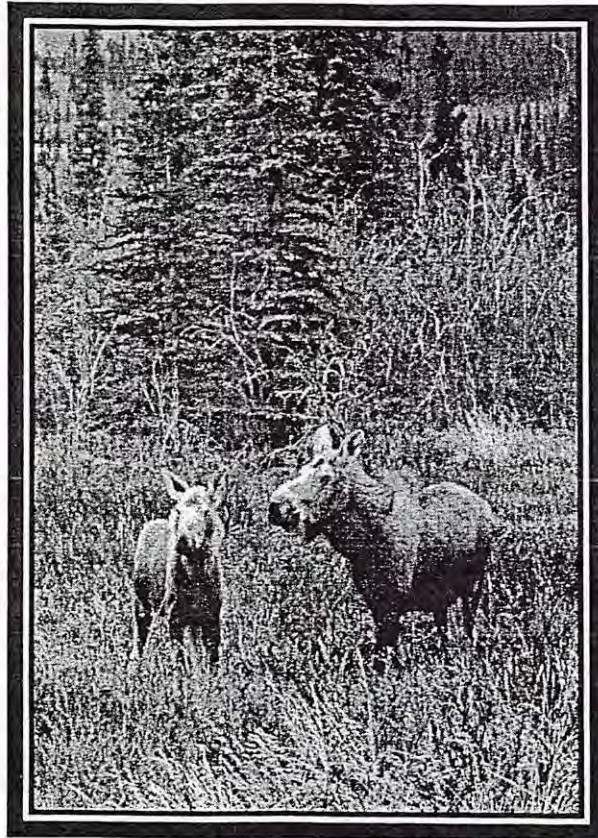


RC 039

# KOYUKUK RIVER MOOSE MANAGEMENT PLAN 2000-2005

*Unit 24 and the northern portion of Unit 21D*

Fm Vityg, ~~A.~~  
Umphenou R  
Prop. 151  
168  
241



*Photo by Larry B Jennings*

*Alaska Department of Fish and Game  
Division of Wildlife Conservation*

*In cooperation with the  
Koyukuk River Moose Hunters' Working Group*



*MARCH 2001*

**STATE OF ALASKA**  
*Tony Knowles, Governor*

**DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME**  
*Frank Rue, Commissioner*

**DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION**  
*Wayne L Regelin, Director*

**Free copies of this report and other Division of Wildlife Conservation publications are available to the public. Please direct requests to:**

**Laura A McCarthy**  
**Publications Technician**  
**ADF&G, Wildlife Conservation**  
**1300 College Road**  
**Fairbanks, AK 99701-1599**  
**(907) 459-7241**

**The Alaska Department of Fish and Game administers all programs and activities free from discrimination based on race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, marital status, pregnancy, parenthood, or disability. The department administers all programs and activities in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.**

**If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility, or if you desire further information please write to ADF&G, PO Box 25526, Juneau, AK 99802-5526; US Fish and Wildlife Service, 4040 N Fairfield Drive, Suite 300, Arlington, VA 22203 or OEO, US Department of the Interior, Washington DC 20240.**

**For information on alternative formats for this and other department publications, please contact the department ADA Coordinator at (voice) 907-465-4120, (TDD) 907-465-3646, or (FAX) 907-465-2440.**

# STATE OF ALASKA

## DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME

### DIVISION OF WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

TONY KNOWLES, GOVERNOR

1300 COLLEGE RD.  
FAIRBANKS, AK 99701  
PHONE: (907) 459-7213  
FAX: (907) 452-6410

May 25, 2001

Greetings members of the Koyukuk River Moose Hunters' Working Group and others who participated in the Koyukuk River moose management plan process. We are happy to present to you a copy of the final Koyukuk River Moose Management Plan along with copies of the endorsements of the plan by the Alaska Board of Game and the Federal Subsistence Board. *Congratulations to all of you on a job well done!*

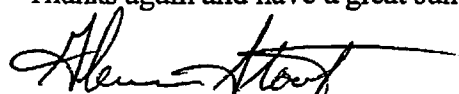
As we all know, even with a sound management plan in place it will be very important to continue closely monitoring the moose population and harvest levels to ensure we meet the overall mission of the plan: conservation of the moose resource. In particular, we will need to monitor participation in the subsistence registration hunt in the Koyukuk Controlled Use Area and possible increases in hunting pressure in northern Unit 24. Hopefully, weather conditions next winter will allow the Department to complete moose surveys in the lower Koyukuk River area and those surveys will indicate the moose population level has stabilized. On the positive side of the matter, Glenn has confirmed a harvest of at least 130 wolves this winter in Unit 21D and this should have a significant affect on reducing moose predation.


