

ACR: - Prohibit the take of wolves on lands in GMU 20 adjacent to Denali National Park

SUBMITTED BY:

Alaska Wildlife Alliance and Denali Citizens Council

MEETING ACR SUBMITTED FOR:

Board of Game Meeting in March 2016

CITE THE REGULATION THAT WILL BE CHANGED IF THIS ACR IS HEARD.

5 AAC 92.510. Areas closed to hunting.
5 AAC 92.550. Areas closed to trapping.

**WHAT IS THE PROBLEM YOU WOULD LIKE THE BOARD TO ADDRESS?
STATE IN DETAIL THE NATURE OF THE CURRENT PROBLEM.**

The problem is low numbers and densities of wolves in GMU 20C, which includes Denali National Park and state lands north of the park. The park's spring 2015 survey counted just 48 wolves in the park (a record low number), and since then two additional wolves, including a pregnant female, were killed in May outside of the park, at least one of whom had spent some time at a bear baiting station. Although not the only reason for these declines, hunter/trapper harvest of wolves that den in Denali National Park is significant for individual packs and decreases the opportunity for tourists to view, photograph and enjoy them in a non-consumptive manner.

A small, defined area of state land (a/k/a the Wolf Townships) was set aside as a no-take buffer in 2002, to conserve wolves that den in the park when they follow migrating prey. This area was allowed to sunset by the Board of Game in 2010, and at that time the Board imposed a six-year moratorium on new buffer proposals. **The March 2016 statewide meeting coincides with the expiration of the moratorium, and will provide the only opportunity in 2016 to discuss this issue. Therefore we ask that this proposal be considered at the statewide meeting.**

WHAT SOLUTION DO YOU PREFER?

The Board of Game should approve an area closed to the take of wolves adjacent to Denali National Park.

DRAFT REGULATORY LANGUAGE:

Take of wolves is prohibited on lands (GMU 20), in the area bounded on the west by the east boundary of Denali National Park; extending east to one mile east of, and parallel to, the Anchorage-Fairbanks Intertie Electrical Power Line; on the south by Carlo Creek; and on the north by a line from the southeast corner of Township 11S, Range 9W (Latitude 63 degrees, 55 minutes North), due east to the George Parks Highway, then

south along the Parks Highway to a line running due east from the Highway through the town of Healy, to one mile east of the Intertie Line; inclusive of all lands west of the George Parks Highway commonly referred to as the “Wolf Townships,” and/or “Stampede Trail”.

See the 2016 Denali Wolf Buffer Proposal Boundary map accompanying the Proposal submitted herewith.

STATE IN DETAIL HOW THIS ACR MEETS THE CRITERIA STATED ABOVE.

a) for a conservation purpose or reason:

The wolves that den and spend much of their time in Denali National Park are a scientifically, socially, culturally and economically valuable wildlife resource highly valued by both Alaskans and visitors seeking the unique experience of seeing a wolf in the wild. Without the requested closed area, the park’s wolf population will likely remain at unprecedented low numbers and densities, and ongoing harvest by hunters and trappers will become proportionally more significant in this decline.

b) to correct an error in regulation: Not applicable.

c) to correct an effect on a hunt that was unforeseen when a regulation was adopted:

The take of two wolves from the East Fork pack on state lands north of Denali National Park in May 2015, described above, was likely the result of more hunters being in the field to hunt brown bears at bait stations from April 15-June 30, under regulations adopted for this area (GMU 20C) by the Board of Game in 2012. The effect of these bear hunting regulations on wolf take (legal until May 31 under existing regulations) was unforeseen when the bear hunting regulations were adopted. This unexpected effect led to an Emergency Closure of wolf take on some state lands in GMU 20C adjacent to the national park on May 15, 2015.

In 2014, the Board of Game increased the wolf hunting bag limit in GMU 20C from 5 to 10 wolves. With additional hunters in the field, this more liberal bag limit will likely result in a higher number of wolves harvested. The Board of Game should consider the additional, unforeseen pressure on an already low wolf population in GMU 20C caused by the presence of bear hunters in May and June, and by more liberal wolf bag limits on state lands close to the national park.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF THIS PROBLEM IS NOT SOLVED PRIOR TO THE REGULAR CYCLE?

The park’s wolf population has declined steadily during the past nine years, and since 2010 the opportunity to view a wolf inside the park has declined dramatically. Significantly, between the spring and fall 2014 surveys an expected rebound in the numbers due to pup production did not occur. Without a solution to this problem, more wolves that venture outside Denali Park will be taken in the 2015-16 hunting/trapping season, placing an already regionally depleted population under additional stress, with associated loss of viewing opportunities.

STATE WHY YOUR ACR IS NOT PREDOMINANTLY ALLOCATIVE.

The aforementioned decline, documented in the accompanying proposal, represents a serious and continuing decline in the population of a valuable wildlife resource, and therefore is a current and critical conservation issue. Though this decline is not considered by many to be a population-level biological concern, we argue that sub-unit and regional population concerns should be eligible for consideration.

IF THIS REQUEST IS ALLOCATIVE, STATE THE NEW INFORMATION THAT COMPELS THE BOARD TO CONSIDER AN ALLOCATIVE PROPOSAL OUTSIDE OF THE REGULAR CYCLE.

Many consider the issue of wolf-take adjacent to Denali National Park to be predominantly allocative. Although we believe there is a critical conservation concern with respect to these particular wolves, we also agree that allocation between consumptive and non-consumptive uses is an important element of this issue.

What is new and compelling is the following: In 2015, the Board of Game made the decision to defer the Interior Region (Region III) meeting from 2016 to 2017, as part of its decision to move to a three year cycle of meetings. The organizations and individuals who intended to bring a Proposal regarding wolf- take in the Denali region had expected to be able to do so in 2016, especially because the Board had placed a six year moratorium on such proposals in 2010. We consider it an obligation for the Board of Game to provide that opportunity in 2016.

STATE YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE ISSUE THAT IS THE SUBJECT OF THIS ACR.

The Alaska Wildlife Alliance is a nonprofit organization speaking for non-consumptive users of this wildlife resource. Denali Citizens Council is a locally-based, nonprofit, public interest organization whose members have a direct interest in conservation of Denali wolves.

STATE WHETHER THIS ACR HAS BEEN CONSIDERED BEFORE, EITHER AS A PROPOSAL OR AS AN ACR, AND IF SO, DURING WHICH BOARD OF GAME MEETING.

Most recently, an Emergency Petition requesting closure of this area was introduced but not considered at the Board of Game's March 2015 meeting. Since the 2010 Region III Board of Game meeting, there has been a moratorium on proposals for areas closed to the take of wolves on lands adjacent to Denali National Park. This moratorium will expire in 2016.