5 AAC 92.125. Predation control areas implementation plans.

(d) **Unit 16 Predation Control Area:** the Unit 16 Predation Control Area is established, which is focused primarily on mainland Unit 16(B), and consists of all lands within the mainland portion of Unit 16(B) and that portion of Unit 16(A) west of a line beginning at the confluence of the Yentna and Susitna Rivers, then northerly along the western bank of the Susitna River to the confluence with the Deshka River, then northerly to 61° 48.80' N. lat., 150° 21.77' W. long., then west to 62° 01.47' N. lat., 150° 24.06' W. long., then north to the northern end of Trapper Lake at 62° 01.47' N. lat., 150° 16.67' W. long., then west to 62° 01.47' N. lat., 150° 24.06' W. long., then north to 62° 09.65' N. lat., 150° 24.06' W. long., then west to the southwestern end of Amber Lake at 62° 09.65' N. lat., 150° 33.42' W. long., then north to 62° 18.03' N. lat., 150° 33.42' W. long., then west to 62° 18.03' N. lat., 150° 51.04' W. long., then north to 62° 27.97' N. lat., 150° 51.04' W. long., then west to the Denali National Park boundary at 62° 27.97' N. lat., 151° 09.22' W. long., encompassing approximately 11,105 square miles; this predator control program does not apply within National Park Service lands unless approved by the federal agencies; notwithstanding any other provision in this title, and based on the following information contained in this section, the commissioner or the commissioner's designee may conduct a wolf population reduction or wolf population regulation program in the Unit 16 Predation Control Area, [AND] conduct a black bear population reduction or black bear population regulation program in the Unit 16 Predation Control Area**, and conduct a brown bear population reduction or brown bear population regulation program in that portion of the Unit 16 Predation Control Area draining into Cook Inlet between the south bank of the McArthur River and the north bank of the Beluga River**:

(1) the discussion of wildlife population and human use information is as follows:

(A) prey population information is as follows:

(i) the moose population for mainland Unit 16(B) was estimated in fall 2010 to be 4,788 – 6,932 moose, based on aerial surveys in 2008 – 2010 in the unit; this population is composed of subpopulations that reside wholly in the unit; however, a subpopulation from the flanks of Mount Yenlo and in the upper Lake Creek drainage mixes in winter with moose from Unit 16(A) in the Kahiltna River drainage, and a subpopulation from the flanks of Mount Susitna and the drainages of Alexander Creek and lower Yentna River winters with moose from Units 14(A), 14(B), and 16(A) in the lower Yentna and Susitna Rivers;

(ii) habitat does not appear to be limiting the moose population, or a factor in calf survival, and is not expected to limit the moose population at objective levels; while the majority of the unit is covered with mature forests, moose habitat has changed little since the high moose densities of the early 1980s; prescribed burning has been the only economically viable option for improving moose habitat and opportunities to conduct controlled burns are limited by climate, access, and privately-owned lands with structures dispersed throughout the unit; the minimum moose density objective is 1.0 moose per square mile for mainland Unit 16(B) based on the intensive management objective of 6,500 - 7,500 moose; there are approximately 6,500 square miles of available moose habitat; presently, mainland Unit 16(B) moose population estimates place the moose density at 0.90 moose per square mile;

(iii) the age structure of the population is believed to have shifted towards the older age classes in the late 1990s as recruitment decreased and the moose population declined; the number of yearling bulls estimated in the mainland Unit 16(B) survey data from 2008 - 2010 showed ratios of nine to sixteen yearling bulls to 100 cows; assuming these numbers to be half of the year's cohort, this indicates an approximate yearling recruitment rate of 11 - 19 percent of the observed moose;

(iv) the bull-to-cow moose ratio for mainland Unit 16(B) in fall 2008 – 2010 was estimated to be 39 – 60 bulls per 100 cows; this is higher than the average bull-to-cow ratios of 24 - 44 observed in the unit in the mid-1990s; thus, the herd is presently above the management objective for this parameter;

