

RC 702

**UNIT 19D EAST: DEPARTMENT REPORT FOR INTENSIVE MANAGEMENT (IM) FOR MOOSE WITH WOLF, BLACK BEAR, AND GRIZZLY BEAR PREDATION CONTROL**

Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Wildlife Conservation

- 1) **Description of IM Program<sup>1</sup> and Department recommendation for reporting period**
- A) This report is an interim review X or renewal evaluation \_\_\_ for a predation control program authorized by the Alaska Board of Game (Board) under 5 AAC 92.125
- B) Date this report was submitted by the Department to the Board:  
1 February X (annual report) 1 August \_\_\_ (interim annual update<sup>2</sup>) Year 2011
- C) Program name (geographic description/GMU and species/herd): Unit 19D East wolf and bear predation control program (Fig. 1)
- D) Existing program has \_\_\_ / does not have X an associated *Intensive Management Plan*
- E) Game Management Unit(s) fully or partly included in IM program area: Unit 19D East
- F) IM objectives for Moose: population size 6000 – 8000 harvest 400 – 600
- G) Month and year the current predation control program was originally authorized: Fall 1995 by the Board. Indicate date(s) if renewed: January 2000, March 2003, January 2006, May 2006, March 2009
- H) Predation control is currently active X or temporarily inactive \_\_\_ in this IM area
- I) If active, month and year the current predation control program began December 2003 or resumed \_\_\_.
- J) Indicate if a habitat management program funded by the Department or from other sources is currently active in this IM area (Y/N) N
- K) Size of IM program area (square miles) and geographic description: Unit 19D East: 8,513
- L) Size and geographic description of area for assessing ungulate abundance: Upper Kuskokwim Villages Moose Management Area (MMA)-1,118 mi<sup>2</sup>
- M) Size and geographic description of area for ungulate harvest reporting: MMA-1,118 mi<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For purpose and context of this report format, see appendix.

