

PROPOSAL 130B

RC 52

5 AAC 92.125 Intensive Management Plans.

(x) **Unit 26(B) Muskoxen Recovery Area:** 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 selective, lethal, brown bear removal to allow recovery of the muskoxen population in Unit 26B:

- (1) a Unit 26(B) muskoxen recovery area is established and consists of all lands within Unit 26(B); this recovery program does not apply to any National Park Service or National Wildlife Refuge lands unless approved by the federal agencies;
- (2) muskoxen and brown bear objectives are as follows:
 - (A) Unit 26(B) muskoxen are not managed intensively for high levels of human harvest, but they are managed to provide hunting opportunities; the population objective is a minimum of 300 muskoxen \geq 1 year old during April surveys; achieving this objective will allow re-establishment of a hunting season and also enhance and maintain viewing opportunity; the harvest objective is 3–9 muskoxen annually, once the population reaches 300 and a harvestable surplus is available;
 - (B) the brown bear population objective for Unit 26(B) is to maintain the current estimated population of 200–320, while annually removing up to 20 brown bears identified as threatening or killing muskoxen; limiting the number of bears that can be removed will assure that brown bears persist as part of the natural ecosystem and will assure continued brown bear hunting and viewing opportunities;
- (3) findings of the Board of Game concerning populations and human use are as follows:
 - (A) the Unit 26(B) muskox population and harvest objectives have not been achieved;
 - (i) the muskoxen population size was estimated at 190 in April 2011; muskoxen numbers in Unit 26(B) increased during 1990–1995 from 122 to 330; some of this increase was the result of immigration from Unit 26(C); during the mid to late 1990s, numbers stabilized at around 265–300 muskoxen through 2003; subsequently, the population declined to 216 by 2006, and during 2007–2011, the population in Unit 26(B) slightly declined and stabilized at its current, reduced population size;
 - (ii) the hunting season for Unit 26(B) muskoxen has been closed since regulatory year 2006–2007; the first hunting season in Unit 26(B) was in 1990; during 1990–1997, all hunting was by Tier II permit; in regulatory year 1998–1999, the Alaska Board of Game determined that the amount necessary for subsistence (ANS) was 20 muskoxen in Unit 26(A) and Unit 26(B), west of the Dalton Highway Management Corridor and established a Tier II hunt; the board also determined an ANS of 4 muskoxen in Unit 26(B), east of the Dalton Highway Management Corridor and established a Tier I registration hunt for residents only; a drawing permit hunt was also established for residents only; 3 permits were issued annually for bull muskoxen in Unit 26(B), east

of the Dalton Highway, and up to 5 muskoxen were authorized by the Alaska Board of Game; beginning in regulatory year 2005–2006, permits were not issued for the drawing and Tier I registration hunts, east of the Dalton Highway in Unit 26(B); this was in response to the sharp decline in muskoxen numbers following 2003; however, the Tier II subsistence hunt west of the Dalton Highway remained open until regulatory year 2006–2007, when no permits to hunt muskoxen were issued for any of the hunts;

(B) predation by brown bears was identified as a primary source of mortality on muskoxen and is an important cause of the failure to achieve the population and harvest objectives;

(i) during 2007–2011, brown bear predation was identified as the primary source of mortality; 62 percent of the documented total adult muskoxen mortality ($n=73$) was attributed to brown bear predation, which accounted for an average of 9 adult muskoxen deaths annually; during the same time period, 58 percent of documented calf mortality ($n=45$) was caused by brown bear predation; this resulted in an annual average of 5 calves known to be preyed on by brown bears; over the 5 years, a total of 74 calves were classified as “missing”; their fates were unknown and not included in the above calculations;

(ii) during 2007–2011, the habitat appeared capable of supporting a larger muskoxen population; captured muskoxen were generally in good condition, and birth rates were sufficient to provide for population growth, but growth was not realized because of poor survival; concentrations of some trace nutrients in muskox body tissues were believed to be suboptimal for survival; an imbalance of trace minerals (particularly low copper and selenium with elevated concentrations of zinc and iron) can negatively affect immune systems and make muskoxen more susceptible to diseases and potentially more vulnerable to predation; thus, it is possible that habitat limitations may have been obscured by high mortality due to predation, controlling predation will help answer this question;

(C) reducing predation can reasonably be expected to aid in achieving the objectives;

