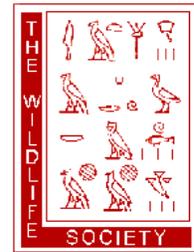




The Alaskan Wildlifer

Newsletter of the Alaska Chapter of
The Wildlife Society

August 2008



Highlights in This Issue

- *Message from president Howard Golden*
- *Perspective: Reliable knowledge should guide wildlife decisions.*
- *News from around the state*
- *Annual meeting rotation discussion*
- *Membership Contributions*
 - *Announcing new web-posting feature*
 - *Ballot Measure 2: The devil is in the details*
 - *Politics and "Sound" Science*

Message from President Howard Golden

I hope everyone's been out enjoying the summer. Southcentral is working on a record cold, wet summer so empathy is high for the experiences of Alaskans in Southeast.

Updated and new position statements & committee activities:

Arctic Refuge. A committee of chapter members chaired by Dick Shideler is nearing completion of an update to our Chapter position statement "*Oil and Gas Development in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.*" As soon as final revisions are made to the draft, it will be distributed to all members for review and vote.

Pack goats. Jim Herriges and committee are continuing work on a draft of the new position statement on disease risk of domestic goats and sheep in Dall sheep and mountain goat habitat. He hopes to get the draft through the committee by autumn and then on to the chapter for review and vote.

Tangle Lakes. A committee was formed following the annual meeting in April to prepare a letter to the Governor on the habitat and wildlife values of the Tangle Lakes area. This area is slated for potential mineral development and the letter is intended to supplement and support the position of the Board of Game that wildlife values in the Tangle Lakes area should be the primary concern in any questions of resource development in that area. Committee members are Bob Tobey, Dave Tessler, and Kyle Joly. They are currently preparing a position criteria questionnaire. This questionnaire is required for any position statement proposed by Chapter members. The

Executive Board will review the questionnaire and vote on its approval. If approved, the letter will be drafted and presented to Chapter members for review and approval.

Polar bears. Also at the annual meeting, the issue of the delayed decision about listing polar bears as threatened was raised and an *ad hoc* committee of Matt Kirchhoff and Erich Follmann agreed to look into what, if any, response would be reasonable for the Chapter to make. Shortly after the annual meeting the Department of Interior elected to list polar bears as threatened. Consequently, the committee and the Executive Board see little value in pursuing any action on this issue.

Existing position statements:

Before long, we should consider updating a couple of existing position statements. One is the position on *Intensive Management of Big Game* that the Chapter prepared in 1995. The purpose of that position statement was "*to identify concerns about Alaska Statute 16.05.255 (e-g), and to recommend appropriate amendments that would reconcile the law with sound wildlife management practices.*" Much has happened in regulation and on the ground since this statement was drafted. Along with the continuing concerns expressed by the public for and against intensive management in Alaska, it seems like a good time to revisit this position statement. **Please contact me (howard.golden@alaska.gov) if you're interested in working on this project as a committee member or chair.** This position statement as well as others produced by the Chapter are posted on our website for your reference (<http://joomla.wildlife.org/alaska/>).



Another existing position statement that probably needs attention is *Wildlife Management by Ballot Initiative* that was produced in 1998. The purpose of this position statement was “to examine the use of ballot initiatives to manage wildlife in Alaska and to recommend an appropriate course of action for Alaskans to take in managing wildlife.” This is an important topic in Alaska. In the primary election ballot this month, voters will be asked to decide on Ballot Measure 2: “An act prohibiting the shooting of wolves and grizzly bears with the use of aircraft.” It has been several years since voters passed similar ballot measures, which were subsequently reversed by the legislature. One of the member opinion pieces in this newsletter addresses this topic. A copy of the Chapter’s existing position statement has been included to provide you with more background. **Again, please contact me if you’re interested in working on this project as a committee member or chair.**

COWCH volunteers needed:

The Executive Board voted to extend the contract with the UAF Oral History Program for one additional year to complete interviews with former Alaskan wildlife biologists. Although a researcher from UAF will conduct the interviews, we need members to help arrange and participate in the interview process. Kyle Joly and Thomas McDonough have volunteered but they could use additional help to make sure we complete the interviews. **Please contact me, Kyle (kyle_joly@nps.gov), or Thomas (thomas.mcdonough@alaska.gov) if you’d like to help.**

Opinion piece:

In June, the Executive Board prepared an opinion piece about reliable knowledge and wildlife management. The piece was in response to what many of us perceived as a general lack of understanding by people about the scientific process and how it fits into the pursuit of sound wildlife science often called for by board of game members, politicians, and the public. One prominent state legislator went so far as to confuse wildlife biologists with another profession whose practitioners are charged with advocating for their clients. The Executive Board deliberated about the best approach to take in response to these misunderstandings. Rather than try to respond to particular comments by individuals in the news about wildlife scientists or their motivations, we decided to prepare an opinion piece that focused on informing Alaskans about the scientific process as it relates specifically to wildlife management. We agreed this approach was most appropriate given our mission of wildlife stewardship through science and education.

