

Intensive management of wolves, bears and ungulates in Alaska



Kim Titus
Alaska Department of Fish and Game



Outline

- *Recent history*
- *Statutes, regulations and policies for increasing ungulates*
 - *Statute = Alaska Legislature*
 - *Regulation = Board of Game*
 - *Policy = "administration"*
- *State subsistence law*
- *Intensive management law*
- *Program goals*
- *Conclusions*

Key players in Alaska's predator management debate



- Alaskans
- Governor
- Alaska Legislature
- Board of Game
- Department of Fish & Game
- Federal land managers

History

- *Long history of wolf control*
- *Predator control prior to statehood kept moose at high numbers*
- *State policies have changed under different administrations*
 - *Planning & stakeholder processes*
 - *Public land and shoot programs*
 - *Wolf reduction using state employees*
 - *Tourism boycotts*
 - *Voter initiative, voter referendum*
 - *Lawsuits*



Abbreviated Recent History

- 1994 - control efforts suspended
- 1994 - National Academy of Science review
 - Report indicated that department's wolf and ungulate management were based on science
 - Report emphasized that there could always be more study
 - Wolf control would be costly, controversial and time consuming
 - Results used by both critics and supporters
- 1994 – Intensive management law passes
- 2002 – present administration supported predator management

Alaska's Constitution

Directs that natural resources shall be developed for the *maximum benefit of the people* and that "natural resources such as wildlife shall be utilized, developed, and maintained on the *sustained yield principle, subject to preferences among beneficial uses.*"

The sustained yield principle is central to Alaska's wildlife management programs.



Alaskans Depend on Fish and Wildlife to Feed Their Families



- Moose and caribou provide an affordable food source for many rural residents
- 25,000 caribou
- 7,000 moose
- Many urban Alaskans also prefer wild meat
- Hunting is important to Alaskan lifestyle and culture
- Subsistence priority state and federal law

State Subsistence Statute

- Identify game populations customarily taken or used for subsistence
- Harvest consistent with sustained yield
- Board of Game identify the amount reasonable necessary for subsistence
- Adopt regulations providing reasonable opportunity for subsistence

State Subsistence Statute

- What if moose, caribou or deer populations are too low?
- Intensive Management to increase ungulates



“Intensive Management” Statute

- Passed in 1994; modified since
- Requires Board to manage identified ungulate populations for high human harvest
- Cannot reduce ungulate harvest without enacting intensive management unless
 - Ineffective based on science
 - Inappropriate land ownership
 - Against best interest of subsistence uses
- Step down regulations enacted by Board of Game

