

PROPOSAL 53

5 AAC 84.270. Furbearer trapping.

5 AAC 85.056. Hunting seasons and bag limits for wolf.

5 AAC 92.008. Harvest guideline levels.

Establish an estimated unreported mortality rate for Unit 2 wolves to be used for establishing the harvest quota as follows:

General authority, as applicable: 5 AAC 84.270(13), 5 AAC 85.056(1), 5 AAC 92.008.

5 AAC 92.008 is amended to read:

An estimated unreported mortality rate of 35-50% shall be utilized in establishing an annual harvest quota of wolves in Unit 2.

The Board of Game should establish an estimated percentage of unreported mortality in the Unit 2 wolf population of between 35-50%, and count that percentage toward the annual allowable mortality. This proposal echoes a recommendation made by the Interagency Wolf Technical Committee recommends that harvest quotas continue to be adjusted annually for unreported kill.⁴

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The legal take of wolves in Unit 2 underestimates the total mortality in the wolf population, and thus leaves the state vulnerable to overharvesting a genetically distinct, isolated wolf population.

Wolves die from any number of causes, including legal harvest by trapping and hunting, wounding loss, illegal harvest (wolves killed but not reported or sealed per regulations), and natural mortality. Illegal mortality is particularly difficult to assess because illegal activities are not self-reported, and there is a minimal enforcement presence on Prince of Wales Island. Unreported human-caused mortality has been documented in Unit 2 at rates of 38% (Roffler et al. 2016a) and 47% (Person and Russell 2008) of collared wolves killed by humans (3 of 8 and 16 of 34 wolves, respectively). Causes of death in these unreported instances included gun shot, snare, and trap wounds, though it is important to recognize that data from most of these cases do not speak to intent. Some of these animals may have been injured during attempted lawful harvest but escaped, and so were not successfully recovered and therefore went unreported. Regardless, unreported human-caused mortality exists at fairly high levels in Unit 2. Harvest quotas should continue to account for this.¹

There may be a bias against reporting killing of radio-collared wolves, which would inflate these numbers somewhat. That acknowledged, it is reasonable to assume that 35-50% more wolves die each year (including natural mortality) than are accounted for in the reported harvest.²

Explicit recognition of unreported mortality is not without precedent. For 2015 and 2016 the department documented an apparent decline in wolf numbers and documented a high rate of unreported human-caused mortality (Roffler et al. 2016). Consequently, as a conservation measure, the Board of Game reduced the wolf harvest quota by 50% to account for unreported mortality³.

¹ From: *Wolf Technical Committee. 2017. Interagency Wolf Habitat Management Program: Recommendations for Game Management Unit 2. Management Bulletin R10-MB-822. USDA Forest Service, USDI Fish and Wildlife Service, and Alaska Department of Fish and Game.*

² Person, David K.; Kirchoff, Matthew; Van Ballenberghe, Victor; Iverson, George C.; Grossman, Edward. 1996. *The Alexander Archipelago wolf: a conservation assessment*. Gen. Tech. Rep. PNW-GTR-384. Portland, OR: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Pacific Northwest Research Station. 42 p.

³ Porter, B. 2018. *Wolf management report and plan, Game Management Unit 2: Report period 1 July 2010–30 June 2015, and plan period 1 July 2015–30 June 2020*. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Species Management Report and Plan ADF&G/DWC/SMR&P-2018- 10, Juneau.

⁴ Wolf Technical Committee. 2017. *Interagency Wolf Habitat Management Program: Recommendations for Game Management Unit 2*. Management Bulletin R10-MB-822. USDA Forest Service, USDI Fish and Wildlife Service, and Alaska Department of Fish and Game

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Wildlife Alliance

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