satisfied all interests (not solely their own).
- Each was to understand that not every recommendation eventually made by the Team would be their first choice.

To further ensure that an open discussion ensued and that no one compromised their values, the group agreed to more specific rules:

- Team members did not serve as formal representatives of organizations or agencies to which they belonged, but rather as individuals.
- All values were respected and considered valid.
- All comments were depersonalized.
- All disagreements were discussed on a professional level.
- Everyone had equal access to the floor.

A key component of the process was public participation. The team recognized that public participation in its deliberations was desirable, but realized that public dialogue during each meeting would be cumbersome. The public were invited to attend team meetings, but not participate in the discussions. Written testimony was solicited from the public and the team held two public meetings, one in Anchorage and one in Fairbanks, at which the public were invited to share their thoughts on wolf management in Alaska. The team announced the date, time, and location of all meetings through the news media, distributed meeting summaries to all interested parties, and prepared news releases following each meeting.

The team held six, two- to three-day meetings during which they discussed definitions of terms; the history of wolf management in Alaska; basic wolf biology; predator-prey dynamics; pack dynamics; population censusing techniques; state and federal regulations, laws, and enforcement capabilities; the use of aircraft in hunting and trapping wolves; long-term population goals; management goals; predator control; ethics; assessment of user groups and needs, attitudes and values of the public; methods and means; interagency coordination; information and education needs; and the role of politics and biology in wolf management decisions.

In June 1991, the team offered its recommendations (Alaska Wolf Management Planning Team 1991) to the department, describing areas of consensus reached by the members. The team recognized in its report that public participation and the consideration of the values of all Alaskans were necessary if the history of adversarial management of wolves was to give way to a constructive dialogue.

Strategic Wolf Management Plan

During summer 1991, the department drafted a Strategic Wolf Management Plan (Alaska Department of Fish and Game 1992a) based primarily on the team's final report, but which also included information offered by other members of the public and wildlife scientists. The draft strategic plan was released for public review in September 1991 and public comments were incorporated.

The team and its facilitator met with the board during October 1991 to brief them on the process, rules, and results of the team's effort. The department expected to offer a status report to the board and complete the process on its own schedule. However, the board took possession of the draft plan and chose to work with the public and the department to finalize and adopt the strategic plan during the meeting.

To allow increased flexibility to include the public in its deliberations, the board chairman recessed the official meeting and convened the board as a "committee of the whole." This committee asked department personnel, three members of the team, and three members of the public to help conduct a word-by-word review of the draft strategic plan. After three days of revision, the board reconvened its official meeting and unanimously approved the plan.

The strategic plan provided guidelines to address wolf management (and therefore system management) in Alaska. The goal of the plan was to ensure the long-term conservation of wolves throughout Alaska, while providing for diverse human values and uses of wildlife, as well as increasing public awareness of wolves and their uses (Alaska Department of Fish and Game 1992a). It recognized that no single type of wildlife management can provide for a wide variety of uses, and described seven zones, where management strategies would range from complete protection of wolves to manipulation of wolf numbers to maintain or enhance human uses of ungulate species. The board's intent was to identify more areas where wolves could be protected and more areas where wolves could be intensively managed to provide opportunities for people to hunt ungulates (Alaska Board of Game 1991).

The strategic plan did not actually apply the zone concept anywhere within the state. It provided the framework for the public process needed to develop area-specific management plans, in which management objectives and strategies would be incorporated through the zone system. It also provided a public process for the development of implementation plans for those areas where wolf control would be needed.

Area-Specific and Implementation Plans

In its final report, the planning team recommended development of operational plans for high priority game management units within one year. In following that recommendation, the department focused initially on portions of south-central and interior Alaska. In November 1991, it asked the public to consider the primary uses of wildlife in specific areas, and suggest appropriate management zones.