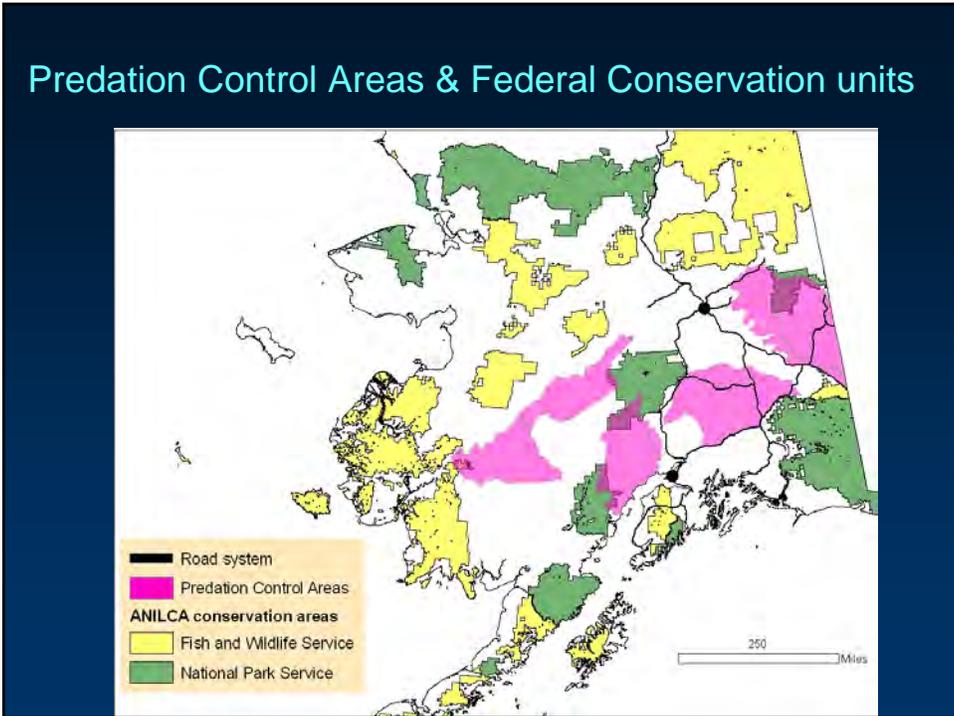
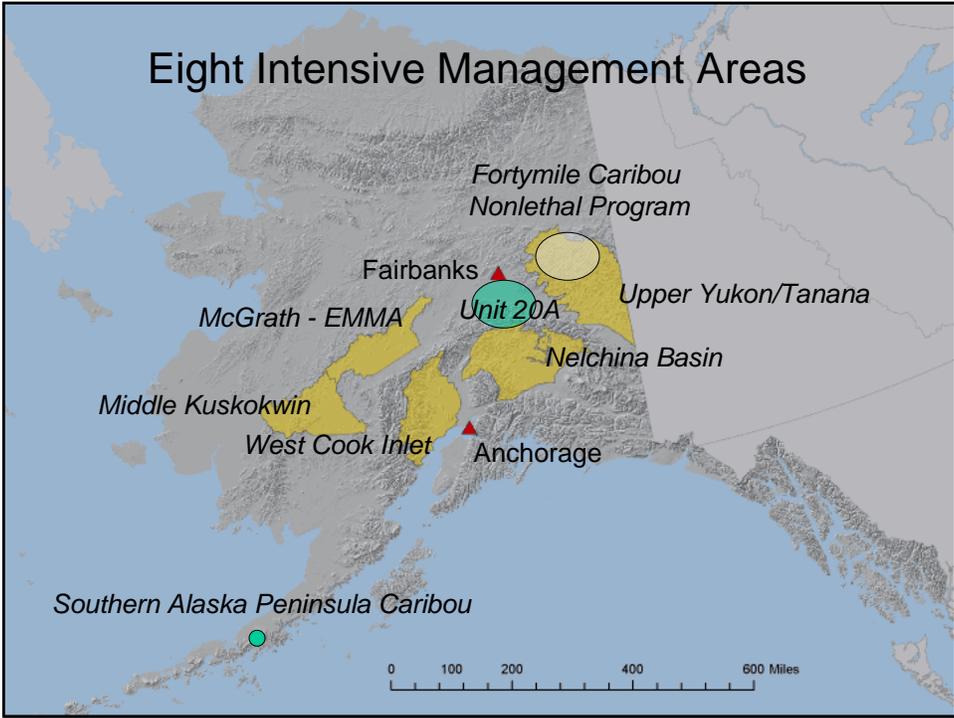
Intensive Management - Implementation

- *Reduce moose hunting seasons*
- *Nonresident hunting often eliminated*
- *Moose season completely closed in some areas*
- *Wolf hunting liberalized*
- *Bear hunting liberalized*
- *Restrictions in hunting of ungulates requires Board to consider predator management plan*



Intensive Management Planning Wolf/Bear Management Programs

- Typically takes 2 – 3 years
- Significant public input
- Goal - allow moose population to grow towards objectives previously set by Board of Game
- Objective – reduce predation by reducing wolf and/or bear populations while maintaining sustainable predator populations
- Predation Control Plan adopted in regulation
- Implemented by Department



23 million hectares of National Parks, Preserves and Monuments

- Hunting is allowed in all but 4 “old parks”
- Certain locals can hunt per Park regulations; specified local subsistence users
- Active Wolf/bear management not allowed in National Parks or Preserves
- Nonconflicting state hunting & trapping apply



National Parks, Preserves, and Monuments

35 million hectares protected in National Wildlife Refuges

- State hunting/trapping apply/allowed
- Intensive Management are not being applied – not currently authorized



National Wildlife Refuges

Implementation of Predation Control Programs

- *Department issues permits to citizens who use personal aircraft*
- *Discretionary permits*
- *Same day airborne taking of wolves*
 - *Land and Shoot*
 - *Aerial gunning*
- *Baiting of bears*



Implementation of Wolf Control Program – use of aircraft

- *Same Day Airborne **hunting** of wolves illegal in Alaska*
- *Same Day Airborne allowed as an effective method in a NON-hunting control program*
- *Predator control programs are NOT hunting; no fair chase standard*

Regulations in predator control areas are complex

Special hunting regulations for predator control areas

The Board of Game has liberalized hunting regulations within predator control areas. Listed below are the predator control areas and the methods and means allowed in each area. Due to a delayed May Board of Game meeting, some regulations will not be effective until later in the regulatory year. The information below separates those areas that will not change to those that will be updated September 1, 2006.