(v) limited flights to count newborn calves and natality data from radio collared moose indicated that a minimum of 80 percent of adult cows over two years old gave birth, with 50 percent of these having twins; together, these data indicated a birth rate of approximately122 calves per 100 cows or greater;

(vi) the calf-to-cow moose ratio during fall moose surveys from 2003 to 2005 ranged between 14 and 23 calves per 100 cows when a wolf predation control program was in effect, with estimated over-winter calf mortality of 40 percent, resulting in a calf recruitment rate of 8 – 14 moose per 100 cows; the calf-to-cow ratio during fall moose surveys from 2008 to 2010 ranged from 11 to 19 calves per 100 cows when black bear and wolf predation control programs were in effect , with estimated over-winter calf mortality of 12.5 percent, resulting in a calf recruitment rate of 10 – 17 moose per 100 cows; the increased calf recruitment in 2008 to 2010 is a result of the increased over-winter calf survival that is likely associated with reduced wolf predation during the winter months; information collected from radio collared moose in November following parturition indicate a 5 year average calf survival rate of 14.5 percent for calves six months of age or less in the northern portion of Unit 16(B); the results of a research study that used radio collars estimated a 20 percent survival rate for calves six months of age or less in the southern portion of Unit 16B during 2010; the reason for the difference between natality and recruitment is largely due to predation;

(vii) research studies of radio collared moose estimate that the adult cow survival rate is 90 - 95 percent;

(viii) the harvestable surplus for 2010 is estimated to be 250 bulls, which is above the minimum of 199 - 227 harvestable moose needed to meet the amount necessary for subsistence; the increase in harvestable moose is a result of the increased bull to cow ratios likely due to the limited resident-only harvest since 2001 and increased bull recruitment;

(ix) the intensive management population objective established by the board for the mainland Unit 16(B) moose population is 6,500 - 7,500 moose, and the intensive management harvest objective is 310 - 600 moose;

(x) the decline in the mainland Unit 16(B) moose population is attributed to poor calf survival, high adult mortality, and the inability of the population to recover from the impacts of deep snow during the winters of 1984 and 1989; the mainland Unit 16(B) moose population is considered to be reduced substantially from the early 1980s when estimates ranged from 8,500 - 10,000 moose, and is currently below the intensive management population objective;

(xi) without the continuation of an effective wolf predation control program and an effective bear predation control program, moose in the mainland Unit 16(B) are likely to persist at low numbers or continue to decline; results from moose mortality studies, and predator and prey studies, conducted throughout Alaska and similar areas in Canada indicate that reducing the number of wolves and bears in unit 16(B) can reasonably be expected to increase survival of calves as well as older moose, particularly yearlings;

(B) the human use information for prey population is as follows:

(i) reported subsistence harvest has varied from 30 to over 120 moose, and some additional subsistence harvest occurs within the general fall hunting season (Tier I) when one is held; during the regulatory year 2006 – 2007, Tier II subsistence harvest was 104 moose; in regulatory year 2007 – 2008 the Tier II subsistence harvest was 126 moose ; in regulatory year 2008 – 2009 the Tier II harvest was 146 moose; in regulatory year 2009 – 2010 the combined subsistence harvest was 206 moose;

(ii) high demand for subsistence moose is demonstrated by the 750 - 1,100 applicants who annually apply for the Tier II permits available for mainland Unit 16(B); additional subsistence demand exists within the unit and is captured by the limited general resident-only hunting opportunity that has occurred in September in recent years;

(iii) all general season and fall Tier II moose bag limits were reduced in 1993 to one bull with a spike or fork or 50-inch antlers or antlers with three or more brow tines on one side; nonresident moose hunting opportunity was first reduced to a portion of Unit 16(B) in 1993 and completely eliminated in 2001; all general season hunting was closed in 2001 and 2002 and only a limited Tier I subsistence (resident-only) season was allowed in 2003 – 2005 and 2009 – 2010 ; the average general season harvest was 388 from 1983 - 1989 and declined to 168 from 1990 - 1999;

