

PROPOSAL 116

5 AAC 92.126. Non-Intensive Management Predator Control Plans.

Implement a non-intensive management predator control plan within the Tok Management Area to benefit Dall sheep as follows:

Implement a non-intensive management predator control plan within the Tok Management Area (TMA) via aerial coyote and wolf control. Aerial coyote and wolf shooting would be allowed via private fixed wing aircraft and retrieval of coyotes and wolves would be allowed via private rotorcraft. In addition, the Department could remove coyotes and wolves using helicopters if necessary to supplement private efforts to meet removal objectives.

Our goal for predator control is to help the sheep population recover to historic averages more quickly than if intervention did not occur. We propose predator control be conducted until the sheep population recovers to the long-term (2006–2019) averages. Alternatively, we propose predator control cease following five years if there are no signs that the control is positively impacting population growth.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Tok Management Area (TMA) sheep population, like many sheep populations throughout Alaska, is currently at a historic low. The total number of sheep observed by the department during their 2022 survey within the TMA survey area was 457, which is 60% fewer than the 2006–2019 average of 1145 sheep. Furthermore, the number of sheep observed in 2022 was 45% fewer than the previous low number of sheep observed in 2014, which followed the very late spring in 2013. The current population decline resulted in a historic low number of draw sheep permits awarded during fall 2022 and fall 2023. Prior to these years, the lowest number of permits awarded was 60, while only ten permits were issued annually during 2022 and 2023.

Although we recognize that weather was likely the primary contributing factor to the current decline, predation is likely an additional contributing factor. According to department sheep research conducted in Unit 20A during the early 2000s, coyotes are one of the primary predators of lambs, while wolf predation also occurs albeit at a lower level. We believe managing predation could help the TMA sheep population recover.

PROPOSED BY: Upper Tanana/Fortymile Fish and Game Advisory Committee (EG-F23-224)
