

BIOPOLITICS OF WOLF MANAGEMENT IN ALASKA

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ABSTRACT: The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) began a wolf (*Canis lupus*) management planning process in 1990 following years of controversy over the issue. A planning team was organized consisting of persons with widely varied values and interests regarding wolves. They developed a set of recommendations which were the basis for a Strategic Wolf Management Plan which spawned Area Specific Plans and Implementation Plans. The process in abstract was working. However, once implementation of wolf control became a reality, there was a negative response heard worldwide. This response was primarily organized by animal rights groups using tactics that were guaranteed to fuel a response. They were able to use a threatened boycott of the tourism industry in Alaska to force a political cancellation of wolf management using aircraft. The events associated with this planning process and the events that followed are documented in this paper by a member of the Alaska Board of Game, from his perspective.

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Those of us with careers in wildlife management (I spent 15 years as Director of the Moose Research Center for the ADF&G) are too often not aware of the pressures that can influence management decisions when special interest groups enter the regulations process. This process in Alaska is very accessible to the public, as it should be. However, this allows for a tremendous diversity of input, some of it aimed at destroying wildlife management concepts.

An important consideration for readers is that by law, all Alaskans are considered subsistence users of the wildlife resource. For most rural or urban Alaskans, the harvest of wildlife is their supply of red meat.

The following scenario is a documentation of chronological events that deals with the management of wolves in Alaska through this process as experienced by myself as a member of the Alaska Board of Game since March 1992.

BACKGROUND

The ADF&G has a long history of controversy associated with wolf management. It began with statehood in 1959 when it inherited the Federal Branch of Predator and Ro-

dent Control's wolf program which included widespread use of poison bait stations, cyanide bait guns, unlimited harvests, continuous open seasons, summer trapping, den hunting, bounties, and aerial shooting (Rausch and Hinman 1975). The ADF&G phased out these control activities and in 1963 the Board of Fish and Game classified wolves as big game and furbearers.

During the 1960's and 1970's the public's attitude about wolves began to change based on increased ecological interest, changing emphasis from consumptive to non-consumptive use of wildlife, and the development of legal processes to support public concern about wildlife (Harbo and Dean 1981). Several popular accounts about wolves produced a special aura about them (Mowat 1963, Mech 1970, Lopez 1978, Allen 1979). From statehood to the present, the ADF&G has responded to the new interest in wolves and has attempted to elevate the status of wolves to manage them as it does all wildlife in Alaska on a sustained yield basis as directed by the state constitution.

Federal control measures in the 1950's depressed wolf populations but they rapidly recovered following increased protection.

Unfortunately, their response also coincided with a series of severe winters in the late 1960's and early 1970's. This coupled with excessive human harvest caused prey populations to decline rapidly over much of Alaska. The ADF&G responded to these declines by reducing or eliminating hunting of moose and caribou and began limited wolf control programs.

Managing for sustained yield of both predators and prey is the statutory mandate for ADF&G, and the programs have varied depending on the attitude of the ADF&G administration and Board of Game (BOG). The seven member BOG is appointed by the governor and is the state regulatory authority (by statute) that passes regulations to conserve and develop Alaska's wildlife resource. The BOG accepts written and oral testimony on proposals that can be generated by any person or group in Alaska. During the 1970's better information became available about both predator and prey populations, research indicated that there were areas where wolf reductions could benefit prey and control measures were instituted on a case by case basis (Harbo and Dean 1980). However, well organized opposition responded and almost every attempt at wolf control was challenged in the courts through the 1970's and 1980's. Some of the challenges delayed control efforts which were subsequently cancelled, but some survived the process and control was accomplished. The successful application of wolf control in these areas lead to demands for control in other areas where prey populations were depressed.

In 1978, the BOG adopted a Statement of Direction to the Commissioner to authorize the use of aircraft in wolf control when the following conditions prevail (Harbo and Dean 1981:61-62):

- (1) The highest priority use of wildlife in an area to be the use of prey species for food or recreational hunting.
- (2) The prey populations have been re-

duced to or are held at levels below that deemed to be the capacity of the habitat.

- (3) The prey populations are below levels that could reasonably satisfy the priority uses.
- (4) Adequate control of predation cannot be accomplished by manipulation of hunting and trapping seasons and bag limits.
- (5) Predation control based on aircraft use governed by a permit is judged to be an effective method for that area.
- (6) Such predation control in an area can be adequately supervised and regulated.

The court challenges were directed at both ADF&G conducted control programs and regulations which allowed hunters and trappers to use airplanes to locate wolves and then land and shoot them. The ADF&G was confronted with the problem of trying to manage wolves to satisfy increasingly polarized user groups.

THE ALASKA WOLF MANAGEMENT PLANNING TEAM

The ADF&G attempted to solve this polarization by forming the Alaska Wolf Management Planning Team in 1990. This citizens advisory group consisted of 12 members with a broad range of interests and values. The objectives of this group included:

- (1) An exhaustive review of information about wolf biology, predator/prey relationships, population dynamics, past control efforts, hunting and trapping statistics, etc.
- (2) Respectful consideration of every team member's interests and concerns about wolf management.
- (3) Development of findings, goals, and principles.
- (4) Two public forums.
- (5) Wide ranging consideration of management options.