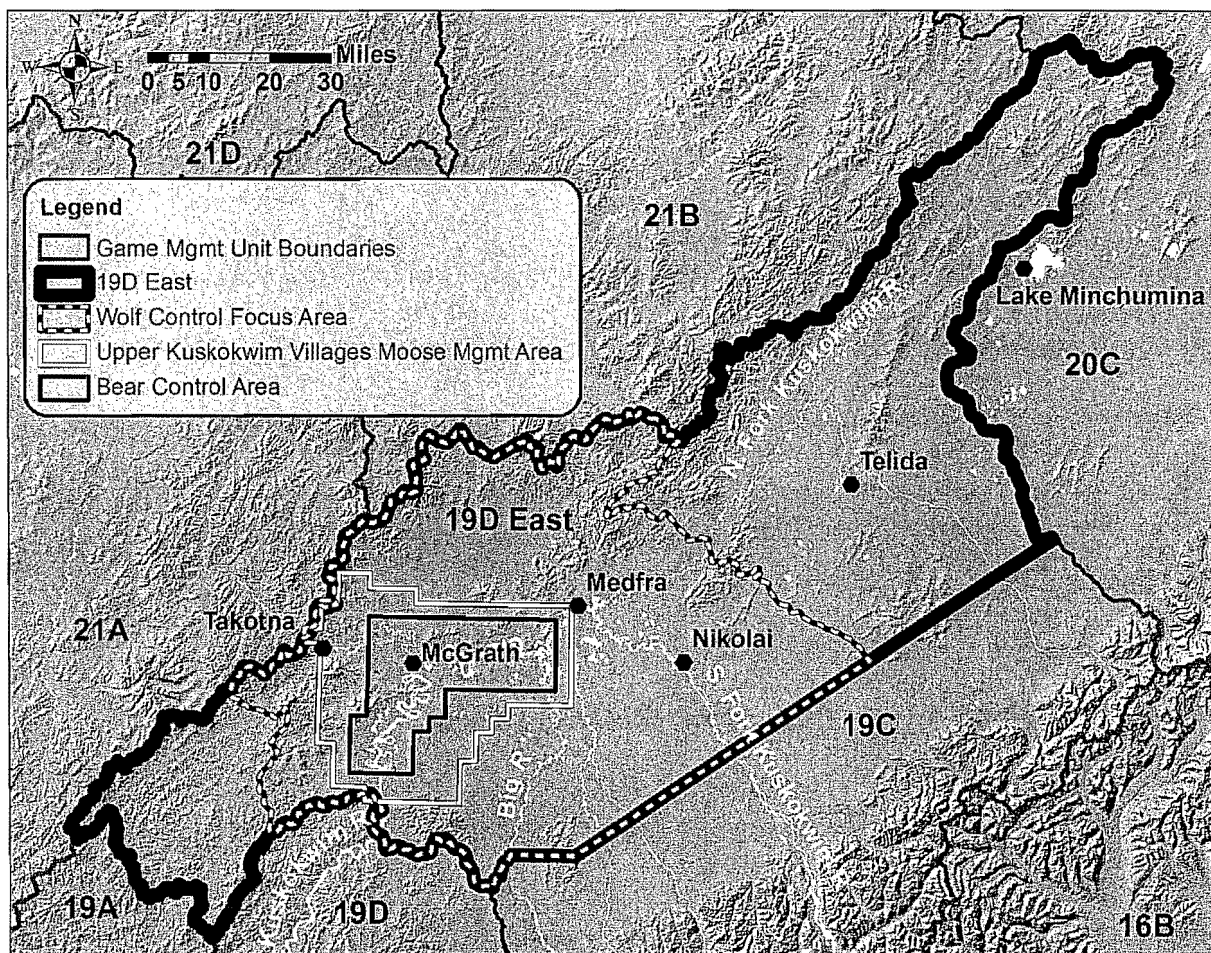
N) Size and geographic description of area for assessing predator abundance: Wolf Control Focus Area (WCFA)-4,484 mi<sup>2</sup> ;Bear Control Area (BCA)-528 mi<sup>2</sup>

O) Size and geographic description of predation control area: WCFA-4,484 mi<sup>2</sup>; BCA-528 mi<sup>2</sup>;

P) Criteria for evaluating progress toward IM objectives: moose abundance and harvest

Q) Criteria for success with this program: MMA abundance=2500 and MMA harvest=100

R) **Department recommendation for IM program in this reporting period:** continue program (details provided in section 5)



**Figure 1.** Unit 19D East intensive management area.

## 2) Prey data

Date(s) and method of most recent fall/spring abundance assessment for moose: Nov 2010-  
Goespatial moose population estimate (GSPE) in MMA

Compared to IM area, was a similar trend and magnitude of difference in abundance observed in nearby non-treatment area(s) since program inception N/A (Y/N) and in the last year N/A (Y/N)?

Date(s) of most recent age and sex composition: Nov 2010-goespatial moose population estimate in MMA

Compared to IM area, was a similar composition trend and magnitude of difference in composition observed in nearby non-treatment area(s) since program inception N/A (Y/N) and in the last year N/A (Y/N)?

**Table 1.** Moose abundance, age and sex composition in Upper Kuskokwim Villages Moose Management Area (MMA) since program implementation in year 1 to year 10. Regulatory year is 1 July to 30 June (e.g, RY 2010 is 1 July 2010 to 30 June 2011).