(iv) there is a small, limited demand for moose to provide for rural federal subsistence hunting on federal lands within mainland Unit 16(B); there is some interest in moose for viewing opportunities in portions of the unit where guides and other operations provide services that promote wildlife viewing;

(v) it is unlikely that the demand in mainland Unit 16(B) for moose for subsistence and general hunting opportunity will decline; given the increasing human population in the nearby Anchorage and Matanuska-Susitna Valley areas, as well as historic local subsistence use, it is probable that demand will match any increase in harvestable surplus gained through active management of the moose herd;

(C) the predator population information is as follows:

(i) the fall 2010 wolf population in mainland Unit 16(B) was estimated to be 40 - 79 wolves in 8 – 9 different packs; a density of approximately 0.6 – 1.2 wolves per 100 square miles; the spring 2007 population estimate for black bears in Unit 16(B) was 3,200 – 3,500; the estimate for brown bears in Unit 16(B) was 625 - 1,250;

(ii) habitat carrying capacity for wolves and bears is dependant on prey and food availability and competition from other predators; carrying capacity for wolves and bears in mainland Unit 16(B) has not been determined; however, harvest from sealing records, supplemented by reports from trappers, hunters, and others, have

indicated that the wolf population had increased and the black bear and brown bear populations had stabilized or increased;

(iii) in mainland Unit 16(B), the current moose-to-wolf ratio is between 61 and 173 moose per wolf; the pre-control estimated ratio for 2003 was as low as 17:1; historically, estimates have ranged as high as 250 moose per wolf in this unit;

(iv) alternate prey include caribou, sheep, beaver, and hare; for most wolves in mainland Unit 16(B), there are few options for alternate prey; small populations of caribou and sheep exist in the higher elevations of the western side of the unit; however, pack territorial structure probably prohibits most wolves from accessing this resource, thus, limiting them to smaller prey such as beaver and hare; black and brown bears typically feed on salmon when available and forage on a variety of vegetation throughout the summer and fall; moose and caribou calves are often prey during the spring when inexperience with predators and limited mobility makes them particularly vulnerable; the limited numbers and distribution of caribou make them unavailable to most predation in mainland Unit 16(B); brown bears also take black bears as prey and this has been reported in numerous observations by hunters, trappers and others in mainland Unit 16(B);

(v) the number of moose that are killed by wolves in any given year in this area is highly dependent on the depth of winter snowfall, competition with other predators, and the abundance of alternate prey; in Alaska and areas of Canada where moose are the primary prey of wolves, studies documented kill rates ranging from four to seven moose per wolf per winter; using this range with our current population estimate of wolves in mainland Unit 16(B), wolves are estimated to be capable of taking between 160-553 moose per winter; research elsewhere in Alaska has indicated that up to 52 percent of neonate moose calves were killed by brown bears; other work has shown significant increases in calf survival following bear removal and population reduction;

(vi) research studies into the causes of moose calf mortality in Unit 16(B) estimated that 80 percent of the calves born during the summer of 2010 died within the first 6 months of life; of the mortalities that were investigated 50 percent were caused by brown bear, 22 percent were caused by black bear, 6 percent were caused by a bear but the bear species could not be determined based on evidence found at the mortality site, 16 percent were caused by a predator but the species could not be determined based on evidence found at the mortality site, and 6 percent drowned;

(vii) mortality factors affecting wolves in mainland Unit 16(B) include human harvest, other wolves, and disease; harvest of wolves in the unit has increased from a low of two wolves in the winter of 1990 - 1991 to 50 wolves in the winter of 2003 - 2004; the total wolf take for 2004 - 2005 was 115 wolves, with 91 of those wolves taken in the predator control program that was initiated in January 2005; the average take of wolves from 2006 to 2009 is 24.8 wolves;