The final report of the planning team dated June 3, 1991 was presented to the ADF&G and based on this report, the ADF&G prepared the Strategic Wolf Management Plan (Alaska Department of Fish and Game 1992a) which was adopted by the BOG on October 30, 1991. Findings of the Wolf Planning Team that were incorporated into the Strategic Plan included:

- (1) Wolves have intrinsic value and provide multiple values to society:
 - (a) Consumptive and non-consumptive use.
 - (b) Role in nature as an integral component of natural food chains.
 - (c) Contribution to rural communities.
 - (d) Special social/cultural relationship to people in rural Alaska.
- (2) Wolves exist as part of a complex ecological system and Alaska land ownership is complicated, therefore successful wolf conservation requires integrated protection and preservation of habitat and prey species and an opportunity for the meaningful involvement of all managers and interest groups.
- (3) The wolf population in Alaska is not endangered. The density varies greatly throughout the state. The current statewide population estimate is approximately 6000, but the population will vary over time due to factors beyond human control.
- (4) Wolf populations can sustain harvest, but sustainable levels vary.
- (5) Alaska is fortunate to have one of the larger wolf populations in the world and currently has extensive habitat and prey. Therefore, we have a special responsibility to ensure that wolves and their habitat are conserved.
- (6) Wolves can affect prey populations and in some situations can keep prey

populations at low levels. Human intervention can speed recovery of the prey populations in some cases.

- (7) Wolves are vulnerable to the growing human population, habitat fragmentation, disease, development, reduction of prey populations, access corridors, habitat conversions such as livestock grazing and game farming, and overharvest.
- (8) Wolves and their prey are of vital importance to the economy and nutritional needs of people in many areas of rural Alaska. Healthy ungulate populations are necessary for rural Alaska.

The Strategic Plan was based on recommendations of the Planning Team, but was not a mirror of it because consensus could not be reached on all issues. The ADF&G had to develop the Strategic Plan to comply with their mandates, regulations, and logistic capabilities. The Plan outlined a strategy for producing a fair system for wolf management in Alaska which consisted of:

- (1) Developing a zone management system (Appendix I) (Alaska Department of Fish and Game 1992a).
- (2) Applying a zone management system.
- (3) Developing Area-Specific Management Plans.
- (4) Developing draft implementation plans where control is authorized (Zones 5,6, or 7).

The following events occurred after the BOG accepted the Strategic Management Plan and had assigned zones to areas of southcentral and interior Alaska at the spring of 1992 BOG meeting. These areas were selected because they represented the areas of the state impacted most (road system connected) by both wolves and users of the resource.

THE NOVEMBER 1992 BOARD OF GAME MEETING

The Area Specific Wolf Management Plan for Southcentral and Interior Alaska (Alaska Department of Fish and Game 1992*b*) was presented to the BOG in November 1992. This plan contained a refined description of the zones assigned to the area, wildlife resources, human uses, past management, proposed management options, alternative population and harvest objectives, and wolf predation control implementation plans. The BOG heard testimony and deliberated on the Area Specific Plan and implementation of wolf management in Game Management Units (GMU) 13, 20A, and in the Upper Tanana/Forty Mile Control Area of GMU's 12, 20B, 20D, and 20E. Population and harvest objective were established for each area (Table 1).

The implementation plan for GMU 13 wolf control was to use land and shoot techniques which were successful there in the past because of the open terrain. Implementation of wolf control in GMU 20A and the Upper Tanana/Forty Mile Area would be done by ADF&G personnel using helicopters. This was determined to be the most effective, efficient, humane, and selective method. The land and shoot technique using licensed public pilots could not be effectively applied to these areas because of the rough terrain and tree cover. Many of the packs in the Upper Tanana/Fortymile Area had individuals with radiocollars which were used to determine wolf density in the area. The radiocollars would also serve to locate the packs during population reduction.

The Area Specific Plan for South Central/Interior (1992*b*) drew considerable public criticism at the November BOG meeting. A major concern was the lack of buffer zones around Denali National Park. This was brought forth in spite of the creation of large preserve areas around the park following federal withdrawals. In response to these concerns the BOG established additional buffer zones

around the Park and also around Fairbanks and Anchorage.

Criticism continued through the hearings about killing any wolves and this was emphasized by animal rights groups that testified that they would "do whatever it took to stop it". Most responsible environmental groups recognized that wolf control was an option but wanted ADF&G personnel to do the wolf control using helicopters. In contrast, Alaskans wanted the public to have an opportunity to participate. Some of the other objections to implementing the plan included: the ADF&G had moved too fast and had not followed the planning teams recommendations, the unfairness of control when some of the packs could be located by radiocollars, and that the control areas were too large or too many of them, suggesting that only one area be implemented. Hundreds of pieces of written testimony were received by the BOG generated by an editorial in *Wolftracks* magazine stating that ADF&G is going to instigate a *mass* wolf control program and parts of Denali National Park and Preserve will not be immune. An attorney representing Defenders of Wildlife, Wolf Haven International, The Sierra Club, and the Southeast Alaska Conservation Council testified before the BOG that they "feel ADF&G has attempted to interpret, to co-opt, and to manipulate the Team's [Wolf Planning Team] recommendations to their own advantage, specifically to more extensively control wolf populations in Alaska under the guise of sound wildlife management". They also threatened more litigation, imminent federal legislation, and claimed that ADF&G was incapable of being responsible stewards of wildlife which could result in the removal of ADF&G authority to do so.

The Alaska Wildlife Alliance and Wolf Haven International had a poll conducted by Dittman Research Corporation (1992). This poll of Alaskans with telephones showed that the majority surveyed opposed killing wolves from aircraft by the public or by ADF&G, but

Table 1. Population and harvest objectives in areas designated for wolf control.