These two areas contained most of the state's human population, road system, and lands that were important and accessible to most of the state's hunting and nonhunting public. Included were areas where wolf control had been

used in the past in an effort to maintain harvest levels of ungulates, and most of the areas where wolf control was likely to be proposed in the future. For these reasons, the department expected management of wolves and their prey in these two areas to be more controversial than elsewhere and, therefore, a good test of the public process.

Over the next four months, department staff conducted public workshops in six communities, attended meetings with interest groups, and spent hundreds of hours talking with concerned people. More than 200 written responses were collected and reviewed prior to drafting area-specific plans.

As efforts progressed, it became obvious that most of the area under consideration was being zoned for moderate to intensive management. Some argued this was appropriate, because active management is precluded by federal ownership over much of the remainder of the state (this information was not effectively presented to the public), and that much of the area contained in the initial area-specific plans is accessible to the majority of Alaskans and has a long history of management for harvest. Others viewed these accessible areas as equally important to the nonhunting public.

The department revised the area-specific plans twice before presenting them to the board in March 1992. The board again convened as a "committee of the whole," involving members of the public and department in a review of the draft plans. The board tentatively approved the zone designations and management objectives in the draft plans. It also directed the department to combine the two area-specific plans into one document, revise the plan to reflect tentatively approved zone changes, review the management objectives with the public, and prepare draft implementation plans for wolf control in those areas tentatively approved for intensive management.

Department staff attempted to comply with these board directives during summer 1992. For example, in one portion of the planning area (east-central Alaska), staff developed and distributed a questionnaire to assess local attitudes toward wildlife management, while developing their portion of the draft area-specific plan. This questionnaire also solicited opinions from tourism-related small businesses. However, similar efforts were not undertaken elsewhere and department staff did not actively seek participation by major tourism agencies or businesses in the planning effort.

Instead, area-specific and implementation plans (Alaska Department of Fish and Game 1992b) were generally prepared by the department with little opportunity for the public to help or learn about their content prior to release for public comment in September. This approach left the public with no option but to react to documents they had not helped prepare.

When the drafts were released for public review, the department tried to focus public attention on the area-specific plans in order to confirm the management objectives for the areas identified for intensive management and to discuss strategies for meeting them, as directed by the board. However, many in the public wanted to discuss the implementation options, because these would govern proposed wolf control programs.

Some hunters were displeased that the draft implementation plans did not include the full range of biologically feasible options. They wanted the board to review options that would yield larger prey populations and, in some cases, wolf populations, and harvest rates higher than those proposed by the department. Subsequently, department staff produced additional, more intensive management options for the board's consideration. However, these were not available to the public prior to the November 1992 meeting.

Public Reaction

By the November 1992 Board meeting, most Alaskans interested in wolf management were aware of the planning process. The two days of public testimony were different from those experienced prior to the planning effort. Many who testified suggested ways to fairly accommodate interests different from their own.

Some environmentalists who had previously opposed any wolf control testified that they could now accept it under some circumstances. The Northern Alaska Environmental Center testified in support of a management program that included temporary wolf population reduction to reverse the decline of the Delta caribou (*Rangifer tarandus*) herd and restore harvests. The Alaska Wildlife Alliance, which had consistently challenged state wolf management programs in the past, also seemed willing to compromise.

Likewise, some sportsmen recognized the volatility of the issue and expressed a willingness to accept fewer programs and programs of a smaller scope. The obvious effort by many people to fairly consider the values and needs of others was encouraging. It appeared that achieving consensus among the major interests in the state was possible. However, there was substantial pressure from some interests to maximize management in traditional hunting areas and from others to minimize management or eliminate it altogether.

During a one-day recess following public testimony, department staff met to formulate the official department recommendations to the board. Based on their knowledge of public concerns expressed before and during the board meeting, staff attempted to balance areas where wolves would be protected and areas where wolf numbers could be controlled to more intensively manage prey to benefit people.