(viii) it is the intent of this plan to maintain wolves and bears as part of the natural ecosystem within the geographical area described for the plan; however, studies in Alaska and elsewhere have repeatedly concluded that annual reductions in wolf populations are required to reduce wolf population levels and predation on their prey; wolf harvest objectives in mainland Unit 16(B) have been set in order to achieve a reduction of at least 60 - 80 percent of the pre-control wolf population estimate of 175 - 180 wolves; to achieve the desired reduction in wolf predation, but

ensure that wolves persist within the plan area, the wolf population objective for mainland Unit 16(B) is set at between 22 and 45 wolves; reductions in brown and black bear populations that have resulted in increased calf survival have been shown in other parts of Alaska and Canada; harvest objectives for black and brown bears in mainland Unit 16(B) were set with consideration for maintaining stable but lower populations of both species and reducing predation on moose calves;

(ix) without a predation control program in the mainland Unit 16(B), it can be expected that the wolf and black bear populations will increase; current trends in fuel prices, low fur prices, and low quality of wolf pelts in the unit due to the louse infestation, have resulted in a decrease in the wolf hunting and trapping effort in the area; thus, removing the major cause of wolf mortality; difficult access, thick cover, and the availability of other bear hunting opportunities have resulted in a failure to meet harvest objectives in the general season prior to the start of control activities; continuing the predator control programs is expected to reduce the predator populations and subsequently allow the moose population to increase toward the intensive management population objective;

(D) the human use information for predator populations is as follows:

(i) annual harvest of wolves in mainland Unit 16(B) with a firearm, excluding same-day-airborne take, has been highly variable since the early 1980s and has ranged from 0 - 27 wolves; from 2005 to 2009, firearms have accounted for an average of 5 wolves annually, or 16 percent of the harvest; harvest of wolves with the use of a snare or trap has similarly been highly variable and has ranged from 1 - 48; from 2005 to 2009, traps and snares have accounted for 6 wolves annually, or 20 percent of the harvest;

(ii) mainland Unit 16(B) receives less trapping pressure than some other areas of the state; the hunter harvest of wolves has always been opportunistic, and is difficult to predict; the trapper harvest of wolves is limited by the number of trappers willing to spend the time targeting this furbearer amidst variable winter travel conditions; winters have begun later, and have been highly variable in temperature and snowfall in recent years creating hazardous conditions for winter hunters and trappers; in addition to open creeks and regular overflow, many large rivers in the area have stayed open until late-winter, or even year-round, completely eliminated trapping pressure from remote areas of the unit;

(iii) most Unit 16(B) trappers will continue to pursue wolves in the unit regardless of same-day-airborne wolf control efforts; trappers in the unit pursue many different furbearers and do not consider the control program a detriment to their opportunities; if the wolf control program were to be discontinued trapper harvest would likely increase to some extent; hunters that take wolves in mainland Unit 16(B) do so opportunistically and would not be seriously affected by the status of the wolf control program;

(iv) annual harvest of black bears in mainland Unit 16(B) has been variable; the average annual harvest from 1980 - 1989 was 103.0 black bears, from 1990 - 1999 it was 92.0 black bears, from 2000 - 2004 it was 124.6 black bears, and from 2005 – 2009 it was 319 black bears; annual harvest of brown bears in mainland Unit 16(B) has increased; from 2002 - 2004 the average harvest was 23.3 brown bears and from 2004-2010 the average annual harvest was 106.6 brown bears;

(v) most Unit 16(B) bear hunters will continue to hunt bears in the unit regardless of bear control efforts; in fact, many hunters have reported hunting in the unit due to recently increased opportunities to take black and brown bears; guide use and resident hunter effort has not shown a decline since the board has authorized increased bag limits for brown bears, more black bear bait-hunting opportunities, and expanded seasons;

(2) the predator and prey population levels and population objectives, and the basis for those objectives, are as follows:

(A) the fall 2010 moose population was estimated to be 4,788 – 6,932 moose, compared to the intensive management objective of 6,500 - 7,500 moose; the intensive management objective was developed by the board based on historical moose population size and trends, habitat condition, sustainable harvest levels, and human use;

(B) the pre-control population of wolves in the fall of 2003 was 160 - 220 wolves; studies in Alaska and elsewhere have repeatedly concluded that annual reductions of wolves are required to diminish wolf population levels and predation by wolves on their prey; consistent with scientific studies and department experience, the objective of this plan is to substantially reduce wolf numbers compared to the pre-control level in order to relieve predation pressure on moose and allow for improved recruitment to the moose population; by maintaining the wolf population at objective level, progress towards moose composition, population, and harvest objectives will be realized; this plan also has as a goal to maintain wolves as part of the natural ecosystem within the described geographic area; to achieve the desired reduction in wolf predation, but ensure that wolves persist within the plan area, the wolf population in mainland Unit 16(B) will be reduced to no fewer than 22 wolves;

(C) the spring (late winter) wolf population objective for Unit 16(B) was set at 22 - 45 wolves based on prior estimates of the wolf population size in the area when the moose population achieved high densities in the past;

(D) in spring 2007, the brown bear population for mainland Unit 16(B) was 625 - 1250 bears; the black bear population for mainland Unit 16(B) was 3,200 – 3,500 bears; significant reductions in the black bear and brown bear populations would reduce the amount of predation on moose while being consistent with the management goal of reaching a desirable predator-to-prey ratio by allowing the bear populations to decline;

(E) based on research in Alaska and Canada, a 60 percent or greater reduction in the bear population within the predation control area specified in this program is expected to result in an increase in moose survival; to achieve the desired reduction in bear predation, but ensure that bears persist within the predation control area, the minimum bear population objectives for the control area are 600 black bears **and 250 brown bears**, which represents an 81 percent reduction from the pre-control minimum estimated population of 3,200 black bears, **and a 60 percent reduction from the pre-control estimated brown bear population of 625 brown bears**;

(3) the justifications for predator control implementation plan are as follows:

(A) the board determined that the moose population in mainland Unit 16(B) is important for providing high levels of human consumptive use; the board established objectives for population size and annual sustained harvest of moose is consistent with multiple use and principles of sound conservation and management of

habitat and all wildlife species in the area; the objectives of the predation control program are to halt the decline of the moose population within the predation control area and to increase the fall (post-hunt) moose population to the intensive management objective of 6,500 - 7,500 moose, providing a sustainable annual harvest of 310 - 600 moose;

(B) the population objectives for moose in mainland Unit 16(B) are not being met, largely due to high predator numbers and the inability of the moose population to recover given the high predation rates;

(C) a reduction in predator numbers is necessary to enhance survival of mainland Unit 16(B) moose, to halt the population decline, and to achieve population objectives in the predation control area; during the 1970s and 1980s, same-day-airborne hunting of wolves by the public, at little or no cost to the department, effectively kept the wolf population at levels well below present levels, both black and brown bear densities were low, and moose populations were increasing or stable; trapper and hunter harvests in the last 10 years have averaged less than 2.5 wolves per trapper and hunter;

(D) moose population objectives are not being met, although trapper and hunter harvests of wolves and harvests of black and brown bears have increased over the last 10 years for mainland Unit 16(B); maximum harvest opportunity appears to have been provided although the wolf numbers have been above the population objective since the early 1990s; the current spring population objective in the control area is 22 - 45 wolves in 3 - 5 packs, and the fall 2010 wolf population estimate is 40 – 79 wolves in 8 – 9 packs; the current population objective in the control area is 600 black bears and 250 brown bears;