NELCHINA BASIN GMU 13		
SPECIES	POPULATION OBJECTIVE	HARVEST OBJECTIVE
Wolf	150 - 200	50 - 150
Moose	25,000 - 30,000	2,000 - 5,000
Caribou	40,000 - 60,000	4,500 - 6,500
Grizzly	reduce significantly	> 125

DELTA CARIBOU RANGE GMU 20A		
SPECIES	POPULATION OBJECTIVE	HARVEST OBJECTIVE
Wolf(a)	55 - 75	5 - 20
Wolf(b)	150 - 300	20 - 60
Moose	11,000 - 15,000	800 - 1,500
Caribou	7,000 - 9,000	500 - 1,000
Sheep	4,000 - 6,000	150 - 300
Grizzly	100 - 175	10 - 20
Black Bear	500 - 700	50 - 100

a - proposed wolf population level during 3 year period when wolf reduction occurs.
b - proposed wolf population level during years when wolf reduction does not occur.

TANANA/FORTYMILE AREA		
SPECIES	POPULATION OBJECTIVE	HARVEST OBJECTIVE
Wolf(a)	40 - 70	5 - 50
Moose	9,000 - 10,000	300 - 650
Caribou	60,000	3,000 - 6,000
Sheep	1,000 - 1,700	30 - 50
Grizzly	270 - 360	10 - 35
Black Bear	700 - 1,300	10 - 50

a - proposed wolf population level during 5 year period when wolf reduction occurs.

supported hunting and trapping them. However, a door-to-door survey of residents of Native and white communities in the Tanana/Forty Mile area, where wolf control was proposed, overwhelmingly supported ADF&G prey objectives and intensive management, including wolf control and liberal grizzly bear harvest (Gardner 1992).

The BOG heard support for the plans from nearly every Advisory Committee (Alaska Department of Fish and Game 1990) in the state. The advisory committee system was established in 1959 to provide local public input into the regulatory process of the BOG. There are over 80 advisory committees statewide consisting of concerned and inter-

ested citizens. The Alaska system is recognized as the most open public system in the country, and the BOG relies heavily on the input from the advisory committees.

Representatives of various user groups in Alaska such as the Alaska Fish and Wildlife Conservation Fund, the Alaska Outdoor Council, Tanana Valley Sportsmen's Association, Alaska Bowhunters, Interior Alaska Airboaters, Golden North Archery Association, Safari Club, etc., supported implementing the plans. The Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Board fully supported the concept of rebuilding the Fortymile caribou herd which is shared by Alaska and the Yukon. This herd historically numbered nearly one-

half million and roamed from Fairbanks to Whitehorse.

There was testimony that considered the plans too conservative and restrictive. There was concern that there were not enough zones 5 through 7 (active control) to give ADF&G the management flexibility it needed, particularly in view of the fact that much of Alaska is off limits to wolf management due to federal land withdrawals.

The BOG was faced with trying to accommodate as many concerns as possible. This was attempted by applying the zonal system which provided all ranges of wolf management from full protection to active control. Implementing the zonal system proved to be problematic for the BOG because the ADF&G proceeded with areas in the state where wolf control was needed before initiating management plans in the vast areas of the state where it is unlikely any wolf control measures would be employed. The areas considered for control represent less than 3.5% of Alaska.

After zoning adjustments were made and finalized, approving implementation of wolf reduction in Zones 6 and 7 (Appendix I) was evaluated by the BOG based on sound biological principles. Testimony was presented from three outside professional biologists who reviewed the plans and found them biologically sound and of no threat to the wolf populations. ADF&G personnel presented the implementation plans in a professional manner giving the board several options for population goals and harvest objectives. Gordon Haber, a biologist who did graduate studies of wolves in Denali Park, was commissioned by the Alaska Wildlife Alliance and Wolf Haven to critique the wolf plan (Haber 1992). He commented "This decision is bad biology all around, almost an insult from a scientific standpoint. They are making a very dumb mistake". Dr. Francois Messier, from the University of Saskatchewan, reviewed Haber's report and found that "the nature and vague-

ness of the report precludes an effective point-by-point review". He also found that "the models Haber used are not consistent with published empirical and theoretical findings". The BOG did not consider the Haber report appropriate in addressing the issues and questioned the biology and conclusions. The BOG approved the three wolf reduction implementation plans (Alaska Department of Fish and Game 1992c) after considering input covering a wide spectrum of values and ideas. The bottom line was that values on the extreme of either end could not drive the system, and that the decision had to be driven by sound biological principles.

THE AFTERMATH

The events following the November BOG meeting, when implementation of the wolf management planning process became reality, was a classic example of mass public motivation by animal rights and anti-hunting groups. Misinformation and sensationalism were tactics used to elicit public support. The livelihood of these organizations depends upon controversy to generate donations. Mailings went out immediately using emotional words like slaughter, decimate, kill thousands, exterminate, cruel, barbaric, etc. Ads in the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, and *USA Today* were effective in eliciting responses. Groups paying for these ads (Fund for Animals, Friends of Animals) admitted that they were "nearly accurate." When questioned about the ads, a Fund for Animals representative said "the wording is intentionally vague."

Director of the ADF&G, David Kellyhouse, in an interview with the *New York Times*, was presenting the positive aspects of the program by indicating that with increased prey we would see increased predators following the program and that this would be beneficial to tourists. He said, regarding the Tanana/Fortymile caribou population, "We feel we are going to create a wildlife spectacle

on a par with the major migrations in East Africa.” This inferred that the program was to promote tourism and as a result tourism groups were upset because they were not a part of the process, and animal rights groups used this to promote of a boycott of tourism in Alaska.