Subsequently, the board, without benefit of a "committee of the whole," revised and adopted the area-specific plan for south-central and interior Alaska according to the department's recommendations. It also adopted implementation plans for three wolf control programs. The area-specific plans increased the area in the state where wolves would be completely protected from hunting and trapping to about

3%, and created areas where wolf numbers would be controlled in about 3.5 % of the state.

The board believed their decisions represented a fair compromise resulting from a fair planning process. Many in the public also felt this balance between protected and intensively managed areas was reasonable. However, environmentalists who participated in the planning process and agreed to limited wolf control felt betrayed. They felt the board did not appreciate the magnitude of their concessions, and had assumed that environmentalists would support more extensive programs if the board provided additional protection for wolves on some state lands. Uncertainty over zoning prospects for the rest of the state also caused some concern. Following the board's actions, the spirit of compromise among Alaskans diminished as rhetoric escalated and public opinion re-polarized.

In retrospect, the temporary departure from an open process during the November 1992 Board meeting and the lack of any public involvement in board deliberations marked a turning point. Concessions made during the public process prior to the board meeting had led many people to support a more conservative approach than that passed by the board. After the meeting, some environmentalists and hunters expressed concern that critical questions had not been asked, alternatives had not been adequately explored, and more extensive programs had been approved than were either biologically necessary or socially acceptable.

Concessions made to various interest groups (i.e., areas closed to hunting and trapping wolves near Fairbanks, Anchorage, and Denali National Park) were not negotiated with group representatives or those living in affected areas, and were presented to the board without public review. Thus, these recommendations were widely viewed as unfair, unnecessary, or inadequate by many in the public.

During subsequent board deliberations, the issue of potential caribou viewing opportunities was raised and the large migrations of caribou in Alaska were compared to ungulate migrations in east Africa. These comments, taken out of context, resulted in news articles suggesting tourism was the primary reason for wolf control in Alaska when, in reality, the department had never viewed tourism as adequate justification for active management.

Neither the department nor the board adequately recognized, informed, or involved the interests of the public outside Alaska. Some of these concerned people were knowledgeable and well informed. Others were not or held pre-existing misconceptions about wolves and wolf ecology, and were easily influenced by inaccurate or misleading information promoted by some extreme interest groups and disseminated in the national media.

This oversight created difficulties when a national animal rights group used the media's focus on tourism to enlist support for their opposition to the control programs by calling for a tourism boycott of Alaska. The potential ramifications of people canceling visits to Alaska were apparent to both the state's tourism industry and administration.

On 4 December 1992, the governor announced that he would not implement regulations establishing new wolf protection areas and control programs until further review. He invited concerned people from around the country to a "wolf summit" in Fairbanks in January 1993. On 22 December, the Fish and Game commissioner announced that department staff would not conduct aerial wolf control in 1993. These announcements prompted many Alaskans to voice dissatisfaction with the governor and commissioner for bowing to outside interests.

More than 125 people were invited to participate in the wolf summit held 16–18 January 1993. Politicians, Alaskan natives, representatives of environmental groups, animal rights groups, hunting and trapping organizations, the tourism industry, members of the media, members of the fish and game advisory committees, and professional wildlife biologists from Alaska and elsewhere attended. The summit was open to the public and, at times, up to 1,500 people attended. Professional facilitators were hired to conduct the meetings.

Speakers reviewed wolf natural history, predator-prey dynamics, the planning process, effects on tourism, and Alaskan, national, and international perspectives on wolf management. Participants then met in nine smaller groups facilitated by representatives of the Office of the Ombudsman to discuss the planning process and management decisions about wolves. After about eight hours of discussion, each group compiled a list of consensus points. Facilitators then identified the following areas of agreement:

1. The planning process used, especially the Alaska Wolf Management Planning Team, was good and the department need not start over.
2. The department should begin proactive education and information efforts about wolves.
3. The International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) Wolf Specialist Group guidelines (IUCN 1983) regarding wolf control and some elements of the Yukon Territory's wolf management plan (Yukon Wolf Management Planning Team 1992) should be incorporated into Alaska's wolf management plan.
4. The state needed to take steps to make its Board of Game and Advisory Committee process more broadly representative of the public's diverse interests.
5. More time was required for a fair and open public process to be successful.