Reliable knowledge should guide wildlife management decisions and policy

By Howard Golden and AK Chapter Executive Board,
Published 29 June 2008, Fairbanks Daily News-Miner.

There has been much discussion in Alaska about the need for sound science in managing wildlife. Alaskans have a right to demand that those entrusted with managing their wildlife resources use sound science to help guide decisions and public policy, whether it’s about predator-prey management or the status of polar bears.

With that demand must also come an understanding of the scientific process and how it forms the basis of sound science and how it should inform the decision-making process.

The scientific process seeks reliable knowledge by attempting to explain the natural world through observation and experimentation. Scientists propose hypotheses to explain their observations and design experiments to test those hypotheses. Reliable knowledge is produced when repeated experiments yield similar results. Such knowledge enables scientists to make reliable predictions, often in the form of mathematical models, of what would happen under events such as resource exploration and development or various wildlife management decisions.

Although models are a simplified and imperfect description of a complex system in the real world, they allow study of how a system works or prediction of how a system would respond to an environmental or management change.

Wildlife scientists, like all scientists, are skeptical of their own and others’ research data until they are convinced the conclusions drawn are correctly inferred from relevant observations, experiments and models. Papers published in scientific journals must pass review by at least two anonymous reviewers with knowledge and expertise on the subject, in addition to review by the journal’s editors. A crucial element of the scientific process is that other scientists test or attempt to invalidate one another’s data, models and predictions.

Gaining reliable knowledge is only a first step in science-based decision making. Science does not tell us whether a decision is right or wrong--it merely informs us of the consequence of an action or what could happen if an action occurs. Wildlife management and policy decisions also depend on the



social, economic, political, financial and ideological circumstances of the participants and the moment.

Whether and how to develop resources or manage wildlife involves value judgments made by elected and appointed officials and the public through a structured process. Wildlife scientists should advocate for the use of scientific reason and evidence to guide management decisions and policy.

Alaskans care deeply about sustaining the abundant wildlife resources in our state. To do so will require skilled scientific practice that produces reliable knowledge needed for sound wildlife management.

News from Southeast:

By Dave Person, Southeast Representative

People

Patricia O'Connor has been working as acting assistant forest supervisor for the Tongass National Forest until the hiring process for a new assistant supervisor is completed. Tricia should be returning to her position as Wildlife and Subsistence Staff Officer for the forest in September.

Ken Taylor retired as deputy commissioner of Alaska Department of Fish and Game overseeing the Divisions of Sport Fish, Wildlife Conservation, Subsistence, and Habitat. Ken worked for the department for many years, retired, and then came back under the Palin administration as deputy commissioner. He will take a job with Pebble Partners as vice president for environmental affairs at the proposed Pebble Mine.

Steve Bethune has been hired by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game as assistant area biologist. He previously was employed by the Alaska Department of Natural Resources in Anchorage. He will work under Ketchikan Area Biologist Boyd Porter. Steve will be responsible for wildlife management activities in the vicinity of Prince of Wales Island (game management unit 2) and will also assist Rich Lowell, the Petersburg Area biologist, with work in game management unit 3, which includes areas surrounding Mitkof, Kupreanof Islands, and Wrangell Islands as well as a portion of the mainland.

News

Blacktailed deer habitat. Two conservation groups, Greenpeace and Cascadia Wildlands Project, sued the Forest Service in Federal District Court to stop 4 proposed timber sales within the Tongass National

Forest. The complaint focuses mainly on how the habitat suitability (HSI) model for Sitka black-tailed deer has been employed during timber planning by the Forest Service. The plaintiffs argue that incorrect use of the model threatens subsistence harvesting and other species dependent on deer such as wolves. The HSI model is a relatively simple tool that combines variables such as habitat type, aspect, elevation, and snowfall to create an index that can be used to compare the potential effects of different timber project alternatives on deer. However, it is also used to evaluate effects of timber projects on subsistence harvest and the capacity of project areas to sustain deer population levels sufficient to simultaneously support wolves and hunting. Regardless of the outcome of the suit, Forest Service staff and scientists have been working (together with ADFG staff) to develop a better approach to modeling effects of timber harvest on deer and their habitats.