Current predator control areas in effect with no changes for the current regulation year (July 1, 2006 - June 30, 2007):

Unit 13 wolf control area - area consists of all of Units 13A, 13B, 13C, and that portion of 13E east of the Alaska Railroad. Use of snowmachines is allowed to position hunters to take wolves (see page 15). Untanned hides and skulls of black bears taken from the area may be sold (see pages 21 and 26).

Unit 19A, Central Kuskokwim wolf control area - area consists of all of Unit 19A. Use of snowmachines is allowed to position hunters to take wolves (see page 15). Untanned hides and skulls of black bears taken from the area may be sold (see pages 21 and 26).

Unit 20A - area consists of Unit 20A, except for the following areas: the Fort Wainwright and Fort Greely Military Reservations, Clear Air Force Station, and that portion of Unit 20A south and west of a line beginning at the east end of the Moody Bridge where it intersects with the Unit 20A boundary, then north along the boundary of Unit 20A to a point exactly one mile east of the George Parks Highway, then south on a line paralleling the George Parks Highway at a distance of one mile, to the southern boundary of Unit 20A. Use of snowmachines is allowed to position hunters to take wolves (see page 15).

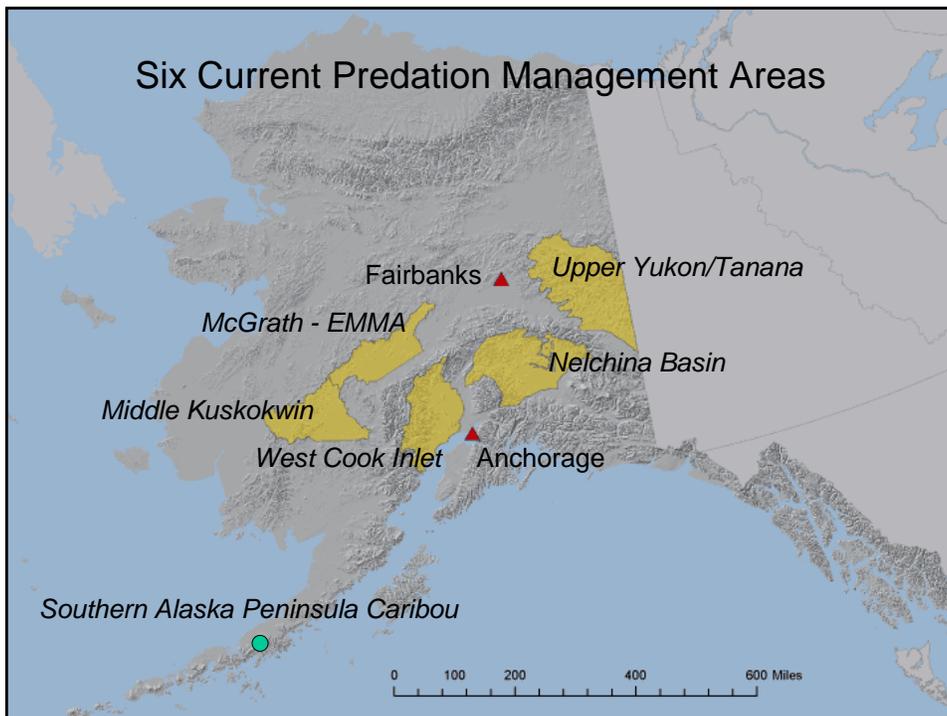
Unit 20D - area consists of Unit 20D except for the portions of Unit 20D within the Ft. Greely Military Reservation and that portion including the Goodpastor drainage upstream from and including Central Creek, the entire drainage of the South Fork of the Goodpastor River, the Healy River drainage, and Billy and Sand Creeks. Use of snowmachines is allowed to position hunters to take wolves (see page 15).

Through August 31, 2006, the predator control areas listed below are in effect, and the following methods and means apply: Use of snowmachines is allowed to position hunters to take wolves (see page 15). Untanned hides and skulls of black bears taken from the area may be sold (see pages 21 and 26).