Immediately following the November meeting the ADF&G prepared a document called “Alaska Wolf Facts” which was widely distributed to the press and public. It was eight pages in length but was not utilized by the vast majority of the press, perhaps because of its length, but more likely it was not headline material. There were no “buzz” words to draw attention. Some basic facts from the document included:

- (1) Wolves never have been threatened or endangered in Alaska. The 1990-91 estimate was 5,900-7,200 wolves (700-900 packs) which has shown an increase in recent years. Wolf distribution is as great now as any time since the turn of the century and their numbers are limited primarily by availability of big game prey rather than annual harvests.
- (2) The current harvest rate of wolves (hunting and trapping) is 17%. Wolves can sustain a harvest of 25-40%. The Strategic Wolf Management Plan was designed to ensure the long term conservation of wolves in accordance with Alaska’s Constitution that requires the wildlife resources be managed for the common use of people and be maintained on a sustained yield basis.
- (3) The selection of zones considered all users and was based on consideration of the laws and management mandates on federal land which comprises about 70% of Alaska. Most of the federal land will be zoned 1-4 where no wolf control is allowed (112,00 sq. mi. or 19% of the state).
- (4) Each of the three proposed control

areas was described in which 300-400 wolves will be killed (5-7% of population) in 1992-93 and 100 to 300 in subsequent years (3-5).

- (5) Predators consume 15-30% of the moose and caribou in Alaska while hunters take 2-7%.

People began writing to tour groups and indicating they would not come to Alaska. Some cancelled plans and the Alaska Visitors Association estimated that if the boycott continued it would cost the state 64 million dollars in revenue. This impact was questioned by many because this same group predicted doom for Alaska tourism following the Exxon Valdez oil spill which did not occur; tourism actually increased. Demonstrations were organized in major cities across the lower 48 states to boycott Alaska. The made-for-television event extended to Canada and Europe and was carried on newscasts around the world.

TEMPORARY DELAY OF THE WOLF PLAN

Stung by worldwide criticism over plans to kill wolves to benefit prey and hunters, Governor Wally Hickel invited fellow governors and 57 wildlife, outdoors, and conservation groups to take Alaska’s wolves for re-introduction. There were no takers. Pressure continued to mount and the tourism industry began to panic. Mail to the governor was 100 to 1 against wolf killing. An Oregon congressman said he would introduce legislation in the U.S. Congress to put a roadblock on the wolf kill.

In early December, Governor Hickel decided to schedule a January “Wolf Summit” in Fairbanks. The ADF&G would invite national and international leaders of conservation and wildlife groups to attend. Carl Rosier, Commissioner of ADF&G said “everything is going to be on the table”. In the interim, no control work would be initiated. The Alaska Wildlife Alliance took offense to

the summit because they viewed it as a promotional effort by ADF&G to sell the program. Other animal rights and preservation groups expressed similar feelings and considered boycotting the summit. BOG members, who had been through weeks of testimony and deliberation, were not convinced that any new useful information would come forth from the summit.

The summit concept did not stop the protests and letters of opposition, but there was also a swing of objections by Alaskans who had expressed no concern in the past but were now upset by the approach being taken by these groups against Alaska. Letters of support began to come in as Alaskans became more aware of what was going on and had a chance to evaluate the facts. Nevertheless, after over 20,000 letters to the Governor in opposition and an ultimatum from nine state and national groups threatening to boycott the summit unless wolf control was stopped for all of 1993, Commissioner Rosier on December 22, 1992, announced suspension of all aerial wolf management efforts in 1993. The groups threatening the boycott were the Alaska Wildlife Alliance, Greenpeace, Sierra Club, Wilderness Society, Alaska Center for the Environment, Northern Alaska Environmental Center, Trustees for Alaska, Wolf Haven International, and National Parks and Conservation Society.

The Governor announced that the summit would proceed. However, most members of the BOG believed that since the Commissioner had made the decision to suspend aerial wolf control, there was no need for a summit and it would only prolong the controversy. The BOG also felt that their authority was taken from them, and the issue was placed completely in the political realm and would have to be therein resolved.

An Associated Press poll at the end of 1992 determined that the wolf issue was the second ranking news story of the year in Alaska behind the stories related to the down-

turn in Alaska's economy. Letters to the editor about the wolf issue appeared daily in most newspapers in the state. The Anchorage Daily News announced that they could not publish all letters during the peak response period in early December.

Just prior to the summit a rally was organized by the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Association using full page ads in the Fairbanks News-Miner newspaper. The message was: "It's not about wolves it is about... (1) Outsiders dictating Alaska's future, (2) Loss of state's rights, (3) Extortion, (4) Freedom and choice.

THE WOLF SUMMIT

The Alaska Wolf Summit was managed by facilitators from CDR Associates, Boulder, Colorado. The purpose statement was:

The purpose of the Wolf Summit is to bring together a representative group of people with a variety of views on Alaska's wildlife to consider wolf management in Alaska. The summit has been designed to promote the constructive exchange of ideas and information. The goals of the summit are to allow participants to gain a better understanding of the ideas and concerns of others, to identify common themes and areas of agreement, and to work toward the development of a consensus on wolf management that will receive the support of the people of Alaska.

Invited participants (111) from various parts of the country representing the whole continuum of values and concerns attended. In addition, seven BOG members, 20 ADF&G staff, and 12 members of the Governor's staff attended. Several hundred observers also attended. People greeted participants outside the meeting with a variety of placards, mostly in favor of the wolf management program and the BOG decision. The plenary session consisted of panels discussing: biology of wolves; predator/prey relationships; international, national and Alaskan perspective on wolf management; and the impact on tourism. A forum for participants was held where the whole

spectrum of views and values were heard.