| Period  | RY   | Abundance <sup>a</sup><br>(90% CI) | Composition (number per 100 Cows) |                            |                   | Total <i>n</i> |
|---------|------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------------|
|         |      |                                    | Calves<br>(90% CI)                | Yearling Bulls<br>(90% CI) | Bulls<br>(90% CI) |                |
| Year 1  | 2001 | 868(+147)                          | 36(+10)                           | 8(+3)                      | 21(+6)            | 455            |
| Year 2  | 2002 | --                                 | --                                | --                         | --                | --             |
| Year 3  | 2003 | --                                 | --                                | --                         | --                | --             |
| Year 4  | 2004 | 1192(+228)                         | 66(+18)                           | 8(+4)                      | 18(+6)            | 578            |
| Year 5  | 2005 | --                                 | --                                | --                         | --                | --             |
| Year 6  | 2006 | 1308(+174)                         | 55(+10)                           | 12(+3)                     | 30(+8)            | 762            |
| Year 7  | 2007 | 1720(+306)                         | 53(+14)                           | 15(+4)                     | 36(+10)           | 844            |
| Year 8  | 2008 | 1718(+352)                         | 44(+12)                           | 14(+5)                     | 40(+11)           | 678            |
| Year 9  | 2009 | 1820 (±323)                        | 38 (±10)                          | 11 (±4)                    | 40 (±11)          | 711            |
| Year 10 | 2010 | 1808 <sup>b</sup>                  | 43 <sup>b</sup>                   | 16 <sup>b</sup>            | 49 <sup>b</sup>   | 712            |

<sup>a</sup>Estimate with sightability correction applied

<sup>b</sup>Preliminary estimate

Describe trend in abundance or composition: Results of a 2001-2009 trend analysis indicate a statistically significant increasing linear trend in abundance within the MMA (115 moose/year, SE=19.2, P=0.004).

**Table 2.** Moose harvest in Upper Kuskokwim Villages Moose Management Area (MMA) since program implementation in year 1 to year 10.

| Period  | RY   | Reported |        | Other mortality <sup>a</sup> | Total |
|---------|------|----------|--------|------------------------------|-------|
|         |      | Male     | Female |                              |       |
| Year 1  | 2001 | 29       | 0      | - <sup>b</sup>               | 29    |
| Year 2  | 2002 | 23       | 0      | - <sup>b</sup>               | 23    |
| Year 3  | 2003 | 32       | 0      | - <sup>b</sup>               | 32    |
| Year 4  | 2004 | 7        | 0      | - <sup>b</sup>               | 7     |
| Year 5  | 2005 | 14       | 0      | - <sup>b</sup>               | 14    |
| Year 6  | 2006 | 12       | 0      | 3                            | 15    |
| Year 7  | 2007 | 25       | 0      | 1                            | 26    |
| Year 8  | 2008 | 61       | 0      | 1                            | 62    |
| Year 9  | 2009 | 56       | 0      | 2                            | 58    |
| Year 10 | 2010 | 50       | 0      | 2 <sup>c</sup>               | 52    |

<sup>a</sup>Mortuary harvest

<sup>b</sup>Records destroyed by fire

<sup>c</sup>Preliminary data

Describe trend in harvest: Increasing as moose have become more abundant and seasons liberalized

Describe any other harvest related trend if appropriate: None

### 3) Predator data

#### Wolves

Date(s) and method of most recent spring abundance assessment for wolves: March 2009- aerial reconnaissance survey

Date(s) and method of most recent fall abundance assessment for wolves: March 2009-calculated by subtracting total removal from following spring abundance estimate

Other research or evidence of trend or abundance status in wolves: Keech et al. In Press. Effects of Predator Treatments, Individual Traits, and Environment on Moose Survival in Alaska. Journal of Wildlife Management

**Table 3.** Wolf abundance and removal in Wolf Control Focus Area (WCFA). Removal objectives are to reduce wolf numbers as low as possible in the WCFA and to maintain a minimum of 40 wolves in all of Unit 19D east to ensure wolves persist in the unit. The WCFA was established in RY 2010. Prior to RY 2010, control was conducted in various different geographic areas. All values listed are for the current WCFA.

