

COPPER RIVER/BERING RIVER MOOSE
POPULATIONS AND STATUS

by

Herman Griesse
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Division of Game
P.O. Box 669
Cordova, Alaska 99574

Abstract

The introduction of 20 moose calves from the Anchorage-MatSu Valley area took place between 1949 and 1959 on the West Copper River Delta (WCRD). Moose crossed the Copper River to the East Copper River Delta (ECDR) as early as 1954. Populations peaked in 1971 at 340 on ECDR and at 240 on WCRD. During the fall of 1971 hunters killed 115 moose; that winter deep snow killed 15 to 30 percent of the remaining animals. Post hunting season population goals were established as a direct result of the winter of 1971-72 and the habitat's ability to meet the needs of 1972 moose numbers. Post hunting season goals were established at 1.2 moose/mi on WCRD and 1.0 moose/mi on ECDR and bull:cow ratios of 30:100.

Moose reached the Bering River area (BR) in the mid-1960's and probably peaked in 1984 at 370 prior to hunter harvest. In 1984 hunters reported killing 63 moose in BR.

Moose moved east of Suckling Hills, (ESH) primarily in the Tsiu River area, around 1970. Moose in ESH were estimated at 430 in 1985, and they are not expected to peak until habitat limits are exceeded, a severe winter occurs, hunter interest increases or predator pressure increases.

Hunters first harvested 25 bulls in 1960 on WCRD. Harvest levels for all sub populations increased to a peak at 115 in 1971, dropped to 35 in 1973, and again increased to 150-165 where it has remained since 1982. Successful hunters use primarily road transportation in WCRD, airboats in ECDR and BR, and airplanes in ESH.

Fall aerial surveys in 1985 produced 988 moose, representing an estimated 1,080 total wintering population. Fall survey densities (moose/mi) were 0.9 in ECDR, 1.3 in WCRD, 1.7 in BR and 2.6 in ESH. Poor calf survival was indicated in ECDR where 8 calves:100 cows were observed.

In view of habitat changes since 1972 on WCRD and ECDR modifications of population management goals are overdue. Management goals for BR and ESH need to be established.

Forest Service

Chugach
National
Forest
R10-MB-7



Proceedings of the Eleventh Copper River Delta Conference

April 10 & 11, 1986
Cordova, Alaska

