Species Management Report and Plan ADF&G/DWC/SMR&P–2022–10

Wolf Management Report and Plan, Game Management Unit 14C:

Report Period 1 July 2015–30 June 2020, and

Plan Period 1 July 2020–30 June 2025

Cory Stantorf

2022

Alaska Department of Fish and Game Division of Wildlife Conservation

Wolf Management Report and Plan, Game Management Unit 14C:

Report Period 1 July 2015–30 June 2020, and

Plan Period 1 July 2020–30 June 2025

PREPARED BY:

Cory Stantorf
Assistant Area Wildlife Biologist

APPROVED BY:

Jeff Selinger
Management Coordinator

David Battle
Area Wildlife Biologist

REVIEWED BY:

Jeff Selinger
Management Coordinator

PUBLISHED BY:

Sky M. Guritz
Technical Reports Editor

Alaska Department of Fish and Game
Division of Wildlife Conservation
PO Box 115526
Juneau, AK 99811-5526

Hunters are important founders of the modern wildlife conservation movement. They, along with trappers and sport shooters, provided funding for this publication through payment of federal taxes on firearms, ammunition, and archery equipment, and pay state hunting license and tag fees. These taxes and fees fund the federal Wildlife Restoration Program and the State of Alaska's Fish and Game Fund, which provided funding for the work reported on in this publication.

Species management reports and plans provide information about species that are hunted or trapped and management actions, goals, recommendations for those species, and plans for data collection. Detailed information is prepared for each species every 5 years by the area management biologist for game management units in their areas, who also develops a plan for data collection and species management for the next 5 years. This type of report is not produced for species that are not managed for hunting or trapping or for areas where there is no current or anticipated activity. Unit reports are reviewed and approved for publication by regional management coordinators and are available to the public via the Alaska Department of Fish and Game's public website.

This species management report and plan was reviewed and approved for publication by Jeff Selinger, Management Coordinator for the Division of Wildlife Conservation.

Species management reports and plans are available via the Alaska Department of Fish and Game's public website (www.adfg.alaska.gov) or by contacting Alaska Department of Fish and Game's Division of Wildlife Conservation, PO Box 115526, Juneau, AK 99811-5526; phone: (907) 465-4190; email: dfg.dwc.publications@alaska.gov. The report may also be accessed through most libraries, via interlibrary loan from the Alaska State Library or the Alaska Resources Library and Information Services (www.arlis.org). To subscribe to email announcements regarding new technical publications from the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Wildlife Conservation please use the following link: http://list.state.ak.us/mailman/listinfo/adfgwildlifereport.

This document, published in PDF format only, should be cited as:

Stantorf, C. 2022. Wolf management report and plan, Game Management Unit 14C: Report period 1 July 2015–30 June 2020, and plan period 1 July 2020–30 June 2025. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Species Management Report and Plan ADF&G/DWC/SMR&P-2022-10, Juneau.

Please contact the authors or the Division of Wildlife Conservation at (907) 465-4190 if you have questions about the content of this report.

Contents

Purpose of this Report

This report provides a record of survey and inventory management activities for wolf (*Canis lupus*) in Game Management Unit 14C for the 5 regulatory years 2015–2019 and plans for survey and inventory management activities in the following 5 regulatory years, 2020–2024. A regulatory year (RY) begins 1 July and ends 30 June (e.g., RY14 = 1 July 2014–30 June 2015). This report is produced primarily to provide agency staff with data and analysis to help guide and record agency efforts but is also provided to the public to inform it of wildlife management activities. In 2016 the Alaska Department of Fish and Game's (ADF&G, the department) Division of Wildlife Conservation (DWC) launched this 5-year report to report more efficiently on trends and to describe potential changes in data collection activities over the next 5 years. It replaces the wolf management report of survey and inventory activities.

I. RY15–RY19 Management Report

Management Area

Unit 14C represents approximately 1,912 mi^2 of Southcentral Alaska and largely consists of the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA). MOA is a mosaic of wildlife habitat and human development. Most of MOA is characterized by large tracts of natural lands including Chugach State Park, Chugach National Forest, the Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge, and Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (an 84,000-acre military base). Even the highly developed portions of MOA support wildlife habitat in vegetated greenbelts, stream corridors, and large municipal parks.

Summary of Status, Trend, Management Activities, and History of Wolves in Unit 14C

Wolf numbers in Unit 14C were probably low to moderate in the 1950s and early 1960s, primarily due to predator control efforts by the federal government (Rausch 1967). As predator control ceased, wolves recovered during the 1970s. Excessive winter moose mortality caused by deep snows during the winters of 1989–1990 and 1994–1995 helped sustain wolf packs in the area during the 1990s. The last extensive aerial wolf survey conducted in Unit 14C was in 1995. This survey documented 4 packs within Unit 14C; a fifth pack is believed to have formed in the unit shortly after the survey was flown (Rick Sinnott, wildlife biologist, ADF&G unpublished report, Wolf and wolverine surveys on Fort Richardson and surrounding areas, 1996). It is estimated that there are still 4 or 5 packs using the area.

