

## **PROPOSAL 104**

### **5 AAC 92.123(a)(1). Intensive Management Plans VII.**

Reauthorize the Unit 19A predation control program as follows:

(a) **Plans established.** Intensive management plans for the following areas are established in this section:

(1) Unit 19(A) Predation Control Area;

...

(b) Unit 19(A) Predation Control Area: the Unit 19(A) Predation Control Area is established and consists of those portions of the Kuskokwim River drainage within Unit 19(A), encompassing approximately **9,972** [10,048] square miles; this predation control program does not apply within National Park Service or National Wildlife Refuge lands unless approved by the federal agencies; notwithstanding any other provision in this title, and based on the following information contained in this section, the commissioner or the commissioner's designee may conduct a wolf and black bear and brown bear population reduction or a wolf and black bear and brown bear population regulation program in Unit 19(A) to benefit moose:

(1) the following Wolf and Bear Predation Control Focus Areas are established in the Unit 19(A) Predation Control Area; the areas do not delineate a moose, wolf, or bear population and are not intended to distinguish animals within the areas from populations in Unit 19(A); the purpose is to focus wolf and bear control in a relatively small area where moose numbers can be better estimated, where moose are accessible to hunters, and where harvest can be closely monitored;

(A) the Wolf Predation Control Focus Area (WCFA) encompasses approximately 3,905 square miles within all Unit 19(A) drainages of the Kuskokwim River upstream from and including the Holitna River Drainage; wolf control will be conducted only within the WCFA; the department has the discretion to adjust the area's size and shape to include up to approximately **4,400** [4,000] square miles of Unit 19(A);

(B) the Black Bear and Brown Bear Predation Control Focus Area (BCFA) encompasses approximately 534 square miles consisting of those portions of the Kuskokwim River drainage within the area enclosed by a line starting at Sleetmute at 61° 42.00' N. lat., 157° 10.00' W. long., then east to 61° 42.00' N. lat., 157° 00.00' W. long., then north to 61° 44.00' N. lat., 157° 00.00' W. long., then east to 61° 44.00' N. lat., 156° 55.00' W. long., then north to 61° 46.00' N. lat., 156° 55.00' W. long., then east to 61° 46.00' N. lat., 156° 50.00' W. long., then north to 61° 48.00' N. lat., 156° 50.00' W. long., then east to 61° 48.00' N. lat., 156° 45.00' W. long., then north to 61° 50.00' N. lat., 156° 45.00' W. long., then east to 61° 50.00' N. lat., 156° 30.00' W. long., then south to 61° 40.00' N. lat., 156° 30.00' W. long., then west to 61° 40.00' N. lat., 156° 45.00' W. long., then south to 61° 18.00' N. lat., 156° 45.00'

W. long., then west to 61° 18.00' N. lat., 157° 15.00' W. long., then north to 61° 24.00' N. lat., 157° 15.00' W. long., then east to 61° 24.00' N. lat., 157° 10.00' W. long., then north to 61° 42.00' N. lat., 157° 10.00' W. long.; bear control will be conducted only within the BCFA; the department has the discretion to adjust the area's size and shape to include up to approximately 800 square miles of Unit 19(A);

(2) this is a continuing control program that was first authorized by the board in 2004 for wolf control, with bear control added by the board in 2012; it is currently designed to increase moose numbers and harvest in the WCFA and BCFA by reducing predation on moose and is expected to make a contribution toward achieving the intensive management (IM) objectives in Unit 19(A);

(3) moose, wolf, black bear, and brown bear objectives are as follows:

(A) the IM population objective established by the board for Units 19(A) and 19(B) is 13,500–16,500 moose; based on the relative sizes of the two units, the proportional population objective for Unit 19(A) alone is 7,600–9,300 moose; the IM moose harvest objective for Units 19(A) and 19(B) is 750–950 moose annually; the proportional harvest objective for Unit 19(A) alone is 400–550 moose annually;

(B) the density objective for moose in the WCFA is 1.0 moose[BCFA is 2.0] persquare mile (corrected for sightability) during late winter surveys; the annual moose harvest objective for the WCFA is 155 [120] moose;

(C) the wolf control population objective in the WCFA is to reduce wolf numbers by at least 60–80 percent; the pre-control estimate within the WCFA is 75 wolves; the pre-control wolf population in Unit 19(A) is estimated at 150; only removing wolves from the WCFA will ensure that wolves persist in Unit 19(A); [THE POST-CONTROL WOLF POPULATION OBJECTIVE FOR UNIT 19(A) IS 25–30 WOLVES; THE PRE-CONTROL WOLF POPULATION IN UNIT 19(A) WAS ESTIMATED IN WINTER 2006–2007 AT 125–150 WOLVES; A MINIMUM WOLF POPULATION OF 25 WOLVES IS APPROXIMATELY AN 80 PERCENT REDUCTION FROM THE PRE-CONTROL WOLF POPULATION AND WILL ENSURE THAT WOLVES PERSIST IN THE PLAN AREA;]

(D) the black bear control objective in the BCFA is to reduce black bear numbers to the lowest level possible; the pre-control black bear population in Unit 19(A) is estimated at 2,500–3,000; the pre-control estimate within the BCFA is 92-102; because the BCFA is a relatively small geographic area, removing black bears from within the BCFA will have only a minor effect on the black bear population in Unit 19(A); [THE WOLF CONTROL POPULATION OBJECTIVE IN THE WCFA IS TO REDUCE WOLF NUMBERS TO THE LOWEST LEVEL POSSIBLE; THE PRE-CONTROL WOLF POPULATION ESTIMATE WITHIN THE WCFA IN WINTER 2006–2007 WAS 75–100 WOLVES;]

