

PROPOSAL 57

5 AAC 92.123. Intensive Management Plans VII.

Modify the Intensive Management Plan for Unit 19 as follows:

(a) Plans established. Intensive management plans for the following areas are established in this section:

- (1) Unit **19(E)** [19(A)] Predation Control Area;
- (2) Unit 19(D)-East Predation Control Area.

(b) Unit **19(E)** [19(A)] Predation Control Area: the Unit **19(E)** [19(A)] Predation Control Area is established and consists of those portions of the Kuskokwim River drainage within Unit **19(E)** [19(A)], encompassing approximately **4,269** [9,972] square miles; this predation control program does not apply to any National Park Service or National Wildlife Refuge lands unless approved by the federal agencies; notwithstanding any other provisions in this title, and based on the following information contained in this section, the commissioner or the commissioner's designee may conduct a wolf and black bear and brown bear population reduction or a wolf and black bear and brown bear population regulation program in Unit **19(E)** [19(A)] to benefit moose:

(1) the following Wolf and Bear Predation Control Focus Areas are established in the Unit **19(E)** [19(A)] Predation Control Area; the areas do not delineate a moose, wolf, or bear population and are not intended to distinguish animals within the focus areas from populations in Unit **19(E)** [19(A)]; the purpose is to focus wolf and bear control in a relatively small area where moose numbers can be better estimated, where moose are accessible to hunters, and where harvest can be closely monitored;

(A) the Wolf Predation Control Focus Area (WCFA) encompasses approximately 3,905 square miles within all Unit **19(E)** [19(A)] drainages of the Kuskokwim River upstream from and including the Holitna River Drainage; wolf control will be conducted only within the WCFA; the department has the discretion to adjust the focus area's size and shape to include up to approximately 4,400 square miles of Unit **19(E)** [19(A)];

(B) the Black Bear and Brown Bear Predation Control Focus Area (BCFA) encompasses approximately 534 square miles consisting of those portions of the Kuskokwim River drainage within the area enclosed by a line starting at Sleetmute at 61° 42.00' N. lat., 157° 10.00' W. long., then east to 61° 42.00' N. lat., 157° 00.00' W. long., then north to 61° 44.00' N. lat., 157° 00.00' W. long., then east to 61° 44.00' N. lat., 156° 55.00' W. long., then north to 61° 46.00' N. lat., 156° 55.00' W. long., then east to 61° 46.00' N. lat., 156° 50.00' W. long., then north to 61° 48.00' N. lat., 156° 50.00' W. long., then east to 61° 48.00' N. lat., 156° 45.00' W. long., then north to 61° 50.00' N. lat., 156° 45.00' W. long., then east to 61° 50.00' N. lat., 156° 30.00' W. long., then south to 61° 40.00' N. lat., 156° 30.00' W. long., then west to 61° 40.00' N. lat., 156° 45.00' W. long., then south to 61° 18.00' N. lat., 156° 45.00' W. long., then west to 61° 18.00' N. lat., 157° 15.00' W. long., then north to 61° 24.00' N. lat., 157° 15.00' W. long., then east to 61° 24.00' N. lat., 157° 10.00' W. long., then north to 61° 42.00' N. lat., 157° 10.00' W. long.; bear control will be conducted only within the BCFA; the department has the discretion to adjust the area's size and shape up to approximately 800 square miles of Unit 19(A); the BCFA is mostly within the WCFA;

(2) this is a continuing control program that was first authorized by the board in 2004 for wolf control, with bear control added by the board in 2012; it is currently designed to increase moose numbers and harvest in the WCFA and BCFA by reducing predation on moose and is expected to make a contribution to achieving the intensive management (IM) objectives in Unit **19(E)** [19(A)];

(3) moose, wolf, black bear, and brown bear objectives are as follows:

(A) the IM population objective established by the board for **Unit 19(E) is X,XXX – X,XXX** moose [UNITS 19(A) AND 19(B) IS 13,500 – 16,500 MOOSE; BASED ON THE RELATIVE SIZES OF THE TWO UNITS, THE PROPORTIONAL POPULATION OBJECTIVE FOR UNIT 19(A) ALONE IS 7,600 – 9,300 MOOSE]; the IM moose harvest objective for **Unit 19(E) is XXX – XXX moose annually** [UNITS 19(A) AND 19(B) IS 750 – 950 MOOSE ANNUALLY; THE PROPORTIONAL HARVEST OBJECTIVE FOR UNIT 19(A) ALONE IS 400 – 550 MOOSE ANNUALLY];

