

PROPOSAL 51

5 AAC 84.270. Furbearer trapping

Extend the wolf trapping season to 45 days on Prince of Wales Island, Unit 2 as follows:

What solution do you recommend? In other words, if the board adopted your solution, what would the new regulation say?

Proposal: Wolf trapping season length of 45 days.

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

The Sitka Blacktail deer population on Prince of Wales Island (PoW) crashed in 2017, 2018 & 2019. This was due to increasingly degraded forest habitat related to past timber harvest and the increase in the wolf population from 2015-2019. The broad loss of Old Growth forest habitat in central and north PoW has had a notable reduction on the ability of the landscape to produce and support deer. The value of old growth forest habitat to a healthy deer population can not be overstated. This loss of quality habitat and the consequential increase in the number one predator of deer (wolves) has significantly depleted the PoW deer population.

Between 1985 and 2001 the wolf harvest on PoW ranged from 18-132 wolves and the season length was Dec. 1-March 31 with no closures and no limit.

In 1993, the 1st petition to list the Alexander Archipelago wolves under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) was filed and Alaska Dept. of Fish & Game (ADF&G) defeated it.

In 2011, a 2nd petition was filed and ADFG countered with a wolf management change in 2015 to avoid the listing.

In 2015, wolves on PoW were managed under a quota system resulting in the following harvest:

2015: 7 total wolves harvested
2016: 30 total wolves harvested
2017: 62 total wolves harvested
2018: 46 total wolves harvested

The 2018 deer season was dramatic for many of us. We saw more wolf scat with deer bones/hair in it than we saw deer. Nearly every mountain, road, beach, etc. had wolf scat on it and our deer were very hard to find.

In 2019, ADF&G changed wolf management to its current format of a variable season length which resulted in the harvest of 164 wolves. This increase in wolf harvest triggered the 3rd petition to list the Alexander Archipelago wolves under the ESA in July of 2020.

With a lot of effort, ADF&G defeated the petition again and has continued to manage wolves under its current format of a tight season length to control the take.

Six years ago, the wolf trapping season start date was moved from December 1st to Nov. 15th and there have been conflicts:

1) The deer are still rutting and the deer bycatch in snares is a problem.

- 2) Many black bear are still out and the black bear bycatch in snares is a problem as well as bears destroying traps/snares.
- 3) There are lots of hunters in the field in November and many have come across wolves caught in traps/snares and have taken/shot the wolves and not reported them.
- 4) ADF&G is still conducting their wolf hair board studies until Dec. 5 and the extra human presence in the field negatively affects the wolf trappers.
- 5) There are still waterfowl hunters in the field at this time and the tide flats see more human pressure also influencing the wolves and negatively affecting the trappers and potentially, dogs.
- 6) November weather/winds are generally worse than December and also negatively affects the trappers. Last year the beach trappers lost at least five days of the season due to high winds.

Extending the wolf trapping season to 45 days would improve the safety, decrease some of the above conflicts, allow trappers the flexibility to choose their weather windows of checking traps instead of the current derby style season, gain more participation from younger/newer trappers and make trapping more enjoyable.

Did you develop your proposal in coordination with others, or with your local fish and game advisory committee?

PROPOSED BY: Craig Fish and Game Advisory Committee

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