The biologists on these panels agreed with the basic premise that under certain conditions wolves could depress prey populations, but could not agree on the conditions or when control is justified. Some thought that aerial wolf control is no longer socially acceptable. Dr. David Mech, Chairman of the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resource (IUCN) Wolf Specialist Group, said that Alaskan wolves are not threatened or endangered and to him this appeared to be an Alaskan problem and should be solved by Alaskans.

An opportunity was provided for participants that had no experience with rural Alaska to go to the village of Minto. Governor Hickel was there with about 40 reporters, photographers, politicians, animal rightists, and environmentalists. The Minto Natives pushed subsistence rights and pleaded for wolf control as a way to help them preserve their subsistence lifestyle. Many expressed disgust with outside dictates and felt the tourism boycott was not meaningful. A Sacramento-based Animal Protection Institute representative was quoted in the *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner*, "I was surprised at the animosity they had toward animal welfare organizations." A native elder said "It's good they came. They'll learn more."

The major work of the summit was conducted in small mixed-interest groups that discussed information presented in the plenary sessions and attempted developing solutions. Each of the nine breakout groups were assisted by a facilitator from the state ombudsman's office and a recorder. Most groups had 12 participants, representing a wide spectrum of views. The breakout groups met for a day and a half then reports were presented to Governor Hickel, Commissioner Rosier, and the BOG.

The presentation of summaries from each breakout group was preceded by an overall summary which included these points:

1. There was a lot of support for the wolf planning team process and it should be extended. The planning process should be used as a model for the implementation plans.
2. Decision makers should consider the Yukon Plan and the IUCN Wolf Manifesto (discussed later in the paper).
3. The ADF&G needs to be proactive in education.
4. Wolf control is an extraordinary issue that needs extraordinary efforts.
5. Data should be presented in a relevant, clear, and concise manner.
6. Information provided needs to include history, biological issues, management, and social/human factors.
7. All user groups should be encouraged to participate in this broad educational process.
8. The BOG and Advisory Committees should reorganize to represent diverse interests.
9. The summit process was not sufficient, too short. Many items did not get discussed.

This summary demonstrated that no strong working consensus came from the summit. It says we must educate, reorganize, and spend more time at planning. This inability to reach any meaningful agreement was echoed in the media. The *Anchorage Daily News* reported "There may not have been much new information presented at the summit, but there was a lot of it." The *Tundra Times* reported that there was an unexpected consensus in that there are situations in which killing wolves is a legitimate wildlife management tool. The *Fairbanks Daily News-Miner* reported "They left as divided as they came. No decrees, directions, or resolutions were expected to come out of the summit and none did."

One reason for the lack of agreement was the uncompromising position taken by some animal rights groups. A representative of the San Francisco based In Defense of Animals

said "My bottom line is and always will be hands off the wolves" and indicated that a tourism boycott will occur if any kind of wolf control is planned. A spokesman for the Alaska Wildlife Conservation Association said "The extremists came into it absolutely opposed, stated their position and stuck with it and we spent two days dealing with that." He also said "The bottom line is they make more money keeping the issue alive."

A spokesperson from the Northern Environmental Center said he felt sorry for the BOG members who in his view couldn't have gained much real guidance from the summit proceedings. The options for the BOG meeting that followed the summit were negligible in that the only useful tool for wolf management had been taken from them with the decree that no aerial control would occur in 1993.

A discouraging note from the summit regarding alternative methods was that representatives of the Fund for Animals and the Alaska Wildlife Alliance were asked how they would respond to a program for wolf management that employed contraceptive or sterilizing drugs and/or translocations. Both responded that they would oppose both measures. The implication was, as was stated by other animal rights groups, that they will oppose anything regarding wolf control or management.

A final note on the summit regards the cost. It was estimated that \$75,000 was a minimum figure. Ironically, the money that would have gone for a control program was used for the summit.

THE YUKON PLAN

At the November BOG meeting testimony was given regarding the Yukon's concern about the status of the Fortymile caribou herd which traditionally shared the Yukon and Alaska border from Fairbanks to Whitehorse. A Native resident from the area where the caribou formerly ranged described

how their people used the caribou and how extensive their range was. The estimates are that the Fortymile herd contained 400,000 to 500,000 caribou in the 1920's and 1930's, but crashed to 6,000 by the late 1960's and early 1970's. The population has gradually increased to 22,000 today, but inhabits only a small part of its former range. The Yukon people were very supportive of the implementation plan in GMU 20E because their hopes were that the very productive former range of the Fortymile herd could once again experience near historic levels.

The Yukon has a pro-active wolf management program and during the 1980's had a wolf reduction in the Finlayson area where caribou responded by increasing from 2000 to over 6000 and moose numbers doubled. The Yukon and Alaska have the most active wolf research programs and continually evaluate predator/prey relationships. The Alaska and Yukon cooperative research in Alaska's GMU 20E (Fortymile area) and the adjacent area in the Yukon was reported in a monograph entitled "The role of predation in limiting moose at low densities in Alaska and Yukon and implications for conservation" (Gasaway et al. 1992). This monograph received The Wildlife Society's publications award for 1992.

On January 12, 1993, the Yukon issued a news release indicating that they would implement a caribou herd recovery plan in the Aishihik Lake area. This would be a two year program to evaluate the response following removal of 150 wolves in 1993 and 50 in 1994 using government crews in helicopters. This announcement came just prior to the Alaska Wolf Summit and caught the animal rights people off guard. However, the spokesperson for In Defense of Wildlife stated in Fairbanks that "Oh they'll hear from us after I get back, most definitely." After the summit, the animal rights groups organized a boycott of tourism in the Yukon and added the provinces of Alberta and British Columbia because a news

release by Friends of Animals said governments there were using poisons to cull wolf populations (this was not a true statement).