If there is a need, we intend to have another Koyukuk River moose management meeting next winter to further evaluate the status of the moose population and how the plan and new regulations are working. We will contact Working Group members to discuss the need and see who is able to participate. This winter the Koyukuk River Advisory Committee designated Jack Wholecheese to replace Rudy Sommer on the Working Group. Most recently Orville Huntington notified us that he would no longer be able to serve on the Working Group.

The only other major action pending that might affect Koyukuk moose management is the on-going litigation against the Department and Board of Game by the Koyukuk River Moose Co-Management Team. We expect a court decision in the near future and will inform you if the decision has a significant affect on the current management program.

Please keep your advisory committee, regional council and village council informed about the state and federal board's endorsement of the plan and other Koyukuk River moose management issues.

Thanks again and have a great summer,

  
Glenn Stout, Galena Area Biologist

  
Randy Rogers, Wildlife Planner

STATE OF ALASKA

TONY KNOWLES, GOVERNOR

DEPARTMENT OF FISH AND GAME  
BOARD OF GAMEP.O. BOX 25526  
JUNEAU, ALASKA 99802-5526  
PHONE: (907) 465-4110  
FAX: (907) 465-6094

May 2, 2001

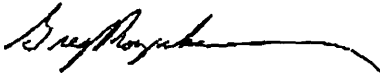
Subject: Board of Game Endorsement of the Koyukuk Moose Management Plan

The Board of Game reviewed the Koyukuk River Moose Management Plan at its spring 2001 meeting in Anchorage and voted unanimously to support the process and endorse the plan. The board would like to commend the members and staff that participated in the plan for a job well done. It is the involvement of public participants in a process such as this that makes the board work easier when dealing with contentious issues.

The board supports the concept of having affected user groups work together on a suitable compromise that recognizes everyone's concerns. When dealing with issues that affect many diverse user groups, principles, and ideals, the board recognizes that not all parties are completely satisfied, and that compromise is necessary for resolution.

On behalf of the Board of Game, I want to compliment the members of the Koyukuk River Moose Management Plan for their hard work on this difficult issue. The Board of Game is pleased to provide its support and encourages the group to continue the work.

Sincerely,

Greg Roczicka  
Chairman, Board of Game

RESOLUTION: 01-1  
FEDERAL SUBSISTENCE BOARD  
DATED MAY 10, 2001

RESOLUTION TO ENDORSE THE KOYUKUK RIVER MOOSE MANAGEMENT PLAN AS  
RECOMMENDED BY THE WESTERN INTERIOR REGIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL

WHEREAS: the planning process used by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game with Koyukuk River Moose Hunters' Working Group (Working Group) involved a wide range of public and agency interests in formulating a comprehensive management plan for the moose population within the Koyukuk River basin which includes all of Unit 24 and the northern half of Unit 21(D);

WHEREAS: the Federal Subsistence Board understands the plan was developed through the cooperative efforts of the Working Group, the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, urban and rural local fish and game advisory committees, the Western Interior Regional Advisory Council, and other agencies;

WHEREAS: the Federal Subsistence Board recognizes that the Western Interior Regional Advisory Council unanimously supports the plan and recommends adoption of the plan;

WHEREAS: the Federal Subsistence Board recognizes the recommendations in the Plan as a comprehensive compromise package and acknowledges that Working Group members honored the values of other members in reaching agreement;

WHEREAS: the Federal Subsistence Board understands that the Plan includes implementation of actions that are within and outside the Board's jurisdiction and is yet within the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding with the State and the Federal Subsistence Board;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Federal Subsistence Board:

1. Endorses the mission statement of the plan to: "Protect, maintain, and enhance Koyukuk River drainage moose populations and habitats in concert with other components of the ecosystem and provide for fair and equitable human uses of the moose resource."
2. Understands and supports the concept of maintaining the integrity of the compromises embodied in the Plan and that all essential elements of the plan must be fully implemented in a timely fashion;
3. Encourages members of the Working Group, the Western Interior Regional Advisory Council, and the public at large to, carefully monitor implementation of the plan and the status of the Koyukuk River drainage moose populations to ensure the mission and goals expressed in the plan are adhered to, and should the need arise, work cooperatively to develop recommendations or proposals for changes to the plan and/or state and federal regulations.