**(E) the brown bear control objective in the BCFA is to reduce brown bear numbers to the lowest level possible; the pre-control brown bear population in Unit 19(A) is estimated at 180–210; the pre-control estimate within the BCFA is 10–15; because the BCFA is a relatively small geographic area, removing brown bears from within the BCFA will have only a minor effect on the brown bear population in Unit 19(A);**  
[THE BLACK BEAR CONTROL POPULATION OBJECTIVE IN THE BCFA IS TO REDUCE BLACK BEAR NUMBERS TO THE LOWEST LEVEL POSSIBLE; THE PRE-CONTROL BLACK BEAR POPULATION IN UNIT 19(A) WAS ESTIMATED AT 2,500–3,000 BLACK BEARS; THE PRE-CONTROL BLACK BEAR POPULATION ESTIMATE WITHIN THE BCFA WAS 135–160 BLACK BEARS; BECAUSE THE BCFA IS A RELATIVELY SMALL GEOGRAPHIC AREA, REMOVING BLACK BEARS FROM WITHIN THE BCFA WILL HAVE ONLY A MINOR EFFECT ON THE BLACK BEAR POPULATION IN UNIT 19(A);]

[(F) THE BROWN BEAR POPULATION CONTROL OBJECTIVE IN THE BCFA IS TO REDUCE BROWN BEAR NUMBERS TO THE LOWEST LEVEL POSSIBLE; THE PRE-CONTROL BROWN BEAR POPULATION IN UNIT 19(A) WAS ESTIMATED AT 180–200 BROWN BEARS; THE PRE-CONTROL BROWN BEAR POPULATION ESTIMATE WITHIN THE BCFA WAS 10–15 BROWN BEARS; BECAUSE THE BCFA IS A RELATIVELY SMALL GEOGRAPHIC AREA, REMOVING BROWN BEARS FROM WITHIN THE BCFA WILL HAVE ONLY A MINOR EFFECT ON THE BROWN BEAR POPULATION IN UNIT 19(A);]

(4) board findings concerning populations and human use are as follows:

(A) the Unit 19(A) **IM** moose population and harvest objectives have not been achieved;

**(B) the WCFA objectives for moose density and moose harvest have not been achieved;** [THE BCFA OBJECTIVES FOR MOOSE DENSITY AND MOOSE HARVEST HAVE NOT BEEN ACHIEVED;]

(C) predation by wolves and bears is an important cause of the failure to achieve **moose** population and harvest objectives;

(D) a reduction of wolf and bear predation within the WCFA and BCFA can reasonably be expected to make progress towards achieving the Unit 19(A) IM objectives;

(E) reducing predation is likely to be effective and feasible using recognized and prudent active management techniques and **are** based on scientific information;

(F) reducing predation is likely to be effective given land ownership patterns;

(5) authorized methods and means are as follows:

(A) hunting and trapping of wolves and hunting of black bears and brown bears by the

public in Unit 19(A) during the term of this program may occur as provided in the hunting and trapping regulations set out elsewhere in this title, including use of motorized vehicles;

(B) notwithstanding any other provisions in this title, the commissioner may allow department employees to conduct aerial, land and shoot, or ground-based lethal removal of wolves and black bears and brown bears using state-owned, privately-owned, or chartered equipment, including helicopters, under AS 16.05.783;

(C) notwithstanding any other provisions in this title, the commissioner may issue public aerial shooting permits or public land and shoot permits using fixed-wing aircraft as a method of wolf removal under AS 16.05.783;

(6) time frame is as follows:

(A) through **June 30, 2026**, [JUNE 30, 2020,] the commissioner may authorize removal of wolves and black bears and brown bears in Unit 19(A);

(B) annually, the department shall, to the extent practicable, provide to the board a report of program activities conducted during the preceding 12 months, including implementation activities, the status of the moose, wolf and bear populations, and recommendations for changes, if necessary, to achieve the objectives of the plan;

(7) the commissioner will review, modify or suspend program activities **as follows:** [WHEN:]

(A) **when the moose density and harvest objectives specified in this subsection are achieved within the WCFA.** [WOLF SURVEYS OR ACCUMULATED INFORMATION FROM DEPARTMENT PERSONNEL, HUNTERS, TRAPPERS, AND PERMITTEES INDICATE THE NEED TO AVOID REDUCING WOLF NUMBERS IN UNIT 19(A) BELOW THE CONTROL OBJECTIVE OF 25–30 WOLVES SPECIFIED IN THIS SUBSECTION;]

(B) **when any measure consistent with signs of nutritional stress in the moose population are identified.** [ THE MOOSE DENSITY AND HARVEST OBJECTIVES WITHIN THE BCFA SPECIFIED IN THIS SUBSECTION ARE ACHIEVED.]

...

**What is the issue you would like the board to address and why?** The Unit 19A Intensive Management Plan expires on June 30, 2020. Public wolf control began in 2004 and the Department of Fish and Game implemented bear control in 2013 and 2014. Moose densities have been slow to respond to these treatments; however, some improvements are now being documented in the moose population. Reauthorization of this plan will give the department the tools necessary to continue to work towards meeting the population and harvest objectives established by the plan.

This proposal will reauthorize the program for a six-year period from July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2026. It includes options for aerial wolf control conducted by public permittees and the

department, and aerial black and brown bear control conducted by the department only. Additional details will also be made available for public review in a separate IM operational plan prior to the board meeting.

**PROPOSED BY:** Alaska Department of Fish and Game

(HQ-F19-150)

\*\*\*\*\*