(i) during 2004–2011, the population remained relatively stable at around 200 muskoxen; evidence indicates that the number of yearlings being recruited annually approximately equaled the number of adult muskoxen dying annually; if survival rates of either adult muskoxen or calves increase, then the muskoxen population would be expected to increase; reducing predation on adults and calves should change survival rates of one or both; during 1987–1995, the annual rate of increase for the entire population was 7%; this time period should be representative of what population growth rate Unit 26(B) muskoxen could experience if bear predation is reduced and habitat is not limiting; therefore, in a best case scenario, it would take approximately 7 years for the muskoxen population to reach 300;

(ii) when the muskoxen population increases to 300 muskoxen ≥ 1 year old during April surveys a hunt will be established if a harvestable surplus is available;

(D) reducing predation is likely to be effective and feasible utilizing recognized and prudent active management techniques and based on scientific information; selectively removing brown bears to reduce predation is an experimental approach, based on the hypothesis that relatively few individual bears commonly kill muskoxen; brown bear radiotracking data collected during 1991–2007 indicated that several radio-collared adult males were responsible for multiple muskoxen predation events in early spring in a given year or over several years; this suggests that targeting individual bears should be effective, especially for reducing the incidence of multiple kills in spring; most of the predation was caused by male bears prior to the time when females emerge from dens;

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

(i) most of Unit 26(B) is state land; the land ownership pattern is 69 percent state, 29 percent federal, and 2 percent private; of the 29 percent federal lands, 12 percent is Bureau of Land Management, and these lands are available for bear control; total land available for bear control is 72–74 percent of the unit.

(ii) only two of the 8–15 total muskoxen groups in Unit 26(B) occasionally occur on federal lands within the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge;

(F) reducing predation is in the best interests of subsistence users because no harvest is currently taking place; an increase in the population that results in sustainable harvest will benefit all Alaska residents;

(4) permissible methods and means are as follows:

(A) hunting of brown bears by the public in Unit 26(B) during the term of the program may occur as provided in the hunting regulations set out elsewhere in this title; however, hunting will be restricted as necessary to maintain the current estimated population of 200–320.

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

(5) time frame is as follows:

(A) during March 15, 2012–June 30, 2018 the commissioner may authorize removal of bears in the Unit 26(B) Muskoxen Recovery 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 muskoxen and brown bear populations, and recommendations for changes, if necessary to achieve the objectives of the plan;

- (6) the program will be reviewed and modified or suspended if there is no evidence of improved survival or a detectable increase in the Unit 26(B) muskoxen population following 3 years of bear removal.

5 AAC 92.115. Control of predation by bears.

...

- (g) Poison [OR AERIAL SHOOTING] may not be used to take bears.

...

5 AAC 92.990 Definitions. Add a definition of hunting.

- (a) In addition to the definitions in AS 16.05.940, in 5 AAC 84-5 AAC 92, unless the context requires otherwise,

...

(80) "hunting" means taking of game under 5 AAC 85.

Note: implementation of this muskoxen recovery program will also necessitate a change to the Board of Game Bear Conservation, Harvest, and Management Policy (2011-186-BOG) dated June 30, 2016 to recognize that the Board may consider changes to regulations allowing aerial, land and shoot, or ground based lethal removal of any sex and age of bear by department staff using state owned, privately owned, or chartered equipment, including helicopters.



Alaska Trapper Questionnaire

Mail to: ADF&G, Information Service
333 Raspberry Road
Anchorage, AK 99518-1599

1001

Info for
Repos/ 40

1. How many years <u>total</u> have you trapped? <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>			5. If you did not trap this year, please indicate when you last trapped. I last trapped: <input type="checkbox"/> Last Year <input type="checkbox"/> Two years ago <input type="checkbox"/> More than two years ago		
2. How many years <u>in Alaska</u> ? <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>			6. If you did not trap, please indicate your status: <input type="checkbox"/> I intend to trap again, please send me questionnaires and the trapper report. <input type="checkbox"/> I no longer trap, but would like to receive the trapper report. <input type="checkbox"/> I no longer trap, please drop me from your list. <input type="checkbox"/> I am not a trapper, please drop me from your list.		
3. What is your age? <input type="text"/> <input type="text"/>					
4. Did you trap this season? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes If yes, continue the survey from question 8. <input type="checkbox"/> No If no, please answer question 5-7 to the right			7. If you did not trap this season, please indicate all reasons why. <input type="checkbox"/> Personal <input type="checkbox"/> Low fur prices <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> High fuel costs <input type="checkbox"/> Too few animals <input type="checkbox"/> Weather conditions		
8. Did you trap with a partner? Trapped alone <input type="checkbox"/> Occasionally took someone <input type="checkbox"/> Regularly trapped: with family member(s) <input type="checkbox"/> with partner(s) <input type="checkbox"/>					
9. If you <u>regularly</u> trapped with a partner or family member, please complete <u>only one</u> questionnaire for yourself and each person you listed here					
Age Years trapped? In Alaska? Friend Wife Son Daughter Father Mother Uncle Aunt Grandfather Brother/Sister Other					
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10. Did you ever take anyone under age 16 trapping with you this year? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No					