Each group concluded that wolf control could be considered, but none were able, in the brief time available, to reach consensus on the circumstances under which control was justified.

On 27–28 January 1993, the board met to reconsider the area-specific plans, implementation plans, and regulations adopted in November, based on concerns that emerged following those decisions. At the department's recommen-

dation, the Board rescinded the area-specific and implementation plans to allow reevaluation, and deleted parts of the strategic plan detailing the process for determining zones, and area-specific and implementation plans. It then directed the department to prepare proposals for wolf control and scheduled a meeting for June 1993 to discuss these proposals and other aspects of the wolf management issue.

The political climate and public sentiments surrounding wolf management continue to be contentious. There seems to be heightened mistrust both of the agency and among various public interests. At the board's request, the department has focused on when, where, and how wolf control might be conducted, rather than a more comprehensive planning effort. With this approach, the outcome will be determined largely by the board and department with less extensive public involvement, and is likely to be perceived as unfair. Thus, we believe it unlikely that the wolf management controversy will be fully resolved in the near future.

Recommendations

1. *There must be agreement on the goal of the planning process.*
   An agency cannot be perceived as using a public planning process to achieve a predetermined result. This is worse than taking action without benefit of public involvement. Members of the public expect their participation to influence a program. If they perceive that it does not, they feel angry, betrayed, and disillusioned. Further, it severely damages the credibility of the agency, jeopardizing future support and public involvement. Internal damage can occur if staff believe there is a commitment to a public process different from that supported by the agency's leadership. As others have learned, it is easy for an agency or individuals to lose credibility and hard to regain it; trust and candor arise from positive experiences (Bartolome 1989).

   In the Alaska situation, the emphasis of staff who initiated the planning effort in 1986 was on maintaining a fair process, with the department accepting the results within ecological, fiscal, and statutory constraints, regardless of the outcome. However, following the gubernatorial election of 1990, the focus of the planning effort shifted toward providing an outcome that the administration considered a fair balance between use and protection.
2. *The agency's planning authority and responsibility must be maintained throughout the planning effort.*
   The agency conducting the planning effort must be perceived as the proper institution to address the problem.

   In Alaska, the division of responsibility between the board and the department is not clear for matters involving planning. However, the board has neither the resources nor time to complete such a process. The department should have retained full responsibility for the wolf planning process, working with the public to develop management plans, documenting public participation, and obtaining substantial consensus before proposing regulatory changes to the board.
3. *Adequate time must be allocated to the planning process.*
   A planning process must proceed at the rate necessary to achieve consent rather than meet administrative deadlines or political pressures. In Alaska, the urgency created by public and political pressure to resolve this issue and the attempt to meet the board's administrative schedule had some negative effects:
   a. Public contact was minimized, jeopardizing the perception of fairness.
   b. Topics were not revisited to correct errors. For example, two major shortcomings in the department's approach were identified early in the planning effort, but insufficient time was provided to address them. First, the plans focused too narrowly on the management of wolves and their major prey species. Astute observers pointed out that it was illogical for wolf management to dictate wildlife use priorities in an area; they felt the process should be reversed so that human use priorities would determine wolf management needs. Second, the zoning system was confusing and inadequate for many situations. It unsuccessfully attempted to blend human use and wolf management into a single classification.
   c. The department dealt concurrently with planning steps that should have been sequential. For example, when it became apparent that population and harvest objectives used in the area-specific plans had not been adequately reviewed by the public, staff were not given time to obtain such a review and revise accordingly.
4. *Teamwork and coordination must be encouraged.*
   Public communication and conflict resolution on a major public issue cannot be done by a few interested employees. An agency must provide leadership and resources for a coordinated, effective effort.