The Yukon government implemented their control program and by late February had completed their program in the Aishihik area. Their program is guided by the Yukon Wolf Conservation and Management Plan (1992). Animal rights groups attempted to interfere with the program in Whitehorse but were not effective because no one was intimidated by them and the government and First Nations people supported it. The Yukon Plan also incorporated some of the issues important to the anti-control groups which helped defuse the issue for some groups. These issues included; no hunting of caribou during control, effort was to support subsistence use, and the herd was very small (< 800 caribou) and declining. Very little was heard about this in United States press because the boycott called by the more radical groups did not work. The people of the Yukon favored wolf control (61%) in a poll by the *The Whitehorse Star*.

THE IUCN WOLF MANIFESTO AND THE WORLD CONSERVATION STRATEGY

The IUCN Manifesto on Wolf Conservation (1974) was also suggested as a guideline for Alaska at the summit. The section of the manifesto dealing with wolf reductions states:

“It is recognized that occasionally there may be scientifically established need to reduce non-endangered wolf populations; further it may become scientifically established that in certain endangered wolf populations specific individuals must be removed by appropriate conservation authorities for the benefit of the wolf population. Conflict with man sometimes occurs from undue economic competition or from imbalances predator/prey ratios adversely affecting prey species and/or the wolf itself. In such cases, temporary reduction of wolf populations may become nec-

essary, but reduction measures should be imposed under strict scientific management. The methods must be selective, specific to the problem, highly discriminatory, and have minimal adverse effect on the ecosystem. Alternative ecosystem management, including alteration of human activities and attitudes and non-lethal methods of wolf management should be fully considered before lethal wolf reduction is employed. The goal of wolf management programs must be to restore and maintain a healthy balance in all components of the ecosystem. Wolf reduction should never result in the permanent extirpation of the species from any portion of its natural range.”

In general, the wolf reduction plans proposed in Alaska meet most the terms of the Yukon Plan and the IUCN Wolf Manifesto. Details of each could be argued, such as two year season closures before implementation in the Yukon plan which is not specific as to sex or age class of harvest. A limited male harvest prior to implementation would not impact the population. We could debate the value of active management before a population is in an emergency situation.

Sustained yield management which is a mandate in Alaska's constitution and a pillar in the IUCN World Conservation Strategy (WCS) (Thomson 1992) would require active management before a crisis. The IUCN WCS has three principal objectives:

- (1) To maintain essential ecological processes and life support systems.
- (2) To preserve genetic diversity.
- (3) To ensure the sustainable utilisation of species and ecosystems.

The third objective was amplified by the IUCN with this statement: “The social and economic benefits from sustained use can provide a powerful incentive to conserve wild species and their supporting ecosystems, provided the people most likely to have an impact on the species and ecosystems concerned have an adequate share of those benefits.”

These principals are very important and provide an internationally recognized basis for sound wildlife management. The IUCN represents the international community through 118 signatory countries and is the largest and most experienced alliance of wild natural resource management authorities, environmental agencies, and natural history groups in the world, and still growing. It is not a coincidence that animal rights groups are attacking the third objective that recognizes sustained yield. Thomson (1992) suggests that one can sort out the groups that truly believe in wildlife conservation by determining if they subscribe to the three WCS objectives. Thomson (1992) expresses a deep concern that the minority animal rights groups in the United States are driving policy that affects the majority of true conservationists. Alaska's experience with the wolf management planning process is a good example of how they do it.

THE JANUARY 1993 BOG MEETING

The BOG met in January, 1993, to review their decisions in November, based on input from the summit. BOG Chairman Burley defended the wolf management plan passed in November as scientifically sound and a political compromise. He criticized animal rights groups and the news media for distorting facts. The inability of the ADF&G to educate the public on this issue was a focus of discussion. Most agreed that it would be impossible on such a complex issue in the time required, when opposition could be mobilized by a few sensational "buzz-words". Nevertheless, all agreed that a better educational and public relations program must be established.

Since aerial control could not be used, the BOG realized that the Zone Management System system would not work and rescinded the parts of the plan dealing with zoning. This also necessitated deleting the Area Specific Management Plans and the Implementation Plans and any references to these in the Plan.

The goals, purposes, findings, and principles sections which came directly from the planning team report and the provisions for emergency situation plans were retained. The BOG also repealed restrictions against nonresident participation in wolf control and against persons providing compensation to a permittee-pilot for participation in wolf control efforts. Finally, the BOG requested proposals be prepared to allow same-day-airborne taking of wolves.

With these actions, regulations were to be put back in place that were rescinded during the planning process, and essentially prepared for a new start. This left all options open for the ADF&G to come up with a new program. The BOG and the ADF&G agreed to hold a special meeting in June on wolf management to address these issues.

The open process provided by the wildlife management system in Alaska remains intact, but nevertheless damaged. The majority of the BOG felt that future wolf management programs could be addressed as they arise without the high profile that was associated with this process. Wolf management should be handled like management programs for every other species. Identifying the wolf with a special plan appeared to be doomed from the start.