(B) the density objective for moose in the WCFA is 1.0 moose per square mile (corrected for sightability) during late winter surveys; the annual moose harvest objective for the WCFA is 155 moose;

(C) the wolf control population objective in the WCFA is to reduce wolf numbers by at least 60 – 80 percent; the pre-control estimate within the WCFA is 75 wolves; the pre-control wolf population in Unit **19(E)** [19(A)] is estimated at 150 wolves; only removing wolves from the WCFA will ensure that wolves persist in Unit **19(E)** [19(A)];

(D) the black bear control objective in the BCFA is to reduce black bear numbers to the lowest level possible; the pre-control black bear population in Unit **19(E)** [19(A)] is estimated at 2,500 – 3,000 black bears; the pre-control estimate within the BCFA is 92 – 102 black bears; because the BCFA is a relatively small geographic area, removing black bears from within the BCFA will have only a minor effect on the black bear population in Unit **19(E)** [19(A)];

(E) the brown bear control objective in the BCFA is to reduce brown bear numbers to the lowest level possible; the pre-control brown bear population in Unit **19(E)** [19(A)] is estimated at 180 – 210 brown bears; the pre-control estimate within the BCFA is 10 – 15 brown bears; because the BCFA is a relatively small geographic area, removing brown bears from within the BCFA will have only a minor effect on the brown bear population in Unit **19(E)** [19(A)];

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

(A) the Unit **19(E)** [19(A)] IM moose population and harvest objectives have not been achieved;

(B) the WCFA objectives for moose density and moose harvest have not been achieved;

(C) predation by wolves and bears is an important cause of the failure to achieve moose population and harvest objectives;

(D) a reduction of wolf and bear predation within the WCFA and BCFA can reasonably be expected to make progress towards achieving the Unit **19(E)** [19(A)] IM objectives;

(E) reducing predation is likely to be effective and feasible using recognized and prudent active management techniques and based on scientific information;

(F) reducing predation is likely to be effective given land ownership patterns;

(5) authorized methods and means are as follows:

(A) hunting and trapping of wolves and hunting of black bears and brown bears by the public in Unit **19(E)** [19(A)] during the term of this program may occur as provided in the hunting and trapping regulations set out elsewhere in this title, including use of motorized vehicles;

(B) notwithstanding any other provisions in this title, the commissioner may allow department employees to conduct aerial, land and shoot, or ground-based lethal removal of wolves and black bears and brown bears using state-owned, privately-owned, or chartered equipment, including helicopters, under AS 16.05.783;

(C) notwithstanding any other provisions in this title, the commissioner may issue public aerial shooting permits or public land and shoot permits using fixed-wing aircraft as a method of wolf removal under AS 16.05.783;

(6) time frame is as follows:

(A) through June 30, **2030** [2026], the commissioner may authorize removal of wolves and black bears and brown bears in Unit **19(E)** [19(A)];

(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, wolf, and bear populations, and recommendations for changes, if necessary to achieve the objectives of the plan;

(7) the commissioner will review, modify, or suspend program activities when:

(A) the moose density and harvest objectives specified in this subsection are achieved within the WCFA;

(B) any measure consistent with signs of nutritional stress in the moose population are identified.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? In 2021 the Board of Game (board) passed Proposal 171 which split Unit 19A into two smaller subunits; Unit 19A and Unit 19E. This created various administrative errors including in 5AAC 92.108 and 5 AAC 92.123. Intensive Management (IM) is no longer being conducted in Unit 19A, but only in the new Unit 19E. Additionally, the current IM plan will expire on June 30, 2026, which is out of cycle with the Interior and Northeastern Arctic Region regular board of Game meeting. Due to COVID-19, the regularly scheduled meeting was postponed by one year, and this IM plan is now out of sync with that cycle. This proposal corrects the identification of the IM areas, updates the IM objectives and brings the IM plan back into alignment with the regularly scheduled board meetings for this area.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game

(HQ-F23-050)
