

PROPOSAL 186

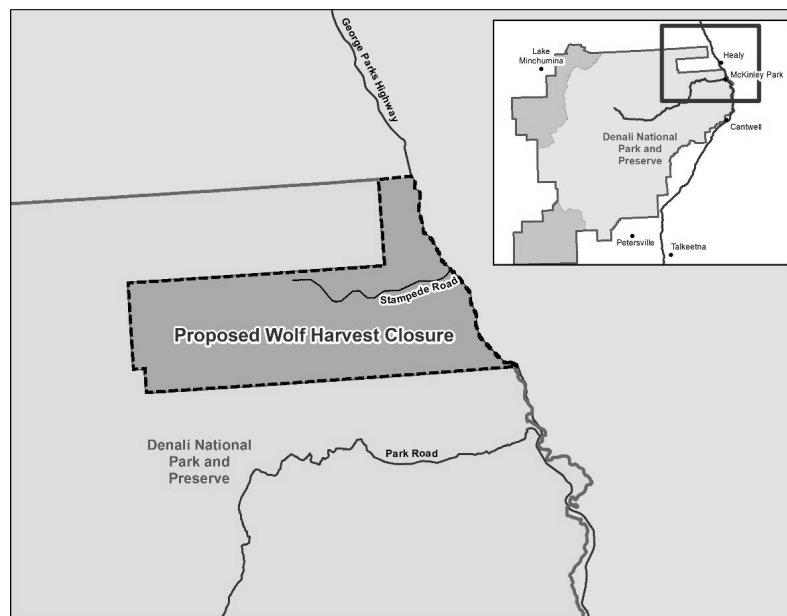
5 AAC 92.510. Areas closed to hunting.

5 AAC 92.550. Areas closed to trapping.

Close a portion of Unit 20C to wolf hunting and trapping as follows:

PROPOSAL: 5 AAC 92.510. Areas closed to hunting; and 5 AAC 92.550. Areas closed to trapping.
Restore prohibition on the harvest of wolves in a portion of Unit 20C as follows:

Within Unit 20C; those portions of Uniform Coding Unit (UCU) 0607, 0605, and 0502 west of George Parks Highway and bounded by Denali National Park on three sides, is closed to the taking of wolves by hunting and by trapping.



What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?

ISSUE

In Alaska, wolves are among the most desired species for viewing (Shea & Tankersley 1991), and state wildlife management includes mandates to provide for multiple uses, including non- consumptive uses such as wildlife viewing (Alaska Department of Fish and Game 2006).

Wildlife viewing also brings an important socioeconomic benefit to the state of Alaska. Wildlife viewing activities in Alaska supported over \$2.7 billion dollars in economic activity in 2011 and 40% of visitors to Alaska reported hoping to view wild wolves during their visit (ECONorthwest 2014).

More than anywhere else in Alaska, wolves in the eastern region of Denali National Park (Denali) provide significant wolf viewing opportunities as visitors travel along the Park Road. Denali is recognized as one of the best places in the world for people to see wolves in the wild and several thousand park visitors may see wolves in a given year. In addition, viewing large carnivores, particularly wolves and grizzly bears, is a main indicator of a satisfying visitor experience in Denali National Park (Manning & Hallo 2010).

Wolf viewing opportunities in Denali are primarily provided by one to three packs of wolves that center their activity near the Denali Park Road during the summer months. Analysis of 14 years of data from the National Park Service (NPS) on wolves equipped with GPS radio collars shows that the same wolf packs that provide the majority of wolf sightings during the visitor season also show a pattern of use of areas just outside of the boundary of the park during the winter and spring. Harvest of wolves in this area has the potential to decrease wolf numbers, alter wolf behavior, and decrease opportunities for wolf viewing by park visitors. While wolf harvest just outside the northeastern boundary of the park may have little effect on regional wolf populations, it can have significant effects on wolf packs whose territories intersect the Park Road and on the experience of Denali's visitors.

Prior to the pandemic, over 400,000 people visited Denali annually (Fix, Ackerman & Fay 2012). The number of active trappers in the Stampede Corridor ranged from one to three in any given year (Alaska Department of Fish and Game 2013). The NPS recognizes the impact of the closure to the lifestyle and livelihood of these trappers may represent a significant trade-off.

WHAT SOLUTION DO YOU RECOMMEND?

Within Game Management Unit 20C; those portions of Uniform Coding Unit (UCU) 0607, 0605, and 0502 west of George Parks Highway and bounded by Denali National Park on three sides, is closed to the taking of wolves by hunting and trapping.

The proposed closure represents the most effective closure in terms of limiting harvest of wolves that primarily reside within the boundaries of the park and provide the majority of wolf sightings. Additionally, the extent of the closure will facilitate interpretation of the effects of the closure on wolf sightings.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF NOTHING IS DONE?

Wolves from the most commonly viewed packs will continue to be trapped and hunted just outside of park boundaries, in places as close as four miles from the park road. During periods when the harvest closure was in place, the probability of seeing a wolf from the Park Road was as high as 45%. Following the elimination of the harvest closure (2011 to 2019 - pre pandemic) the probability of seeing a park wolf ranged from 21% to 1%.

WILL THE QUALITY OF THE RESOURCE HARVESTED OR THE PRODUCTS PRODUCED BE IMPROVED?

This proposal would help to facilitate opportunities for Alaskans and others to see wolves along the Denali Park Road. It would have a small effect on the number of wolves harvested in the entirety of Unit 20C.

WHO IS LIKELY TO BENEFIT?

- Visitors who come to Alaska to see a diversity of wildlife (~ 400,000 annually).
- Tour operators and the Alaska tourism industry that promote and provide wildlife viewing tour products.

WHO IS LIKELY TO SUFFER?

Trappers and hunters who wish to harvest wolves in the area that we are proposing to close within the Stampede Corridor. This proposed change may impact the lifestyle or livelihood of trappers who use the area.

OTHER SOLUTIONS CONSIDERED?

Previous proposals in 2017 and 2020 considered a reduced spatial extent and duration for a wolf harvest closure in the area.

References

Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Alaska Department of Fish and Game Hunting and Trapping data. Fairbanks, AK; 2013

ECONorthwest 2014. The Economic Importance of Alaska's Wildlife in 2011: Summary Report, Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

Fix, P. J., Andrew Ackerman and Ginny Fay, 2013, 2011 Denali National Park and Preserve Visit Characteristics. Natural Resource Technical Report NPS/AKR/NRTR—2013/669. National Park Service, Fort Collins, Colorado.

Manning, R. E., and J. C. Hallo. 2010. In Focus: Denali Park Road: The Denali Park Road experience: Indicators and standards of quality. Park Science 27(2):33–41.

Shea, L., & N. Tankersley. (1991). Wildlife watching and Alaska's tourism potential. Alaska's Wildlife. Alaska Department of Fish & Game. Juneau,23(2).

PROPOSED BY: Denali National Park and Preserve

(HQ-F23-002)