The mule deer working group sponsored by the Western Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies (WAFWA) is in the process of completing a series of publications that provide comprehensive information for managing habitat for mule deer. The volume covering black-tailed deer in coastal forests of the Pacific Northwest and Alaska has been completed and approved by the directors of the cooperating state agencies. Copies of the guidelines will be available from WAFWA and participating state wildlife agencies including ADFG.

Education and research. Always creative when it comes to teaching students and volunteers about wildlife research in spectacular locations, **Matt Kirchhoff** (ADFG) taught a field marine ornithology course to students from University of Alaska Southeast. The course brought students out to field camps located near Lemesurier Island, Elfin Cove, and Point Adolphus to teach them about methods of doing research on marine birds. Students conducted visual surveys of marbled murrelets and then learned how to analyze the data. **Kristin Romanoff** (ADFG) has also been active teaching people about science and marbled murrelets through her citizen's science initiative and "Murrelet Watch" program. Kristin has involved local citizens in early morning murrelet surveys throughout SE Alaska. Folks involved in the program collect important biological data while simultaneously learning about scientific methods.



News from Southcentral:

By Todd Rinaldi, Southcentral Representative

People

Tom Lohuis, Director of the Moose Research Center, has accepted a new position with ADFG in Anchorage as the Regional Sheep Biologist. In addition to examining Dall Sheep demography across the entire Chugach Range, Tom will incorporate his background in energetics and physiology to begin addressing age-specific survival questions.

Michelle Drago, a USFS Biological Science Technician with the Seward Ranger District, will be leaving Alaska in August to take a position as a Wildlife Biologist for the Siuslaw National Forest in Oregon.

Judy Putera, long time Wildlife Biologist at Lake Clark National Park and Preserve, is now the Wildlife Biologist at Wrangell St. Elias National Park and Preserve.

News

Anchorage - The Alaska Chapter of the Wildlife Society provided \$500 to the program *Safe Neighborhoods, Wild Bears* for its summer pilot project aimed at encouraging Anchorage residents to use bear-resistant garbage containers. This collaborative project by Fish and Game, the Municipality of Anchorage, nonprofits and Alaska Waste is working very well in Stuckagain Heights, one of the pilot neighborhoods with high participation in the project. In the Muldoon area, however, where participation is below 50 percent, there are still many bears getting into trash. Overall, however, it has encouraged more Anchorage residents to use bear-resistant containers, even outside the pilot neighborhoods where cost of the containers is not subsidized. For more information go to: <http://www.alaskabears.alaska.gov/>.

Kenai - The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, as mandated through ANILCA, is required to prepare and update conservation plans for all national wildlife refuges in Alaska. The revised draft Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Kenai NWR is available for public comment until 1 September at <http://www.r7.fws.gov/nwr/planning/ccp.htm>.

News from the North:

By Kyle Joly, North Representative

People

Scott Brainerd became the Alaska Department of Fish and Game's Research Coordinator in Fairbanks on 1 July. He has a B.S. from UAF and an M.S. from the University of Montana. He worked for ADFG during late 1970's and early 1980's, studied bobcat and lynx ecology in the Rockies, and worked as marine mammal biologist. He moved to Norway in 1988 and studied the effects of forestry practices on European pine marten--receiving his Ph.D. He worked for the Norwegian Institute for Nature Research (NINA), focusing on large carnivores, primarily wolves. As the international affairs specialist with Norwegian Association of Hunters and Anglers, Scott participated in Nordic and European policy development for hunting NGO's, and authored the approved European Charter for Hunting and Biodiversity for the Council of Europe, Bern Convention. He is happy to be returning to Alaska (after a 23-year absence during which he remained an Alaska Chapter member).