Management Direction

EXISTING WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT PLANS

- Direction for the management of Unit 14C wolves was outlined in the Southcentral Wildlife Management Plan (ADF&G 1976).

- In 2000, a wildlife plan called "Living with Wildlife in Anchorage: A Cooperative Planning Effort" was created in an attempt to outline common goals for Anchorage wildlife management (ADF&G 2000). The planning effort was initiated and led by ADF&G. It involved a team from local, state, and federal agencies with wildlife responsibilities, as well as people from various wildlife-related interest groups and members of the general public. This plan was intended to be used as a guide as Anchorage continued to be developed.

GOALS

- Provide an opportunity to view, photograph, and enjoy the presence of wolves in Unit 14C.

- Provide maximum opportunity to participate in hunting and trapping wolves.

CODIFIED OBJECTIVES

No codified objectives exist for wolf in Unit 14C.

Amounts Reasonably Necessary for Subsistence Uses

None.

Intensive Management

None.

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

1. Population Objective:
    a. Maintain a healthy wolf population in Unit 14C.
2. Human-use Objective:
    a. Provide for both consumptive and nonconsumptive uses.

MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Population Status and Trend

ACTIVITY 1.1. Monitor pack behavior and numbers.

Data Needs

Wolves experience little to no hunting or trapping pressure in Unit 14C, so there is very little chance that wolves in Unit 14C are at risk of being overharvested. However, given their opportunistic nature and proximity to people and domestic pets, there is a possibility that wolves can become acclimated to feeding on domestic pets and acting aggressively towards humans. Anytime a wild animal loses its fear of humans, particularly animals that live and hunt in packs, it is a cause for concern. Receiving reports about wolf-human interactions enable ADF&G area wildlife managers to determine if packs or individuals are exhibiting behaviors that may turn into a public safety risk.

Methods

The majority of our information is anecdotal and comes from staff reports while conducting field work (mostly aerial surveys) and reports from the public.

Results and Discussion

In RY18, funding was available to fly a wolf-track-presence survey for an upcoming research project. The survey aimed to determine which portions of Unit 14C that wolves were actively using, and to get a rough idea on pack sizes. The largest pack, based on number of tracks, was thought to be 3–4 individuals strong with several pairs scattered from Thunderbird Creek to Eagle River.

Recommendations for Activity 1.1

Continue.

2. Mortality-Harvest Monitoring and Regulations

ACTIVITY 2.1. Monitor harvest through sealing records.

Data Needs

Fursealing data is needed annually to assess trends in harvest, pack size, the location of harvest, hunter effort, and trapper effort.

Methods

Wolves harvested by trappers and hunters are required to be sealed by an authorized ADF&G staff member or a state-appointed sealer within 30 days of the close of the season.

Season and Bag Limit

Trapping seasons and bag limits Unit 14C, Alaska.

Area	Season dates	Bag limit
JBER[1] Management Area	Closed to trapping by military regulation	–
Eagle River Management Area	Closed to trapping	–
Anchorage Management Area	Closed to trapping	–
Eklutna Lake Management Area	Closed to trapping	–
Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge	Closed to trapping	–
Remainder of Chugach State Park	Closed to trapping	–
Birchwood Management Area	10 November–last day of February	No limit
Remainder of Unit 14C	10 November–last day of February	No limit

[1] JBER stands for Joint Base Elmendorf–Richardson, a United States military facility in Anchorage.

Hunting seasons and bag limits Unit 14C, Alaska.

Area	Season dates	Bag limit
Remainder (Outside of management areas)	10 August–30 April	5

Results and Discussion

Harvest by Hunters-Trappers

No wolves were harvested in Unit 14C by hunters or trappers during RY15–RY19.

Other Mortality

One wolf was struck and killed by a vehicle in Anchorage in RY16.

Alaska Board of Game Actions and Emergency Orders

No Board of Game changes were made during this reporting period (RY15–RY19). No emergency orders were issued during this reporting period.

Recommendations for Activity 2.1

We recommend the continued monitoring of sealing records.

3. Habitat Assessment-Enhancement

None.

NONREGULATORY MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS OR NEEDS

Reported conflicts between humans and wolves have been nonexistent since the previous reporting period (RY10–RY14), likely as a direct result of the public safety actions that had occurred on the Joint Base Elmendorf–Richardson (JBER) military facility during that time.

However, due to the intersections of wolf habitat with both residential and recreational areas in Unit 14C, it is possible that more wolves could become aggressive or habituated in the future. To prevent future problems, educational outreach should be implemented that advises area residents of precautions that they can take to avoid encouraging aggressive or habituated behavior in wolves.

