

RC 17

B.O.G Handout from Paxson Fish and Game Advisory RECEIVED

Our Advisory Committee would like to summarize our position on predator control and moose population objectives for Unit 13.

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We feel that the number moose and caribou available for hunters is extremely important, and the best way to achieve that is to insure the long term health of the eco-system. There are also social/economic considerations; to balance all of these factors is a formidable task.

Our concern with the present moose population objective is that it is at or above anything that has been achieved. We feel that the present objective gives very little leeway for several deep snow years, (2012 and very potentially 2013), or other natural limiting factors---such as inadequate browse in some areas. We would like to see a population objective 10% lower than the current. A population in the middle ground is easier to manage and is healthier than one hovering near the very top. (One needs to look at the very high pop. in the Delta Junction area---low recruitment and compare to the very high twinning rates in Unit 13 as a comparison.) The concern is if we should go past the carrying capacity of the range, it will take considerable time to bring it back to health. To achieve maximum sustained yield we should be just under the top capacity of the range for any environmental conditions that could occur.

At this time there are unknown factors that ADF&G may be able to get more data on. (on-going browse studies)

Predator control is one of the factors we would like to address. The current I.M program is an excellent tool that the Department has used to good advantage. We have utilized this valuable tool and now we need to maintain it. Wolf numbers were brought down to bring up the moose population and now they can also be used to reduce it in a very balanced fashion. Wolves hunt unit wide the year around and target a variety of the ungulate population. A healthy predator number also contributes to the health of the eco-system as a whole. Wolves prey on many things besides moose. Our position is that a wolf population objective in the 220 range for unit 13 (spring) is what is necessary at this time to achieve the proper balance. That said---the I.M. program needs to be able to trigger as necessary in the event of unforeseen circumstances. (weather, excessive hunt pressure, etc.)

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Another issue to bear in mind is hunt quality. The present number of hunters---triggered mostly by 10,000 caribou permits, is also very close to the capacity in a Unit with very few roads and a limited trail system. The Denali Highway and the Richardson are the only roads in the area. There are no side roads. Trails are limited and trail access is limited in some areas due to motorized restrictions. Visitor services are minimal in most of the unit. Federal subsistence hunts are also on-going in this area and there may be some competition between hunts. The area lodges tell us that they like the present numbers of hunters, but more might be a problem.

A hunter population in the middle ground will maximize the harvest potential and hunt quality. A moose population in the middle ground will increase calf recruitment and health, in addition to giving the necessary leeway in the face of unknown and undetermined natural effects.

Thank you, Paxson Fish and Game Advisory.

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