Signed:



---

Mitch D., Chairman



## CONTENTS

MISSION STATEMENT .....	II
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	III
INTRODUCTION .....	1
OVERVIEW .....	1
PLANNING PROCESS .....	2
ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN.....	5
BACKGROUND INFORMATION .....	6
HABITAT .....	6
PREDATION .....	6
MOOSE POPULATION STATUS .....	7
MOOSE HARVEST.....	8
COMMERCIAL ACTIVITIES.....	10
MANAGEMENT CONSIDERATIONS .....	11
SUBSISTENCE MANAGEMENT .....	11
<i>Interactions of State and Federal Law</i> .....	11
<i>Board of Game Allocation Procedures</i> .....	12
PREDATOR CONTROL .....	13
<i>State Intensive Management Requirements</i> .....	13
<i>Federal and State Constraints</i> .....	14
ISSUES OF CONCERN IDENTIFIED BY THE WORKING GROUP .....	14
MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS .....	15
MANAGEMENT ZONES.....	16
GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND MANAGEMENT ACTIONS .....	18
POPULATION AND HARVEST OBJECTIVES AND HARVEST RATES FOR THE KOYUKUK CUA...32	32
<i>Intensive Management Population and Harvest Objectives</i> .....	32
<i>Harvest Rates for the Koyukuk CUA</i> .....	32
BIOLOGICAL DECISION-MAKING FACTORS.....	33
<i>Population Monitoring and Estimation</i> .....	33
<i>Harvest Monitoring</i> .....	34
<i>Predation</i> .....	35
<i>Habitat Management</i> .....	35
<i>Weather</i> .....	36
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	36
Figure 1 Koyukuk River basin region.....	1
Figure 2. Permits issued and moose harvested, Ella's Cabin checkstation, 1987–2000 .....	9
Figure 3 Unit 21D moose harvest, 1988–1999 .....	10
Figure 4 Unit 24 moose harvest, 1988–1999 .....	10
Figure 5 Number of moose hunters and hunters using commercial services in Units 21D and 24, 1993–1999.....	11
Figure 6 Units 21D and 24 management zones developed by the Koyukuk River Moose Hunter's Working Group.....	16
Table 1 Three Day Slough Trend Count Area aerial moose composition counts.....	8

**MISSION STATEMENT**

*Protect, maintain, and enhance Koyukuk River drainage moose populations and habitats in concert with other components of the ecosystem and provide for fair and equitable human uses of the moose resource.*

**“All of us here are from across the state with different life styles but we are here for the same reason - so we can continue to hunt and eat moose meat. Even if we disagree on some things we have to compromise and save the moose for future generations.”**

**- Pollock Simon, Allakaket**

**“I don’t claim to represent any group other than just the typical Alaska family that wants to get out and pursue game. I grew up in Idaho and my family has always hunted and fished – we never bought meat at the supermarket. I have a small sense of how important game is for those living on the river. I hope through all of this I can learn from the group and keep your passion in mind. And I hope you can learn from my passion and me. I have hunted the Koyukuk for 10 years or so, and I have a real desire to know that my boys can go up there and hunt later in life.”**

**- Layne Channer, Wasilla**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Koyukuk River Moose Management Plan (KRMMP) was developed through the cooperative efforts of the the Koyukuk River Moose Hunters' Working Group (KMWG or "Working Group"), Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G or "Department"), and other agencies. The KMWG is a citizen-based advisory body composed primarily of representatives from state Fish and Game advisory committees. The group also includes representatives from the federal Western Interior Regional Advisory Council and commercial operators. Agency personnel have been involved in the planning process as technical advisors. The recommendations of the Working Group were developed through a consensus decision-making process. The process was designed to develop recommendations in time for the March 2000 meeting of the Alaska Board of Game.

