

PROPOSAL 130

5 AAC 92.118. Intensive Management Plans IV.

Renew and update the Unit 15C Intensive Management Plan as follows:

(c) Unit 15(C) Predation Control Area. The Unit 15(C) Predation Control Area is established and consists of all lands within Unit 15(C) north of Kachemak Bay including the Fox River Flats (1,171 square miles); state and private lands are approximately 856 square miles;

(1) this is a continuing **habitat enhancement and predator** control program that was first established by the Board of Game (board) in 2012 for wolf control; it is [CURRENTLY] designed to increase moose **abundance** [NUMBERS] and harvest by **improving habitat and** reducing predation on moose by wolves and is expected to [MAKE A CONTRIBUTION TO ACHIEVING] **maintain** the intensive management (IM) objectives in Unit 15(C);

(2) moose and wolf objectives are as follows:

(A) moose IM population objectives for Unit 15(C) as established in 5 AAC 92.108 are 2,500 - 3,500 moose. This objective is within the range of historic population estimates; the bull-to-cow objective is 20 - 25:100 for Unit 15(C);

(B) the moose harvest objectives for Unit 15(C) is 200 - 350 moose; which is eight percent of the low population objective and 10 percent of the high population objective;

(C) the department has determined that wolves can be removed from public and private lands within the control area to the extent possible without affecting the sustainability of the wolf population in Unit 15(C) because the control area is approximately 33 percent of Unit 15(C) and does not include all lands that the wolf population occupies;

(3) findings concerning populations and human use are as follows:

(A) **repealed** __ / __ / ____;

(B) wolf predation is likely **a factor in the failure to achieve moose population and harvest objectives** [AN IMPORTANT CAUSE OF THE FAILURE TO ACHIEVE THESE OBJECTIVES];

(C) a reduction in wolf predation in Unit 15(C) may make progress toward achieving the Unit 15(C) IM harvest objectives for moose;

(D) reducing wolf predation **is likely to be effective and feasible using** [HAS BEEN EFFECTIVE UTILIZING] recognized and prudent active management techniques and based on scientific information;

(E) reducing wolf numbers is likely to be effective given land ownership patterns if conducted by department personnel;

(F) **repealed** __ / __ / ____;

(4) authorized methods and means are as follows:

(A) hunting and trapping of wolves by the public in the Unit 15(C) 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 the use of motorized vehicles;

(B) notwithstanding any other provisions in this title, the commissioner may issue public aerial shooting permits or public land and shoot permits as a method for wolf removal

under AS 16.05.783;

(C) department personnel will be allowed to conduct aerial wolf removal using aircraft under AS 16.05.783.

(5) time frame is as follows:

(A) through **June 30, 2029** [JULY 1, 2022], the commissioner may authorize the removal of wolves in the Unit 15(C) Predation Control Area;

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

(6) the commissioner will review, modify, or suspend program activities as follows:

(A) when the mid-point of the IM population and harvest objectives for the moose population are achieved;

(B) if, after three years, the harvest of wolves is not sufficient to make progress towards the IM population objectives for wolves;

(C) wolf predation control activities may be suspended:

(i) if, after three years, there is no detectable increase in the total harvest of moose in the control area;

(ii) if, after three years, any measure **such as twinning rates and short-yearling mass**, consistent with significant levels of nutritional stress in the moose population is identified;

(iii) when the moose population and harvest objectives within Unit 15(C) have been met; or

(iv) if the population exceeds a density of 3.0 moose per square mile;

(7) The department may plan and execute habitat enhancement projects in areas identified for improvement based on evidence at the landscape or population level through prescribed burns, wildfire, or mechanical means to increase the potential carrying capacity across the range in the Unit 15(C) Predation Control Area.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Unit 15C Intensive Management (IM) plan expires July 1, 2022. Due to rescheduling of board meetings due to the CoV-SARS 2 pandemic this proposal will be presented to the board after expiration. The department would like to have the plan reauthorized with predator control and habitat enhancement options. While the Unit 15C moose population and harvest objectives are currently being met the department sees a benefit to reauthorizing and updating the plan. Updates to the plan include adding habitat enhancement, which was not the focus in the initial IM plan development. The department's intent is to utilize habitat work to maintain moose populations within objectives, which will support meeting harvest objectives. Several habitat enhancement operations are being developed for use in Unit 15C and because of recent fire activity the department has the opportunity to research and monitor habitat changes over time.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

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