| Period  | RY                | Fall abundance <sup>a</sup> | Harvest removal |      | Dept. control removal | Public control removal <sup>b</sup> | Total removal | Spring abundance <sup>c</sup> |
|---------|-------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|-------------------------------|
|         |                   |                             | Trap            | Hunt |                       |                                     |               |                               |
| Year 1  | 2001              | 89                          | 19              | 3    | 0                     | N/A                                 | 22            | 67                            |
| Year 2  | 2002              | --                          | 28              | 5    | 0                     | N/A                                 | 33            | --                            |
| Year 3  | 2003              | --                          | 9               | 1    | 0                     | 17                                  | 27            | --                            |
| Year 4  | 2004              | --                          | 12              | 2    | 0                     | 12                                  | 26            | --                            |
| Year 5  | 2005              | 26                          | 9               | 1    | 0                     | 3                                   | 13            | 13                            |
| Year 6  | 2006              | 29                          | 13              | 1    | 0                     | 2                                   | 16            | 13                            |
| Year 7  | 2007              | --                          | 6               | 2    | 0                     | 19                                  | 27            | --                            |
| Year 8  | 2008              | --                          | 4               | 3    | 0                     | 19                                  | 26            | --                            |
| Year 9  | 2009              | 37                          | 7               | 4    | 0                     | 4                                   | 15            | 22                            |
| Year 10 | 2010 <sup>d</sup> | --                          | 4               | 2    | 0                     | 10                                  | 16            | --                            |

<sup>a</sup>Calculated by subtracting total removal from following spring abundance in each RY when spring abundance surveys were conducted

<sup>b</sup>Public control removal began in RY 2003

<sup>c</sup>Calculated by extrapolating density within a 3,210 mi<sup>2</sup> aerial reconnaissance survey area within the WCFA to the entire WCFA

<sup>d</sup>Preliminary data

### Black Bears

Date(s) and method of most recent spring abundance assessment for black bears. May 2010-mark/recapture estimator

Date(s) and method of most recent fall abundance assessment for black bears. November 2009-calculated by subtracting total removal from May 2010 abundance estimate.

Other research or evidence of trend or abundance status in black bears: Keech et al. In Press. Effects of Predator Treatments, Individual Traits, and Environment on Moose Survival in Alaska. Journal of Wildlife Management.

**Table 4.** Black bear abundance and removal in Bear Control Area (BCA). Removal objective is to reduce bear numbers as low as possible within the BCA.

| Period  | RY   | Spring abundance <sup>a</sup><br>(95% CI) | Harvest removal |                  | Dept. control removal |                 | Public control removal |    | Total removal | Fall abundance <sup>a,b</sup> |
|---------|------|---|-----------------|------------------|-----------------------|-----------------|------------------------|----|---------------|-------------------------------|
|         |      |   | FA <sup>c</sup> | SPR <sup>d</sup> | FA                    | SP              | FA                     | SP |               |                               |
| Year 1  | 2001 | --  | 1               | 0                | 0                     | 0               | 0                      | 0  | 1             | --                            |
| Year 2  | 2002 | 96(+13) <sup>e</sup>                      | 4               | 0                | 0                     | 67 <sup>f</sup> | 0                      | 0  | 73            | --                            |
| Year 3  | 2003 | 30(+9) <sup>e</sup>                       | 1               | 5                | 0                     | 26 <sup>f</sup> | 0                      | 0  | 32            | 23                            |
| Year 4  | 2004 | --  | 0               | 1                | 0                     | 0               | 0                      | 0  | 1             | Near 0                        |
| Year 5  | 2005 | --  | 1               | 5                | 0                     | 0               | 0                      | 0  | 6             | --                            |
| Year 6  | 2006 | 70(+14) <sup>g</sup>                      | 0               | 0                | 0                     | 0               | 0                      | 0  | 0             | --                            |
| Year 7  | 2007 | --  | 1               | 7                | 0                     | 0               | 0                      | 0  | 8             | 70                            |
| Year 8  | 2008 | --  | 1               | 5                | 0                     | 0               | 0                      | 0  | 9             | --                            |
| Year 9  | 2009 | 102 <sup>g,h</sup>                        | 4               | 0                | 0                     | 0               | 0                      | 6  | 10            | --                            |
| Year 10 | 2010 | --  | 0               | --               | 0                     | --              | 4                      | -- | --            | 92 <sup>b</sup>               |