At the March 2000 meeting, the Board of Game adopted regulatory proposals that resulted from the planning effort with a few minor modifications. Later that spring the Federal Subsistence Board adopted several proposals to align federal regulations with those recently adopted by the state. The draft plan remained open for public comment through the fall 2000 hunting season. This provided an opportunity to evaluate how the new regulations were working before the draft plan was submitted to the Board of Game for final approval.

ADF&G's Division of Wildlife Conservation initiated the planning process in response to concerns about increasing numbers of hunters and harvest levels and potential affects on moose populations, primarily in the lower section of the Koyukuk River. In 1999, 731 hunters were checked at the Ella's Cabin checkstation and reported a harvest of 367 moose. This compares to 299 hunters harvesting 181 moose 11 years earlier in 1988. In addition to human harvest pressures, it appears that predators are having a significant influence. A survey conducted in spring 1999 indicated an approximate 17% increase in wolf populations over the 1994 estimate. Moose surveys conducted in fall 1999 indicated that moose populations have peaked and have possibly declined by 10% or more.

The KRMMP identifies separate management zones for the upper and lower Koyukuk drainage. These zones are based on differences in moose habitat, populations, and hunting pressure. Using numbers of hunters that participated in the hunt in 1998, the plan recommends establishing a baseline maximum number of hunters in the lower river. This recommendation is based on the consensus of Working Group members on the need to be cautious biologically, and to retain the quality of the hunting experience. The plan identifies the need to monitor harvest levels in the upper Koyukuk River and middle Yukon River area to be sure excess harvest does not develop from displacement of hunters from within the Koyukuk Controlled Use Area (CUA) or other reasons.

As a result of the planning effort, moose hunting regulations in the lower river within the Koyukuk CUA have been significantly changed. The general registration hunt on the lower Koyukuk River has been changed to a drawing hunt with separate resident and nonresident drawing pools. Separate resident and nonresident drawing hunts help to retain opportunity for nonresidents and commercial guides, but at a much lower level than has occurred in recent years. If resident demand continues to increase however, nonresident opportunity will have to be further reduced or eliminated. Because the plan is based on Alaska subsistence laws in



which all Alaska residents are potentially qualified as subsistence hunters, there is potential for subsistence use to increase significantly. If this happens, further restrictive measures would likely be necessary.

As the need to stabilize moose populations in the Koyukuk has become evident and recommendations have been made to reduce human harvest levels, the KMWG strengthened its recommendations regarding control of predation. Initially the group focused on increasing opportunities to harvest predators. The group then agreed to recommend predator control, including aerial wolf hunting, and to urge preparation of an Intensive Management Plan.

The KRMMP includes recommendations that involve other agencies such as the US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) or that may require legislative action. For example, the recommendation to revise the definition of wanton waste to allow for successful enforcement of cases where meat is removed from the field but is not kept in a condition suitable for human consumption likely requires legislation. Another recommendation requires hunters to hire guides and transporters that are properly registered with the state. The plan urges cooperation with FWS in matters such as enforcement of illegal guiding and transporting and habitat enhancement.

The KMWG met in December 2000 to review how the regulation changes worked during the fall 2000 hunting season and consider public comments on the draft plan. Members of the Working Group agreed that the fall 2000 season was greatly improved and that both local and nonlocal hunters enjoyed a much higher quality hunt than in the past several years. The group did not recommend any significant changes to the draft plan. The KMWG did agree to recommend that the group continue to meet annually, or more often if needed, to monitor implementation of the plan and possible changes in moose population levels or hunter numbers.

While the KMWG experienced disagreements along the way, members achieved consensus on most issues and exercised a great deal of cooperation and compromise. The Working Group is to be commended for their hard work and dedication to protect the moose resources of the Koyukuk drainage. The recommendations included in the KRMMP are designed to maintain opportunities and balance the interests of all users within sustained yield and the requirements of state and federal law.