(E) previous programs utilizing same-day-airborne hunting of wolves effectively kept the wolf population at levels well below present levels, and moose populations were increasing or stable; airplane-based control of wolf populations is necessary to reduce numbers over short periods of time and allows for a more timely recovery of the moose population; during moderate to severe winters wolves and moose congregate in river corridors; expansion of the control program into portions of Unit 16(A) was necessary to effectively reduce wolves that occupy these corridors;

(F) multiple measures have been taken to improve survival of moose within mainland Unit 16(B); general predator hunting and wolf trapping seasons alone have failed to result in sufficient reductions of predators and increased numbers of moose; liberalization of seasons, bag limits, and other restrictions on harvest for bears and wolves have shown no detectable effect on the moose population in the unit; there has been a year-round season for black bear with a three bear limit and no tag required for brown bear with a two bear limit;

(G) presently known alternatives to predator control for reducing the number of predators are ineffective, impractical, or uneconomical in the Unit 16(B) situation; hunting and trapping conducted under authority of ordinary hunting and trapping seasons and bag limits is not an effective reduction technique in sparsely populated areas such as Unit 16(B); numbers of hunters and trappers are relatively low and so far have been unsuccessful in increasing the harvest of wolves or bears to the extent of having a positive effect on the moose population; the inherent wariness of wolves, difficult access, and relatively poor pelt prices also explain low harvest rates; application of the most common sterilization techniques, including surgery, implants, or

inoculation, are not effective reduction techniques because they require immobilization of individual predators, which is extremely expensive in remote areas; relocation of wolves or bears is impractical because it is expensive and it is very difficult to find publicly acceptable places for relocated predators; habitat manipulation is ineffective because it may improve the birth rate of moose in certain circumstances, but it is poor survival, not poor birth rate that keeps moose populations low in rural areas of mainland Alaska; supplemental feeding of wolves and bears as an alternative to predator control has improved moose calf survival in experiments; however, large numbers of moose carcasses are not available for this kind of effort and transporting them to remote areas of Alaska is not practical; stocking of moose is impractical because of capturing and moving expenses; any of the alternatives to a predation control program are not likely to be effective in achieving the desired level of predator harvest;

(4) the permissible methods and means used to take predators are as follows:

(A) hunting and trapping of wolves by the public in the Unit 16 Predation Control Area during the term of the program will occur as provided in the hunting and trapping regulations set out elsewhere in this title, including use of motorized vehicles as provided in 5 AAC 92.080;

(B) the commissioner may issue public aerial shooting permits or public land and shoot permits as a method of wolf removal under AS 16.05.783;

(C) hunting of black and brown bears by the public in the Unit 16 Predation Control Area during the term of the program will occur as provided in the hunting regulations set out elsewhere in this title, including use of motorized vehicles as provided in 5 AAC 92.080;

(D) the commissioner may reduce the black bear **and brown bear populations** within the Unit 16 Predation Control Area by means and direction included in the Board of Game Bear Conservation and Management Policy (2011-XXX-BOG dated day-March-2011), and incorporated by reference, including the following methods and means under a department developed control permit:

(i) legal animal is any black bear, including sows and cubs, **and any brown bear, except sows with cubs of the year, and cubs of the year;**

(ii) no bag limit;

(iii) same-day-airborne taking of black bears **and brown bears** if the permittee is at least 300 feet from the airplane,

(iv) same-day-airborne taking of [BLACK] bears if the permittee is at least 300 feet from the aircraft, including the use of any type of aircraft to access [BLACK] bear baiting stations from April 15 through October 15; except that helicopters may not be used from August 5 through September 25;