RC 53

What kind of transportation did you use:

11. to travel from your home to your main trapline? (check only one)

- ☐ Airplane ☐ ATV, 4-wheeler, etc ☐ Highway vehicle
☐ Dog team ☐ Snowmachine ☐ Walk/ski/snowshoe
☐ Boat

12. to run your main trapline most of the time? (check only one)

- ☐ Airplane ☐ ATV, 4-wheeler, etc ☐ Highway vehicle
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13. How many years have you trapped the same area?

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14. How many weeks did you trap this year?

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15. How many days/weeks did you check your traps?

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16. Please rate the conditions on your trapline?

- ☐ good ☐ fair ☐ poor

17. Did you sell or keep most furs?

- ☐ Sold most furs to fur buyer in Alaska
☐ Sold most furs to fur buyer outside Alaska
☐ Kept most furs
☐ Other

18. Did you change your effort from the last season you trapped?

- ☐ increased ☐ decreased ☐ no change

19. If you increased your effort, did the increase result in a higher catch?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

20. If you changed your effort did you (mark all that apply):

- ☐ Changed to a different species ☐ Increased the length of your trapline ☐ Increased the number of sets ☐ Increased the number of weeks
☐ Trapped in a new area ☐ Decreased the length of your trapline ☐ Decreased the number of sets ☐ Decreased the number of weeks

21. Please describe your trapline(s). Game Management Units (GMUs) are indicated by numbers from 1-26; larger GMUs are divided into subunits that are indicated by letters. Use the map to determine the GMU/Subunit.

	Length (miles)	Number of sets	GMU/ subunits	Drainages									
Example	<table border="1"><tr><td>5</td><td>6</td></tr></table>	5	6	<table border="1"><tr><td>1</td><td>3</td><td>4</td></tr></table>	1	3	4	<table border="1"><tr><td>2</td><td>0</td><td>A</td></tr></table>	2	0	A	Tanana River	
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22. Please write the number of furbearers you took on your traplines.

	Main	2nd	3rd	4th
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Beaver	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
Coyote	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
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Lynx	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
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Mink	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
Muskrat	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
Red Fox	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
Red Squirrel	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
River Otter	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
Wolf	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>
Wolverine	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>	<div><div></div><div></div><div></div></div>

23. Please write the number of pelts you took with each method.

[illegible]

24. Which of the following factors affected your trapping efforts this year? Mark all that apply.

☐ Trapping conditions ☐ Pre-season advertised prices ☐ Fuel prices
☐ Previous season prices ☐ Other trappers ☐ Regulation changes in your area

25. If you answered yes, please explain how your trapping effort was affected.

[illegible]

The Trapper Questionnaire and Report are relatively expensive to produce, in part because printing and mailing costs have increased considerably in recent years. However, access to the Internet and e-mail have also increased. Sending Trapper Questionnaires to trappers by e-mail and trappers reading the annual reports on ADF&G's website would help reduce costs.

26. Are you interested in receiving future Trapper Questionnaires by e-mail?

☐ Yes ☐ No

E-mail address:

[illegible]

27. Would you prefer to view future Trapper Questionnaire reports on-line using ADF&G's website rather than receiving a paper copy in the mail?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Do you have any comments or suggestions for ADF&G? ☐ Yes ☐ No

[illegible]

Thanks for participating in the Trapper Questionnaire Program. I greatly appreciate the time and effort you put into completing this survey. You are our best source of information on factors that affect trappers and furbearer harvest, and you are our only source of harvest information for furbearers that are not sealed. Your response will help us determine the status and value of each species. As always, your identity will be kept strictly confidential, and this information is not used for any purpose other than producing the Trapper Report. Thanks again for your help!

Sincerely,
Tom Schumacher
Tapper Questionnaire Coordinator