## INTRODUCTION

### OVERVIEW

The Koyukuk River Moose Management Plan (KRMMP) addresses management of moose within the Koyukuk River basin, an area encompassing over 31,000 mi<sup>2</sup> of Interior Alaska. The planning area includes all of Unit 24 and the northern half of Unit 21D. A number of communities lie within the Koyukuk drainage including Wiseman, Bettles, Evansville, Allakaket, Alatna, Hughes, Huslia, and finally Koyukuk, which is located at the mouth of the Koyukuk River on the Yukon River (Fig 1). For these villages and also the Yukon River villages of Nulato, Galena, and Kaltag, moose along the Koyukuk are an important subsistence resource. Many Alaskan residents from outside the immediate area also hunt Koyukuk River moose, as do residents of other states and countries. Several commercial big game guiding and transporting companies operate in the Koyukuk area.

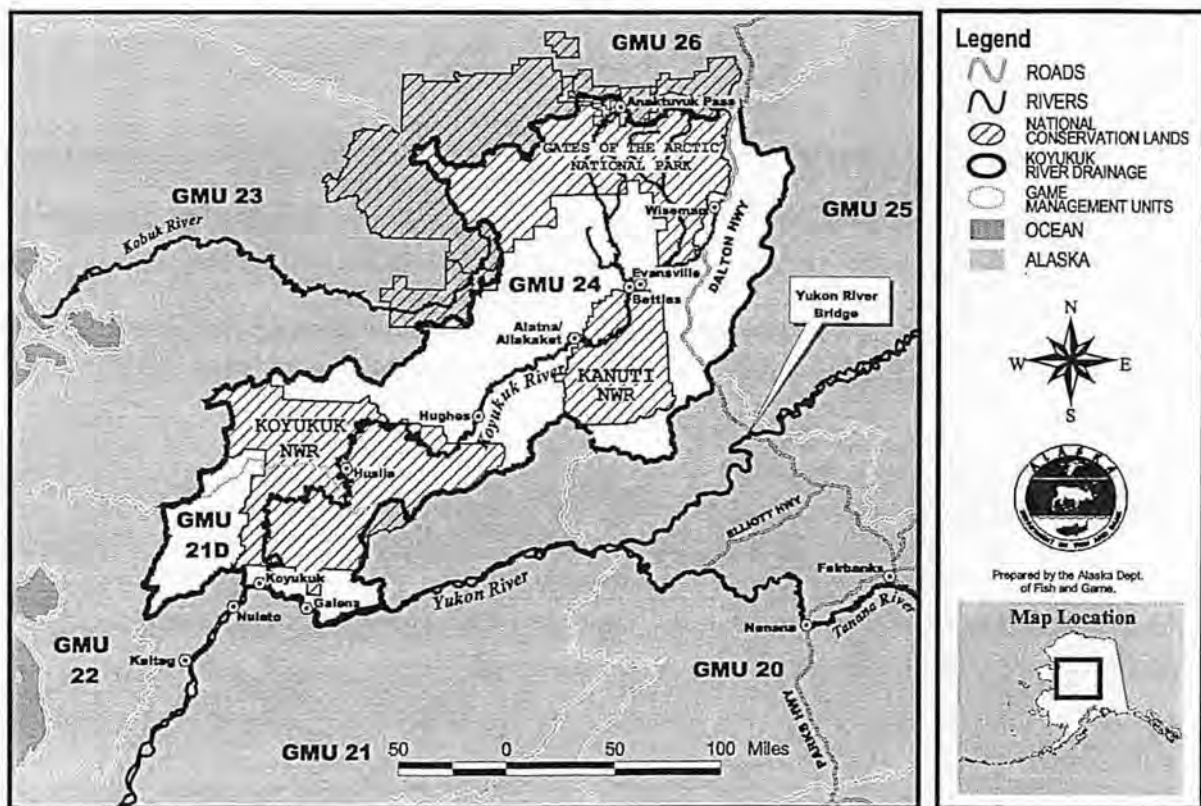


Figure 1 Koyukuk River basin region

Within the Koyukuk River drainage, land is predominately in federal ownership, although there are also state and private lands. The majority of private lands consist of Native allotments and lands owned by Doyon Regional Native Corporation, Gana-A' Yoo, Ltd., Evansville, Inc., and K'oyitl'ots'ina, Ltd. Village Native Corporations. There are three federal Conservation System Units within the Koyukuk drainage including the Koyukuk National Wildlife Refuge, Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge, and Gates of the Arctic National Park and Preserve (Fig 1). Remaining federal lands, including the Dalton Highway and trans-Alaska