<sup>a</sup>Does not include cubs

<sup>b</sup>Calculated by subtracting total removal from spring abundance estimate in the previous RY

<sup>c</sup>Fall

<sup>d</sup>Spring

<sup>e</sup>Removal estimator

<sup>f</sup>Non-lethal removal

<sup>g</sup>Mark/recapture estimator

<sup>h</sup>Preliminary

### Grizzly Bears

Date(s) and method of most recent spring abundance assessment for grizzly bears: May 2002- Estimated by using density extrapolated from other areas of Interior Alaska with comparable habitat

Date(s) and method of most recent fall abundance assessment for grizzly bears: November 2003- calculated by subtracting total removal from May 2002 abundance estimate.

Other research or evidence of trend or abundance status in grizzly bears: Keech et al. In Press. Effects of Predator Treatments, Individual Traits, and Environment on Moose Survival in Alaska. J. of Wildl. Manage.

**Table 5.** Brown bear abundance and removal in Bear Control Area (BCA). Removal objective is to reduce bear numbers as low as possible within the BCA.

| Period  | RY   | Spring abundance <sup>a</sup> | Harvest removal |                 | Dept. control removal |                | Public control removal |    | Total removal | Fall abundance <sup>a,b</sup> |
|---------|------|-------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|----------------|------------------------|----|---------------|-------------------------------|
|         |      |                               | FA <sup>c</sup> | SP <sup>d</sup> | FA                    | SP             | FA                     | SP |               |                               |
| Year 1  | 2001 | --                            | 0               | 0               | 0                     | 0              | 0                      | 0  | 0             | --                            |
| Year 2  | 2002 | 12 <sup>e</sup>               | 0               | 0               | 0                     | 6 <sup>f</sup> | 0                      | 0  | 6             | --                            |
| Year 3  | 2003 | --                            | 0               | 0               | 0                     | 0              | 0                      | 0  | 0             | 6                             |
| Year 4  | 2004 | --                            | 0               | 0               | 0                     | 0              | 0                      | 0  | 0             | --                            |
| Year 5  | 2005 | --                            | 0               | 0               | 0                     | 0              | 0                      | 0  | 0             | --                            |
| Year 6  | 2006 | --                            | 0               | 2               | 0                     | 0              | 0                      | 0  | 2             | --                            |
| Year 7  | 2007 | --                            | 1               | 2               | 0                     | 0              | 0                      | 0  | 3             | --                            |
| Year 8  | 2008 | --                            | 0               | 0               | 0                     | 0              | 0                      | 0  | 0             | --                            |
| Year 9  | 2009 | --                            | 2               | 0               | 0                     | 0              | 0                      | 0  | 2             | --                            |
| Year 10 | 2010 | --                            | 0 <sup>g</sup>  | --              | --                    | --             | 0                      | -- | --            | --                            |

<sup>a</sup>Does not include cubs

<sup>b</sup>Calculated by subtracting total removal from spring abundance estimate in the previous RY

<sup>c</sup>Fall

<sup>d</sup>Spring

<sup>e</sup>Estimated by using density extrapolated from other areas of Interior Alaska with comparable habitat

<sup>f</sup>Non-lethal removal

<sup>g</sup>Preliminary

#### 4) Habitat data and nutritional condition of prey species

Where active habitat enhancement is occurring or was recommended in the *Intensive Management Plan*, describe progress toward objectives: No active habitat enhancement occurring