Data Recording and Archiving

- Unit 14C wolf harvest data is stored in ADF&G's Wildlife Information Network (WinfoNet).

- Digital copies of the wolf JBER public safety documents are stored on the Anchorage network drive at the following location: (O:)/DWC/common/Anch_Wildlife_Management/BGDIF/Wolves.

- Electronic copies of public wolf sightings are stored on the Anchorage network server at the following location O:\DWC\common\Anch_Wildlife_Management\Wildlife Calls\Historical and in the Wildlife Encounter Database.

Agreements

None.

Permitting

None.

Conclusions and Management Recommendations

Anecdotal reports of wolf sightings, along with healthy moose numbers, indicate that wolf predation is not a problem in Unit 14C. Therefore, no changes in seasons or bag limits are recommended. Given the difficulty in managing both hunting and trapping within the human-populated portions of Unit 14C, it would be difficult to open additional areas to the take of wolves. If it is determined that additional harvest is warranted, it is possible that a restricted weapons season could be opened on JBER. Considering the weapons restrictions on base, the most practical scenario may be a muzzleloader hunt in the portion of JBER north of Eagle River.

Unit 14C has very little harvest of wolves. The primary management needs are to monitor wolf populations, be responsive to public reports of aggression, and take steps to manage any problems that arise. Given the time that has passed since the public safety action taken by the department on JBER, and the rate at which a wolf population can rebound from harvest, a wolf project was initiated during RY15–RY19 so that pack home ranges and numbers can be better tracked and enumerated.

II. Project Review and RY20–RY24 Plan

Review of Management Direction

MANAGEMENT DIRECTION

The existing management direction and goals appropriately direct management of wolves in Unit 14C. The management direction for Unit 14C ensures that wolves will persist as part of the natural ecosystem and ensures continued consumptive and nonconsumptive opportunities. There are no area-specific issues in Unit 14C that require a departure from statewide goals for wolf management.

GOALS

- Provide an opportunity to view, photograph, and enjoy the presence of wolves in Unit 14C.

- Provide maximum opportunity to participate in hunting and trapping wolves.

CODIFIED OBJECTIVES

No codified objectives exist for Unit 14C.

Amounts Reasonably Necessary for Subsistence Uses

None.

Intensive Management

None.

MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

1. Population Objective
    a. Maintain a healthy wolf population in Unit 14C.
2. Human-Use Objective
    a. Provide for both consumptive and nonconsumptive uses.

Since there is very low human harvest of wolves in Unit 14C, wolf populations likely fluctuate based on current levels of prey species. No additional management objectives for the Unit 14C wolf population are necessary at this time.

MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Population Status and Trend

ACTIVITY 1.1. Monitor pack behavior and numbers

Data Needs

No change from RY15–RY19.

Methods

No change from RY15–RY19.

2. Mortality-Harvest Monitoring

ACTIVITY 2.1. Monitor harvest through sealing records.

Data Needs

No change from RY15–RY19.

Methods

No change from RY15–RY19.

3. Habitat Assessment-Enhancement

None.

NONREGULATORY MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS OR NEEDS

Reported conflicts between humans and wolves have been nonexistent since 2011, likely as a direct result of the public safety actions that occurred on JBER during that time. However, due to the intersections of wolf habitat with both residential and recreational areas in Unit 14C, it is possible that more wolves could become aggressive or habituated in the future. To prevent future problems, educational outreach should be implemented that advises area residents of precautions that they can take to avoid encouraging aggressive or habituated behavior in wolves. A research project looking at wolf populations in Unit 14C should be started.

Data Recording and Archiving

- Unit 14C wolf harvest data is stored in WinfoNet.
- Digital copies of the wolf JBER public safety documents are stored on the Anchorage network drive at the following location: (O:)/DWC/common/Anch_Wildlife_Management/BGDIF/Wolves.
- Electronic copies of public wolf sightings are stored on the Anchorage network drive at the following location: O:\DWC\common\Anch_Wildlife_Management\Wildlife Calls\Historical and in the Wildlife Encounter Database.

Agreements

None.

Permitting

None.

References Cited

Alaska Department of Fish and Game. 1976. Alaska wildlife management plans: A public proposal for the management of Alaska's wildlife: Southcentral Alaska. Draft proposal subsequently approved by the Alaska Board of Game. Division of Game, Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Project W-17-R, Juneau.

Alaska Department of Fish and Game. 2000. Living with wildlife in Anchorage: A cooperative planning effort [web page]. Division of Wildlife Conservation, Anchorage. http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=anchoragewildlifeplanning.main (Accessed 31 May 2021).

Rausch, R. A. 1967. Some aspects of the population ecology of wolves, Alaska. American Zoologist 7(2):253–265. https://doi.org/10.1093/icb/7.2.253


ALASKA
DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME