

PROPOSAL 27

5 AAC 92.111. Intensive Management Plans I.

Reauthorize the Northern Alaska Peninsula (NAP) Caribou Herd Intensive Management Plan (IM) as follows:

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

...

Northern Alaska Peninsula Herd Management Area is entirely deleted and replaced by the following:

(b) **Northern Alaska Peninsula Herd Predation Management Area: to facilitate growth in the Northern Alaska Peninsula (NAP) caribou herd on the mainland portions of Units 9(C) and 9(E) to aid in achieving intensive management objectives in an area encompassing approximately 19,461 square miles (50,403 square kilometers); the wolf reduction area includes all Alaska Peninsula drainages south of the south bank of the Naknek River and the southern boundary of Katmai National Park to a line from the southernmost head of Port Moller Bay to the head of American Bay, encompassing approximately 10,734 square miles (27,802 square kilometers);**

(1) **This is a continuing control program that was first authorized by the board in March 2010 for wolf control; it is currently designed to increase caribou abundance and harvest by reducing predation on caribou by wolves and is expected to make a contribution to achieving the intensive management (IM) objectives in Units 9(C) and 9(E).**

(2) **Caribou, brown bear and wolf objectives are as follows:**

(A) **the intensive management objective for the NAP as established in 5 AAC 92.108 is 6,000–15,000 caribou; these objectives were based on historic information regarding population numbers, habitat limitations, human use, and sustainable harvests;**

(B) **the caribou harvest objective for the NAP as established in 5 AAC 92.108 is 600–1,500 caribou;**

(C) **the wolf population objective for Unit 9 is to maintain a wolf population that can sustain a three-year annual harvest of 50 wolves;**

(D) **the brown bear population objective for Unit 9 is to maintain a high-density bear population with a sex and age structure that can sustain a harvest composed of 60 percent males, with 50 males eight years of age or older during combined fall and spring seasons;**

- (3) **Board findings concerning populations and human use are as follows:**
- (A) **The board has designated the NAP as important for providing high levels of human consumptive use;**
 - (B) **the board established objectives for population size and annual sustained harvest of caribou in Units 9(C) and 9(E) consistent with multiple use and principles of sound conservation and management of habitat and all wildlife species in the area;**
 - (C) **the population and harvest for the NAP are below IM objectives throughout the range;**
 - (D) **wolves are a major predator of caribou in the range of the NAP and are an important factor in failing to achieve these objectives;**
 - (E) **a reduction of predation can reasonably be expected to aid in achieving the objectives;**
 - (F) **nutrition is not considered to be the primary factor limiting caribou population growth;**
 - (G) **reducing predation is likely to be effective and feasible using recognized and prudent active management techniques and based on scientific information;**
 - (H) **reducing predation is likely to be effective given land ownership patterns, and;**
 - (I) **reducing predation is in the best interests of subsistence users.**
- (4) **Authorized methods and means are as follows:**
- (A) **hunting and trapping of wolves by the public in treatment areas during the term of the management program may occur as provided in the hunting and trapping regulations set out elsewhere in this title, including the use of motorized vehicles as provided in 5 AAC 92.080;**
 - (B) **the commissioner may issue public aerial shooting permits, public land and shoot permits, or ground-based shooting permits, allow agents of the state, or department employees to conduct aerial, land and shoot, or ground-based shooting as a method of wolf removal under AS 16.05.783, including the use of any type of aircraft;**
 - (C) **the commissioner may authorize the use of state employees or agents or state owned, privately owned, or chartered equipment, including helicopters, as a method of wolf removal under AS 16.05.783;**

- (5) Time frame is as follows:
- (A) through June 30, 2031, the commissioner may authorize the removal of wolves in the NAP Predation Management Area;
 - (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 caribou and wolf populations, and recommendations for changes, if necessary, to achieve the objectives of the plan;
- 6) The commissioner will review, modify or suspend program activities as follows:
- (A) when the IM population and harvest objectives for the NAP are sustained or the population can grow at a sustained rate of five percent annually;
 - (B) if after three years, the harvest of wolves is not sufficient to make progress towards the intensive management population objectives for wolves;
 - (C) if after three years, there is no detectable increase in the total number of caribou in the control area;
 - (D) if after three years, bull-to-cow ratios show no appreciable increase or remain below 20 bulls per 100 cows;
 - (E) if after three years, fall calf-to-cow ratios show no appreciable increase or can be sustained at 25 or more calves per 100 cows;
 - (F) if after three years, any measure consistent with significant levels of nutritional stress in the caribou population are identified;
 - (G) when the caribou population and harvest objectives within the NAP Predation Management Area have been met; or
 - (H) upon expiration of the period during which the commissioner is authorized to reduce wolf numbers in the wolf reduction areas.

What is the issue you would like the board to address and why? The Northern Alaska Peninsula Caribou Herd Intensive Management Plan expires on June 30, 2020. IM objectives for the NAP have not been achieved because wolf harvest was not sufficient to make progress towards the intensive management population objective for wolves (6B above). During the seven years that the IM program was active, a total of 16 (5%) wolves were removed via public control (same-day-airborne) versus 275 taken from the wolf assessment area by hunters and trappers. The most effective predation control action taken for the NAP was the waiving of the nonresident wolf tag requirement. As a result, most harvest is taken by guided nonresident bear hunters during the odd regulatory year when the bear seasons are open. Since 2011, the NAP has been increasing by an

average of about 7.3% per year and hovers near 4,300 caribou (based on survey data and modelling). At this rate the population should reach the lower end of objectives in five - six years.

To comply with protocol for intensive management plans, ADF&G is removing unnecessary and outdated information from the previous version and introducing specific regulatory language for the intensive management plan for the NAP predation management area. This reauthorization proposal allows the Board of Game to modify the programs objectives and give further guidance to ADF&G if warranted.

PROPOSED BY: Alaska Department of Fish and Game (HQ-F20-046)