EVENTS FOLLOWING THE JANUARY BOG MEETING

Following the January BOG meeting, four Fish and Game Advisory Committee's adjacent to the proposed GMU 20A wolf control area petitioned ADF&G Commissioner Rosier to declare an emergency in the area and recommend a new aerial wolf control program to a special BOG meeting. Commissioner Rosier declined to call it an emergency situation, but said that the BOG could still hold a special session and authorize a control program. However, he indicated that any conflict between he and the BOG would have to be resolved by Governor Hickel, and Hickel had already said

that there will be no aerial wolf control in 1993. The BOG was again taken out of the loop and would only antagonize the frail process if it were to respond to the advisory committee's request over the Commissioners recommendation. However, of greater importance was the fact that even if a plan were authorized, the aircraft restriction would prevent any effective, efficient, humane, and successful wolf reduction. Secondly, the present guidelines in the Strategic Plan would require the Commissioner to draft an emergency situation plan that would have to include one public meeting in or near the affected area and another in a regional population center. Then it would be presented to the BOG for their deliberation with public hearings. If the BOG approves, then it could be implemented. Most BOG members agreed that there was inadequate time remaining for this process to be completed to implement that winter/spring season. Based on these circumstances the BOG did not call for a special meeting in spite of tremendous pressure to do so and placed their faith in the statements by the ADF&G that they would prepare some workable options for the BOG to consider in a special June meeting.

As per the call for a BOG meeting in June 1993 to exclusively discuss wolf management, announcements went out immediately to the public to submit proposals to the BOG for their deliberation. The cutoff date for these proposals was March 31. The proposals were published and made available to the public and public hearings were scheduled for the first two days of the June meeting. Of the 92 proposals received, 71 were for some form of positive management or control of wolves and 21 were for negative management or protection.

On June 8, 1993, Commissioner Rosier announced that the ADF&G will not support aerial hunting of wolves when the BOG meets on June 26. This contradicted earlier ADF&G published proposals (Alaska Department of

Fish and Game 1993). Instead, ADF&G will recommend trapping in the GMU 20 Delta caribou by Department personnel. No control plan is recommended for other areas. This did not appease the animal rights groups. Friends of Animals indicated that they would initiate another tourism boycott of Alaska who claims that Governor Hickel promised them that no wolves will be killed. California based In Defense of Animals was quoted by the *Anchorage Daily News* "It is not an issue of how they kill them [wolves], it's the intention of reducing predators for the sake of sport hunters".

Friends of Animals followed their threat of a boycott of Alaska with an add in major newspapers including *USA Today* on June 16, 1993. The add read "If Alaska shoots the parents and starves the orphans, how will they treat the tourists". It is followed by inaccurate details of what will occur and then a plea for \$20 to help stop the wolf slaughter. This was more than Governor Hickel could take and he ordered that a suit be filed against the group for lies about the state's proposals. Governor Hickel also said the state will make a mail fraud complaint to the U.S. Postal Service against Friends of Animals. This all happened before the BOG even met to decide which, if any, of the 93 proposals to authorize.

THE JUNE 1993 BOG MEETING

The special meeting of the BOG on wolf management began with two days of public testimony, which covered the spectrum from complete protection to authorizing bounties. Nearly all the major animal rights groups were represented by their top officials, except the representative of Friends of Animals, who did not want to come to be served papers by Alaska's Attorney General.

Deliberations began with the BOG agreeing that wolves need to be controlled under certain conditions. They turned down several proposals asking to reclassify wolves as predator or furbearer from big game animals. They

rejected proposals that would allow aerial shooting, aerial land and shoot hunting, night lights, and they tabled all proposals allowing use of snowmachines to take wolves. It should be noted that the BOG actions on these important issues were not covered by the major press. They seemed to wait for the animal rights groups to tell them what to cover. The BOG then allowed same-day airborne taking of wolves with a trapping license, provided no shooting occur within 300 feet of the aircraft. This allows those trappers that run their lines with aircraft to be able to take wolves as they run their lines. It was emphasized that this was strictly an access issue.

The animal rights groups grasped the same-day airborne trapping regulation and indicated this was grounds for them to call for a boycott. Some of the news media went with their complaints and called it a "license to harass" and an "airborne wolf-hunt" and tied it to hunters, rather than trappers. It seemed to most observers that they did not understand the regulation and certainly did not appreciate the distance provision. It was another opportunity the BOG gave them to "play their game".

The BOG then replaced the Strategic Wolf Management Plan with a new document that was titled "Wolf Conservation Management Policy for Alaska". This policy indicates the conditions under which the BOG will consider wolf control. It will occur when:

1. wolf predation is a factor in an unacceptable decline in prey population size or productivity;
2. wolf predation is a factor preventing recovery of a lowdensity prey population; or
3. wolf predation is a factor preventing attainment of approved population or human use objectives.

The new policy statement contains some elements of the Strategic Wolf Management Plan, but noticeably absent were the zoning requirements (removed in January) and the

emergency situation plan which was removed at this meeting. The emergency plan was redundant since the Commissioner and the Board already had these powers in statute.

The BOG then approved the proposed wolf control program in a portion of GMU 20A south of Fairbanks using trapping and ground shooting methods by ADF&G personnel or persons authorized by them. The objective was clearly stated that the program was to provide additional prey, primarily caribou, for hunters (all Alaskans are considered subsistence users by law). Regular trapping and hunting will continue. This program will be evaluated this winter and results reported at the spring 1994 BOG meeting. This control program was reviewed by Dr. David Mech, and he informed the ADF&G that it complies with the provisions of the IUCN Wolf Manifesto. The BOG excluded from the control area the portion of the GMU that is adjacent to Denali National Park and the military lands. The area is less than 1% of Alaska's total.

Nearly all BOG members were on record as recognizing this was the only option remaining without aerial control and should be tested and evaluated. They maintained that aerial shooting from a helicopter was the most effective, efficient, selective, and humane wolf control method. Many felt that this method may have to be employed in the future; particularly if the ground trapping efforts are not successful.