(v) April 15 through October 15 baiting season for [BLACK] bears; up to four bait stations per permittee; bear baiting allowed along the Unit 16 shorelines of the Susitna River, Yentna River below the confluence with the Skwentna River, the Deshka River (Kroto Creek) below the confluence with Trapper Creek, and Alexander Creek outside a 100-yard buffer on each side of the river; [BLACK] bear baiting within one mile of a cabin if the cabin is on the opposite side of a major river system from the [BLACK] bear baiting station and other permit conditions are met; control permittees must possess a valid Alaska hunting license, except that a resident who is 10 - 15 years of age at the start of

the season and has successfully completed a certified hunter education course and a department orientation for predator management, is allowed to hunt on behalf of a permit holder who is at least 16 years of age, under the direct immediate supervision of that permit holder, who is responsible for ensuring that all legal requirements are met; a control permittee may maintain and use another control permittee's bait station with written permission from the other control permittee;

(vi) same-day-airborne taking of black bears if the permittee is at least 300 feet from the aircraft, including the use of any type of aircraft, such as a fixed-wing aircraft and helicopter, to access bear foot-snaring camps from April 15 through October 15, except that a helicopter may not be used from August 5 through September 25; a helicopter may be used only to transport resident permittees, gear, and harvested bears and parts of bears directly to and from a foot-snaring camp; up to 10 helicopter permits may be issued at the discretion of the department and a permittee must attend a department-approved orientation course;

(vii) taking of black bears by foot snaring by permit only from April 15 through October 15; if foot snaring is based out of remote camps, no more than five foot snaring camps may be in operation at any time, and at least two permittees must be present in each camp when foot snares are in the field; foot snaring permits will be issued at the discretion of the department based on previous trapping experience, ability to help train other participants, and length of time available for participation in a snaring program; a selected foot snaring permittee must successfully complete a department-approved training program, must be a resident 16 years of age or older, and report all animals taken by the permittee to the department within 48 hours of taking;

(viii) foot snares may only be placed on the ground directly under the bucket snare or in buckets and must be checked by the permittee at least once each day;

(ix) all brown bears incidentally snared must be immediately reported to the department; if practicable, an incidentally snared brown bear will be released by the department staff; no more than 10 incidentally snared brown bears may be killed each year by all snaring permittees in the aggregate; hides and skulls of incidentally snared brown bears are the property of the state and must be salvaged and delivered to the department.

[(E) THE BOARD FINDS THAT RECENT LIBERALIZATIONS IN HUNTING REGULATIONS FOR BROWN BEAR APPEAR TO BE ACHIEVING THE BOARD'S REDUCTION OBJECTIVES FOR THE PRESENT;]

(5) the anticipated time frame and schedule for update and reevaluation are as follows:

(A) through July 1, 2017, the commissioner may reduce the wolf and [BLACK] bear populations in the Unit 16 Predation Control Area;

(B) annually, the department shall to the extent practicable, provide to the board at the board's spring board meeting, a report of program activities conducted during the preceding 12 months, including implementation activities, the status of moose, wolf, and bear populations, and recommendations for changes, if necessary, to achieve the objectives of the plan;

(6) other specifications that the board considers necessary are as follows:

(A) the commissioner will suspend wolf control activities

(i) when wolf inventories or accumulated information from permittees indicate the need to avoid reducing wolf numbers below the management objective of 22 - 45 wolves specified in this subsection;

(ii) when spring conditions deteriorate to make wolf control operations infeasible; or

(iii) no later than April 30 in any regulatory year;

(B) the commissioner will suspend black bear control activities

(i) when black bear population inventories or accumulated information from permittees indicate the need to avoid reducing black bear numbers below the management objective of 600 black bears specified in this subsection;

(ii) no later than June 30 during any regulatory year;

(C) **the commissioner will suspend brown bear control activities**

(i) when brown bear population inventories or accumulated information from permittees indicate the need to avoid reducing brown bear numbers below the management objective of 250 brown bears specified in this subsection;

(ii) no later than June 30 during any regulatory year

(D) predator control activities will be terminated

(i) when prey population management objectives are attained; or

(ii) upon expiration of the period during which the commissioner is authorized to reduce predator numbers in the predator control plan area;

(E) the commissioner will annually close wolf hunting and trapping seasons and bear hunting seasons as appropriate to ensure that the minimum population objectives are met.