

**Board of Game Emergency Teleconference  
January 25, 2006  
Summary of Actions**

**DESIGNATED REPORTER: Sherry Wright**

*This summary of actions is for information purposes only and is not intended to detail, reflect or fully interpret the reasons for the Board's actions.*

**Finding of Emergency**

**ACTION: Carried**

Board moved for a Finding of Emergency to address the deficiencies noted in the January 17, 2006 Superior Court Summary Judgement . The court held the predation control implementation plans invalid because they were deemed overly broad in geographic scope in two cases, and because all had failed to comply with some of the requirements of the regulations that dealt with control of predation by wolves. Specifically, they failed to meet a sufficient explanation of the wolf harvest – how to attain the goals and what alternatives had been considered or tried. Two areas were considered too broad, so more detail about the geographical area description was added to each plan. The board deemed it necessary for the immediate preservation of public peace, health, safety and general welfare in that this ruling took place in the middle of the predator control season for each area, while control operations were underway.

The programs in place have been the object of much debate since 2003. There have been numerous requests of the board to consider predator control in other areas, which have been denied because they did not meet the high standards required for predator control implementation. The Alaska Federation of Natives have endorsed resolutions for the last five years supporting the department's predator control plans. Hunters and trappers generally take a very small portion of the harvest. The majority occurs by natural mortality. By statute – the board must look at all aspects, including those people dependent on these resources, particularly Alaskans seeking relief. Several rural community's population data and annual incomes averages of \$15,000 were discussed and the economic hardships endured when enough game population is not available for harvest. The nutritional needs of local people are not being met. Lacking the ability to care for their own families, by harvesting meat, has also been a contributing factor in the alcoholism, depression and suicide rates in Alaska. This tears at people's self esteem. Also contributing to their mental state, is the concern expressed by parents in rural Alaska for the safety of their children in areas with high wolf densities.

If the program is stopped, it would bring irreparable damage to the program. It is likely that, in order to be effective, an even greater harvest of wolves would be necessary to address the depleted moose populations. Cited studies showed that intermittent control is ineffective, as wolves have the ability to repopulate quickly. Moose repopulate 1-2 calves per year, where wolves repopulate with 4-5 pups at a time. Enforcement has been showed to be effective in cases where the perimeters set were exceeded. Four out of five of the units have seen improved calf survival. This is one of points of importance for continuation of the program. Cows recruited into the population benefit the overall population into the future. The board is committed to stay the course, especially for those who are in the most need.

Part of the culture of Alaska, for both rural and urban Alaskans, is the ability to enjoy wild game meat. Many have supplemented or grown up with wild game as part of their subsistence. Buying beef at the store is not the same for those whose lives have included use of the resources.

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There has been a significant loss of moose harvest levels over the last 25 years. A comparison of the value of the meat was made. While a moose may save \$1500 off an urban grocery bill, it translates to \$3-4000 for rural Alaskans. Those figures were also from five year old data and when you factor in the current price of fuel and the extremely cold winter we are having, this becomes even more of an emergency.

The population levels indicate that the ban on same day airborne contributed to the moose population decline and also removed a management tool that kept the wolf density in check. Board further wanted to stress that predator control is distinctly different than hunting or trapping, and is a necessary tool.

The board will further discuss these plans at their March 2006 meeting.

**Repeal previous plans**

**ACTION: Carried**

**DISCUSSION:** Board repealed 5 AAC 92.125 (1), (5), (6), (7), and (8) in order to examine each plan on its own merit. Department provided an overview of the proposed new regulations that includes: a geographical description; the department authorization; expanded and standardized to include predator/prey population and human use of predator/prey; predator/prey population objectives; justifications for plan implementation; methods and means; anticipated time frame that includes a schedule for updates and re-evaluations; conditions wherein the program will be suspended and/or terminated. The board then began discussion of each plan.

**Unit 13 Wolf Predation Control Implementation Plan ACTION: Carried as amended**

**AMENDMENT:** Commissioner is given authority to close by emergency order once harvest goals are reached.

**DISCUSSION:** The board repealed the previous Unit 13 Wolf predation control implementation plan to address the deficiencies found by the court. New regulation will be found as 5 AAC 92.125 (12). The first year of this plan excluded some areas where trapping occurred, but this was modified based on lower harvest from that effort. Local efforts to reduce predators have not been sufficient, in spite of efforts made.

**Unit 16B Wolf Predation Control Implementation Plan ACTION: Carried as amended**

**AMENDMENT:** Commissioner is given authority to close by emergency order once harvest goals are reached.

**DISCUSSION:** The board repealed the previous Unit 16B Wolf predation control implementation plan to address the deficiencies found by the court. New regulation will be found as 5 AAC 92.125 (13). Board asked for more clarification on the affect of the snow depth.

**Unit 19A Wolf Predation Control Implementation Plan ACTION: Carried as amended**

**AMENDMENT:** Commissioner is given authority to close by emergency order once harvest goals are reached.

**DISCUSSION:** The board repealed the previous Unit 19A Wolf predation control implementation plan to address the deficiencies found by the court. New regulation will be found as 5 AAC 92.125 (9). The board discussed the balloon effect of closed areas. Although

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hunters and trappers do the best they can, it takes aerial control to achieve the harvest objectives. There is a low number of hunters and trappers with a large area, making other management tools cost prohibitive.

**Unit 19D East Wolf Predation Control Implementation Plan**

**ACTION: Carried as amended**

**AMENDMENT:** Commissioner is given authority to close by emergency order once harvest goals are reached.

**DISCUSSION:** The board repealed the previous Unit 19D East Wolf predation control implementation plan to address the deficiencies found by the court. New regulation will be found as 5 AAC 92.125 (10). The predator control program has shown moose population improvement in this area. The board, in previous action, liberalized the bear hunting regulations to help reduce pressure on moose population.

**Unit 12/20E Wolf & Brown Bear Predation Control Implementation Plan**

**ACTION: Carried as amended**

**AMENDMENT:** Commissioner is given authority to close by emergency order once harvest goals are reached.

**DISCUSSION:** The board repealed the previous Unit 12/20E Wolf predation control implementation plan to address the deficiencies found by the court. New regulation will be found as 5 AAC 92.125 (11). There was a discussion of the differences in the percentages, which is due to the findings and the requirement for minimum amount necessary. Non-resident hunting has not been eliminated, but it is deemed beneficial because they are somewhat more likely to harvest a bear. These programs should be in place before the ungulate populations reach Tier II status.

The board believes in all of these plans that without this action cost to private persons would certainly be increased to participate, as well as the cost in mental and physical welfare of those who do participate.

The board further instructed the department to review regulations that refer to the repealed regulations and bring any housekeeping proposals to the March meeting.