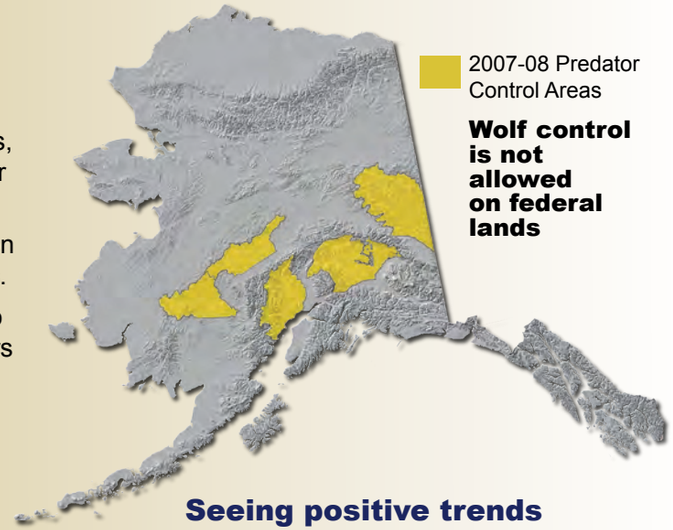
Some things to consider about predator control

- Wolves and bears are skilled predators, and may kill up to 80% of the moose or caribou that die each year.
- Predator control programs are active on less than 10% of the state's land mass.
- Predator control **is** a regulated effort to reduce the number of wolves and bears in an effort to increase the number of moose or caribou.
- Predator control is not hunting. Only authorized individuals may participate, and fair chase ethics do not apply.
- There is no indication that wolf or bear control programs have had a permanent adverse affect on either local or statewide wolf or bear populations.
- ADF&G will continue to closely monitor the effectiveness of wolf and bear control as there is still much to learn.



Seeing positive trends

Areas with active predator control in 2007-08 include the upper Susitna, Talkeetna, Nelchina and Copper Basins; the McGrath area; the upper Yukon and Tanana Basins; and part of Cook Inlet.

Board of Game and the public process

Alaska's hunting and trapping regulations are made by seven people appointed by the governor and approved by the legislature. This independent group is the Alaska Board of Game.

The Board of Game listens to all concerned members of the public, along with local Advisory Committees, and ADF&G biologists, in their effort to pass regulations that respond to people's concerns, while also considering the need for long term conservation and sustainable harvest of game populations.

It is the Board of Game, under the Intensive Management Law, that directs ADF&G to undertake predator control.

Continuing controversy

There will always be controversy surrounding predator control. Some people oppose the manipulation of wildlife populations for human benefit, while others demand management practices that allow hunters to harvest a high percentage of wildlife annually.

Different strategies

It is not expected that one single management approach will satisfy everyone. Therefore, the Board of Game directs ADF&G to use different management strategies in different parts of the state to provide for different values and demands.

Long-term wildlife health

ADF&G is committed to maintaining healthy caribou and moose populations *and* healthy wolf and bear populations. We will continue to manage Alaska's wildlife populations with the health of all wildlife, sustainable harvests, and conservation as our guiding principles.

Want to know more?

Visit www.wildlife.alaska.gov
Click on the 'Management/Research' section, and scroll down to the link on 'Wolf Control in Alaska.'

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game printed this publication in December 2007 at a cost of $x.xx per unit, to inform the public about predator management.

Understanding
Intensive Management
and
Predator Control in Alaska

From the
Division of Wildlife Conservation
of the
Alaska Department of Fish & Game

When moose or caribou populations drop below a certain number, the intensive management law goes into effect.

First...

ADF&G biologists carefully study all the possible causes of declining moose or caribou numbers. They look at the quality of habitat, the health and reproductive rate of the herd, harvest levels by humans, and the impact of predators. They then undertake the action(s) that will most likely increase moose or caribou numbers.

Their options include:

• Improving habitat

In some cases habitat improvement has involved controlled fire or vegetation crushing to generate new plant growth. However, reduced habitat quality or inadequate nutrition are not typically causes of moose or caribou population declines in Alaska.

• Reducing hunting

If hunting pressure is thought to be the cause of the decline, wildlife managers may reduce the season or impose strict harvest quotas. Some communities with declining moose populations have even voluntarily opted for moose hunting moratoriums.

• Easing predator trapping/ hunting regs

Where excess pressure from predators—typically wolves or bears—is pushing the decline of moose or caribou populations, managers may increase the quota or relax restrictions on how people may hunt or trap predators.

Then...

If other methods are inadequate to reverse declining moose or caribou

populations, and studies indicate significant predation from bears or wolves,

the Board of Game may direct ADF&G to undertake predator control.

Non-lethal methods tried

Various forms of non-lethal predator control have been tried in Alaska, including sterilization and relocation of wolves; offering predators alternative food sources during calving; and capturing and relocating bears. While these techniques have had moderate success, they are difficult, labor-intensive, expensive, and take biologists away from other important work.

Reduce but don't eliminate predators

Lethal predator control involves killing wolves, and sometimes bears. The intent is to reduce their numbers enough to allow moose or caribou populations to increase—but not to completely eliminate predators. The long-term goal is *increased* numbers of moose or caribou, *increased* harvest by humans, and *viable* populations of wolves and bears.

In order for predator control to succeed...

- predation must be a major reason for the decline of the moose or caribou population;
- it must cover a large enough area;
- it must be continued long enough to allow for several years of moose and caribou calf survival;
- it must cover all species of predators affecting the moose or caribou population;
- harvest by humans must be reduced or eliminated; *and*
- there must be adequate habitat to support an expanding moose or caribou population.

The long-term goal of predator control is to increase numbers of moose or caribou to allow for increased harvest by humans, while maintaining healthy and sustainable

Results suggest the beginning of increased moose calf survival and moose population growth:

- In the Upper Susitna, Talkeetna, Nelchina and Copper Basins (GMUs 13A, 13B, 13C and 13E): As of 2007, moose numbers are up 14% since 2000 (about 2% per year within long-term trend count areas); moose calf numbers increased 110%; yearling bulls increased 176% and total bulls increased 45%.

- In McGrath (GMU 19A): As of spring 2007, Holitna and Hoholitna River drainage moose surveys indicate population growth, there's a 64% twinning rate and a ratio of 62 calves to 100 cows and 26 bulls to 100 cows.

- Moose density estimates south of the Kuskokwim River were 0.19 moose/square mile in fall 2004 and increased to 0.38 moose/square mile in spring of 2006.

- In GMU 19D near McGrath aerial surveys show increased moose calf survival in the years since predator removal began in 2002.

- In the 528 square mile micromanagement area surrounding McGrath, moose population has increased from 524 animals in 2001 to 691 animals in 2006, about a 30% increase.

A little history about Alaska's Intensive Management Law

Harvesting wild game is extremely important to many Alaskans. Participating in the hunt, helping with butchering, and sharing the bounty of economical, wild-grown meat are long-standing traditions.

The Alaska Legislature recognized the importance of wild game meat to Alaskans when it passed the **Intensive Management Law in 1994**.

This law requires the **Board of Game** to identify moose and caribou populations that are especially important food sources for Alaskans—and to insure that these populations remain large enough to allow for adequate and sustained harvest.

If the moose or caribou populations drop below what the Board of Game determines is needed for continued harvests by people, they direct the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) to undertake **intensive management** of that population.