The BOG was able to maintain some semblance of an active management program for wolves. No one could be completely satisfied with the outcome, but the BOG took a course down the middle and retained a program that could be further built upon. The important thing from here on is that the Administration maintain their support for this program. There will be efforts by animal rights groups to undermine the process. However, if Alaska stands firm, we can proceed with our active management programs, as they did in the Yukon, and continue to comply

with our constitutional mandate to manage wildlife for sustained yield for use by people.

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APPENDIX I WOLF MANAGEMENT ZONES

Zone 1 - Full Protection

Human use goals are:

1. to provide areas where wolves and prey are fully protected from hunting and trapping;
2. to provide opportunities to view, pho-

tograph, hear, enjoy, and learn more about wolves and prey in an unaltered environment;

3. to provide opportunities for scientific study of wolves where human influence is minimal.

Conditions of use and management are:

1. emphasis is on non-consumptive uses of both wolves and prey;
2. hunting and trapping of wolves and prey are not allowed; and
3. human activities and developments are regulated to keep disturbances of wolves and prey to a minimum.

Example: The original Denali National Park

Zone 2 - Wolf Protection

Human use goals are the same as Zone 1

Conditions of use and management are:

1. emphasis is on nonconsumptive uses of wolves;
2. hunting and trapping of wolves are not allowed;
3. hunting and trapping of other species may be allowed; and
4. use and management intensity of other species may vary from low or minimal to high or intensive.

Example: Chugach State Park

Zone 3 - Minimum to moderate use of wolves and prey/Minimum management of wolves and prey

Human use goals are:

1. to provide areas where wolves and prey are not significantly influenced by people and are affected primarily by natural environmental factors;
2. to provide opportunities to view, photograph, hear, enjoy, and learn more about wolves and prey in nearly unaltered environments;
3. to provide opportunities for scientific study of wolves where human-caused mortality and manipulations are not

significant factors; and

4. to allow low to moderate harvests of wolf and prey populations to meet special needs.

Conditions of use and management are:

1. emphasis is on nonconsumptive and special consumptive uses of both wolves and prey;
2. hunting and trapping of wolves are allowed, but harvests will normally be low to moderate in most areas, and;
3. wolf population regulation and reduction are not allowed.

Example: Alaska Native Land Claims Settlement Act (ANILCA) Park Units

Zone 4 - Moderate use of wolves and prey/Minimum management of wolves and minimum to moderate management of prey

Human use goals are:

1. to provide areas where wolves and prey are primarily affected by natural environmental factors, but some influence by people is permitted;
2. to provide opportunities to view, photograph, hear, enjoy, and learn more about wolves and prey in an environment that may be slightly altered; and
3. to provide for moderate harvests of wolves and prey by people.

Conditions of use and management are:

1. emphasis is on nonconsumptive and moderate consumptive uses of wolves and prey;
2. hunting and trapping of wolves and prey are allowed, but harvest rates will be kept low to moderate by hunting/trapping regulations or remote access; and
3. wolf population regulation and reduction are not allowed.

Example: Wrangell-St. Elias National Preserve.

Zone 5 - Moderate use of wolves and moderate to high use of prey/Moderate management of wolves and moderate to intensive management of prey

Human use goals are:

1. to provide areas where wolves are influenced by both natural environmental factors and by people;
2. to provide opportunities to view, photograph, hear, enjoy, and learn more about wolves and prey under managed conditions; and
3. to provide for moderate harvests of wolves and moderate to high harvests of prey by people.

Conditions and use of management are:

1. emphasis is on consumptive uses of wolves and prey;
2. hunting and trapping of wolves and prey are allowed;
3. moderate harvest rates of wolves will normally be maintained while harvests of prey will normally range from moderate to high;
4. wolf control, i.e. population regulation and reduction, will not normally occur but may be considered at the request or concurrence of the land owner/manager; and
5. if wolf control does occur, either land and shoot or aerial shooting may be utilized.

Example: Game Management Units 14A and 14B.

Zone 6 - High use of wolves and prey/Moderate management of wolves and moderate to intensive management of prey

Human use goals are:

1. to provide areas where wolves and prey are managed for high human use;
2. to provide opportunities to view, photograph, hear, enjoy, and learn more

about wolves and prey under managed conditions; and

3. to provide for high harvests of wolves and prey by people.

Conditions of use and management are:

1. emphasis is on elevated consumptive uses of wolves and prey;
2. hunting and trapping of wolves are allowed and may be encouraged;
3. wolves and prey will normally be managed to provide for moderate to high harvests;
4. land-and-shoot taking of wolves as a regulation or reduction measure may be allowed under permit;
5. wolf populations may be regulated at levels below those that would occur naturally; and
6. wolf population reductions are not anticipated, but may be allowed.

Example: Game Management Unit 13

Zone 7 - High use/Intensive management of wolves and prey

Human use goals are:

1. to provide areas where wolves and prey are intensively managed for human use;
2. to provide for high harvests of wolves and prey by people;
3. to provide a mechanism for increasing depressed prey populations or harvests when wolf predation is a major limiting factor.

Conditions of use and management:

1. emphasis is on prey population recovery and elevated and sustained consumptive uses of wolves and prey;
2. hunting and trapping of wolves are allowed and may be encouraged;
3. wolves and prey will normally be managed to provide for high harvests;
4. land-and-shoot taking and aerial shooting of wolves as a regulation or

reduction measure may be allowed under permit;

5. wolf populations may be regulated at levels below those that would occur naturally; and
6. wolf population reduction may be necessary periodically but normally would not be a long-term practice.

Example: None in recent years.