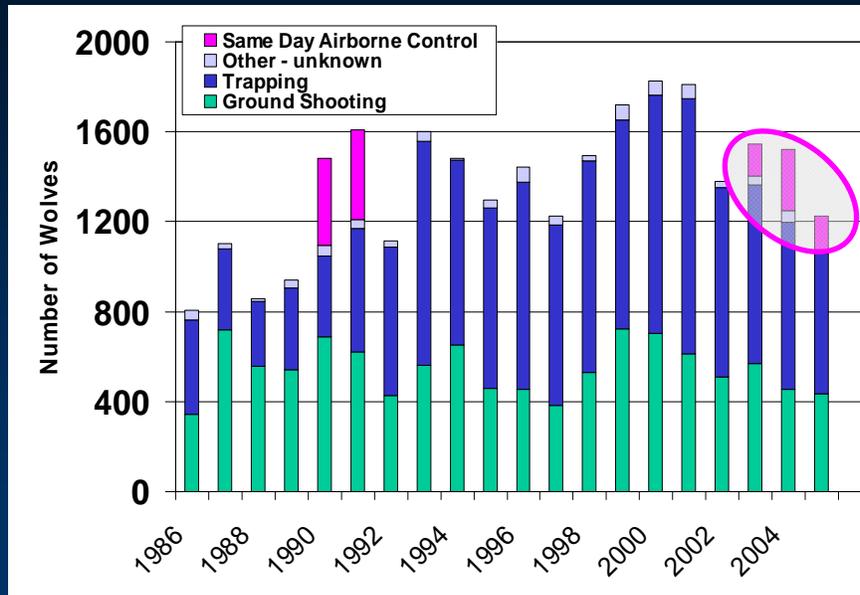
Beginning September 1, 2006, the following expanded predator control areas will be in effect. The following methods and means apply: Use of snowmachines is allowed to position hunters to take wolves (see page 15). Untanned hides and skulls of black bears taken from the area may be sold (see pages 21 and 26). Black bear bait stations may be accessed during open bear baiting seasons, and black bears may be taken at those bait sites the same day you have flown, provided you are at least 300 feet from the airplane.

Unit 16B wolf control area - consists of all lands within the mainland portion of Game Management Unit 16B.

Unit 16 wolf control area - that portion of Unit 16 (A) west of a line beginning at the confluence of the Yenina and the Susitna Rivers then northerly along the western bank of the Susitna River to the confluence with the Deshka River then northerly to N 61° 48' 47" W 150° 21' 36" then east to N 61° 48' 47" W 150° 16' 41", then north to the northern end of Trapper Lake at N 62° 01' 26" W 150° 16' 41" then west to N 62° 01' 26" W 150° 24' 04" then north to N 62° 09' 40" W 150° 24' 04" then west to the south



Alaska wolf harvest 1986 - 2005



FAQ's

- Does the Board of Game approve predator management everywhere?
- No. The Board has turned down more requests than they have approved.



FAQ's

- Can't we just let the predator/prey system operate naturally and not harvest moose if there aren't enough for humans?
- No. The law does not allow for that option. These are complex ecological systems including habitat, predators, prey and humans.



FAQ's

- Hunting versus control, are they different and who cares?
- Hunting/trapping are used first by the Board to reduce predators; control regulations are distinct and allow methods that some consider out of bounds or are otherwise illegal as hunting



Conclusions

- Ungulates are an important food resource for many Alaskans.
- Subsistence and intensive management laws require adequate ungulate populations.
- Ungulates (moose) occur in persistent, low numbers across much of Interior Alaska.
- Predation is sometimes a limiting factor



Conclusions

- Hunting seasons and bag limits for predators are often relaxed prior to instituting predator control.
- Where inadequate, predator control plans established.
- Control programs are not hunting.
- > 500 wolves taken by aerial wolf control program in last two years.
- Wolf and bear populations remain sustainable in control areas.



No single management approach
will satisfy everyone



Southern Alaska Peninsula – Unit 9 Spring 2008

Radio-collared 65 neonatal calves

Removed 28 wolves from the calving grounds

Calf survival up from <1% in 2006 and 2007, to 50% in spring 2008

Calves:100 cows increased from
<2:100 in 2006 and 2007 to 39:100 in
fall 2008. Calf ratios did not increase
in control herd (Unimak)

Need to continue program

Wolf reduction: Earlier: March – April

Implement orphaned pup protocols



Unit 9 – Southern Alaska Peninsula Caribou “SAP” caribou herd