**Table 5.** Nutritional indicators for moose in Upper Kuskokwim Villages Moose Management Area (MMA).

| Period  | RY   | Twinning Rate for Radiocollared cows >2 yrs (n) | Twinning Rate uncollared cows (n) |
|---------|------|---|-----------------------------------|
| Year 1  | 2001 | 59% (22)  | 39% (46)                          |
| Year 2  | 2002 | 24% (25)  | 36% (39)                          |
| Year 3  | 2003 | 32% (31)  | 39% (31)                          |
| Year 4  | 2004 | 44% (45)  | 50% (40)                          |
| Year 5  | 2005 | 40% (60)  | 35% (29)                          |
| Year 6  | 2006 | 52% (56)  | 50% (30)                          |
| Year 7  | 2007 | 55% (51)  | --                                |
| Year 8  | 2008 | 33% (43)  | 26% (87)                          |
| Year 9  | 2009 | 33% (40)  | 29% (45)                          |
| Year 10 | 2010 | --  | --                                |

**5) Department recommendations<sup>3</sup> for annual evaluation (1 February) following Year 9 for Unit 19D East wolf and bear predation control program**

Has progress toward defined criteria been achieved? Yes. Results of a 2001-2009 trend analysis indicate a statistically significant increasing linear trend in moose abundance within the MMA (115 moose/year, SE=19.2, P=0.004). MMA moose harvest has increased as abundance has increased and seasons have been liberalized. Increases with the MMA are contributing to achievement of Unit 19D East IM objectives.

Has achievement of success criteria occurred? No. The MMA abundance objective of 2500 and harvest of 100 have not been achieved.

Recommendation for Predation Control: Continue as currently being conducted.

**6) Appendix: Purpose and context of Department Report**

This document provides a standard format for area biologists in the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (Department) to periodically report on progress in intensive management (IM) programs with predation control to the public and the Alaska Board of Game (Board). Predation control programs are authorized in Title 5, Chapter 92, Section 125 of the Alaska Administrative Code (5 AAC 92.125). The Department Report is premised on the 10 November 2010 draft *Guidelines for intensive management of big game in Alaska*, which describes the legal background, scientific principles, and management factors of producing and maintaining elevated harvests of ungulates (caribou, deer, or moose) in selected areas of Alaska. For IM programs initiated or renewed after 1 January 2012, the intent is that details of rationale, decision criteria involving public process and other biological and management factors for specific IM



programs will be found in the corresponding *Intensive Management Plan*.

IM objectives for deer and moose are determined by the Board for a game management unit (GMU), whereas those for caribou are determined by herd. The IM program area may be described by geography (drainage) or community(s) if it is focused in a smaller area than the one describing the corresponding IM objectives, or if the area is composed of multiple GMUs. A predation control area may be smaller, and contained within, the IM program area or the area used for assessing predator abundance in a game management unit. Thus, the number of wolves, black bears, or grizzly/brown bears remaining in the larger abundance assessment area on a specific date incorporates the potential for recolonization of the smaller control area by predators on surrounding lands (where hunting and trapping but not control methods are allowed), in addition to reproduction by predators remaining in the control area.

The Department Report to the Board documents evaluation of progress toward IM population or harvest objectives for ungulate or other objectives determined by public process for existing IM programs. Initially these reports will be only for areas with predation control to meet annual reporting requirements (Alaska Statutes, Title 16, Section 50, Part b), but they may be expanded to IM programs that only include ungulate habitat enhancement, diverse strategies for hunter access and ungulate harvest, and outreach programs (see *Guidelines*). Predator harvest is achieved through hunting and trapping regulations, whereas predation control typically removes predators by additional means such as by public participants (by special Department permit) or by Department personnel (non-lethal methods could also be applied). Report information will be used for Department recommendations and Board decisions on continuing, modifying, suspending, or terminating IM programs. The annual report will be issued on 1 February with an interim report on 1 August. These dates account for lag time in entering reported predator removal and ungulate harvest into an electronic database for archive and analysis. The August interim report will have the ungulate harvest and wolf removal from the previous regulatory year, whereas the February annual report will include most of the ungulate harvest from the prior fall and bear removal from the prior regulatory and calendar years. Report information is for a single program, but it may also be presented in a table showing multiple IM programs in a region or all IM programs statewide.