   In Alaska, the department slowed the planning process on several occasions to provide additional time to attempt consensus among the interested public, but a coordinated, effective effort was sometimes lacking. Thus, additional time did not significantly improve the public process, and in some cases, exacerbated existing frustration among segments of the public who felt too little progress was being made. We recommend a team approach to maintain a coordinated, effective effort in which agency leadership, other staff, and potentially affected interests outside the agency are informed and involved.

5. *Staff must make public communication a priority, acquire the skills necessary to do the job, and involve the public in all phases of the process.*
   This will prevent an agency from generating plans based largely on its own perception of public desires. When a plan is developed based on public reaction rather than ongoing involvement, agency credibility can be compromised.
6. *All potentially affected interests must be identified and involved in the planning process.*
   Inadvertently ignoring an interest will alienate those involved and can slow or halt progress in resolving an issue. The department did not adequately involve either the Alaska tourism industry or interest groups outside Alaska in the planning process, leading these interests to react to the planning effort with negative press coverage and political interference late in the process.

   Attempts to reconcile extreme views often dominated each phase of the process, reducing the influence of those with more moderate views and furthering the tendency for those involved to frame issues and regard interests in terms of stereotypes. Efforts to inform and involve less extreme groups were inadequate, leading them to "choose sides" when disagreements among more extreme interests led to a stalemate.
7. *The public and media must be kept informed.*
   A proactive public information effort before and during the planning process can reduce misperceptions, foster consensus among those with opposing views, and result in a better plan. An informed public is less influenced by extreme views. An ongoing effort to work with the media will also reduce inaccurate, biased reporting that can needlessly aggravate public distrust.

   In the Alaska situation, the department often did not keep the public and media adequately informed. For example, the needs assessment indicated presentations to civic groups would be effective, but few were actually done.

Conclusions

The department did not succeed in its recent attempt to develop a statewide compromise wolf management plan that most Alaskans could accept. The citizen participation effort fell short in part because the department did not maintain a process that was perceived as fair, was unable to fully incorporate public comments and concerns into the plan, and did not adequately inform the public and media.

Although early efforts seemed promising, three events significantly affected the outcome. The 1990 gubernatorial election shifted the focus from process to outcome. The October 1991 board meeting transferred control and timing of the planning process from the department to the board. The November 1992 board meeting discontinued the previous practice of including the public in deliberations. We believe these events undermined the trust of those who had made a good-faith effort to participate, and resulted in board actions that did not have sufficient public acceptance within Alaska.

The department and board are now pursuing a more focused approach to identify areas where wolf management, including control, is considered urgent. Their goal is to reach some middle ground between the extremes on where and how wolves will be managed in these areas. The department will propose what it considers moderate management approaches to the board for its consideration and public review.

Despite the outcome, the planning effort has yielded some benefits for the department. Some staff have learned how to communicate more effectively and involve people in decision making. Lines of communication with new interests have been established, and rapport with existing interests has, in some instances, been enhanced. We feel the department has taken an important step toward learning how to better work with the public to resolve controversial issues. The experience and knowledge gained should serve the department well in the years to come, and serve as a catalyst for further introspection and constructive change.

Society's values toward wildlife and expectations for management have become more diverse, and in some instances, are incompatible. Wildlife professionals are struggling to manage for increasingly diverse human interests. However, these changes are difficult to accept for some members of the public and wildlife professionals accustomed to wildlife management's traditional role.

Alaska attempted to address an inherently difficult issue. The antagonism and mistrust surrounding wolf management in Alaska has existed for decades. It was probably optimistic to expect the department to resolve this controversy in just a few years. Nonetheless, this experience has reaffirmed our belief that active citizen participation can help overcome distrust and lead to constructive dialogue. Despite the outcome, we believe that when properly conducted, a program of public involvement can resolve controversial issues, even one as contentious as wolf management.

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Ecology and Conservation of

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