Erich Follmann of the Institute of Arctic Biology and the Department of Biology and Wildlife at UAF received a special recognition from the Alaska Chapter of the Wildlife Society at its annual meeting in Anchorage for over 25 years of dedicated support of the Alaska Chapter and the UAF Student Chapter of The Wildlife Society. He has held several positions at the campus for the last 29 years and is currently Professor of Zoology. In addition to his regular teaching assignments for vertebrate classes he has and continues to mentor graduate students working with mammalian carnivores. Arctic fox ecology and rabies epizootiology are the main focus of his own research efforts and he is currently evaluating the effectiveness of a recombinant DNA oral rabies vaccine in arctic foxes.

News

Western Arctic Caribou Herd Declines. After a nearly 30-year period of increase, the latest (2007) aerial photo-census results revealed the herd has declined. The herd numbered 490,000 caribou in 2003 and 377,000 in 2007. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game is tentatively planning the next census for the summer of 2009.



BLM defers energy leasing on Teshekpuk Lake wetlands for 10 years

By Tom Paragi

In mid-July the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) announced plans to offer 3.9 million acres for oil and gas leasing in the Northeast National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NPR-A). However, 219,000 acres of Teshekpuk Lake and islands will not be leased, and leasing will be deferred for a decade on 430,000 acres of wetlands north and east of the lake.

A 1998 Record of Decision by the BLM had established a Surface Protection Area of nearly 600,000 acres within the 4.6 million acre NPR-A Planning Area that prohibited leasing for oil and gas exploration and development. In 2004, the current administration began attempts to open this area for development.

In August 2007, BLM issued a Draft Supplemental Integrated Activity Plan/Environmental Impact Statement for the NPR-A, outlining alternatives for leasing. TWS submitted comments to BLM in November 2007 with the following recommendations: select Alternative A (*No Action*); maintain the *No-leasing* and *No Surface Activity* areas in the *Teshekpuk Lake Surface Protection Area*; and maintain the lack of road connection between the *Teshekpuk Lake Surface Protection Area* and other oilfield developments on the North Slope.

TWS has provided comments to BLM several times since 2004 on the potential effects of leasing on wildlife populations and habitat in Northeast NPR-A. Details of the most recent comments and a summary of past comments can be found on page 4 of the November 2007 issue of *Alaskan Wildlifer*. Comments provided to BLM from TWS in a 6 November 2007 letter can be viewed on the Chapter website under "*Position Statements*" and then "*Correspondence*".

Meetings and Announcements

American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), Arctic Science Conference, 15-17 September 2008, Fairbanks, Alaska. The theme of the conference is "*Growing Sustainability Science in the North: The Resilience of the People in the Arctic*." The event has three linked themes in successive days: *Observing Change*, *Understanding Change*, and *Responding to Change*. Two sessions of particular relevance to contemporary wildlife management and

subsistence are "*Northern Food Systems and Food Security*" and "*Engaging Local Expertise*." For information about the conference, see <http://www.arcticaaas.org/meetings/2008>. The deadline for early registration is 1 September.



The theme for the 2009 North American Moose Conference and Workshop will be "Population, Behavioral, and Landscape Ecology of Moose: Implications for Theory and Management." Kris Hundertmark will give the Capstone Address, and John Kie and Art Rodgers will

conduct a home-range workshop. Organizers should have a web page up soon at the Department of Biological Sciences at ISU with additional details. Contact Terry Bowyer at bowyterr@isu.edu.

Note: Audio recordings of the 2008 AK Chapter Conference plenary session--*State/Federal Dual Regulation of Terrestrial Wildlife*--are available on the chapter website.

Meeting Rotation Schedule to Remain Unchanged

by Tom Paragi

In the May newsletter I summarized a member proposal from the April business meeting to change the rotation schedule for location of our annual meeting to better accommodate student attendance. Chapter members had voted in summer 2006 to hold the annual meeting every other year in the region where most of our members reside (Southcentral), instead of the earlier policy of rotating annually among the three regions of the state. The recent proposal for members to consider was to hold the meeting every other year where most wildlife students reside (Fairbanks).

In June we heard from several members, and those who chose to vote were 10 in favor of keeping the present rotation schedule and 4 in favor of changing it. The general sentiment was that the present meeting rotation has resulted in increased attendance



by members, which is arguably the first step in keeping our members engaged and our organization functional. Putting it every other year in Fairbanks is too far for our Southeast members to travel every other year. Jim Herriges, our newsletter editor, reminded the Board that the present meeting rotation is a guide or policy (rather than a mandate or bylaw) that permits us to be flexible and perhaps jump out of sequence on occasion if an opportunity to improve attendance presents itself, such as a joint meeting with another group.

Suggestions included the need to improve options for student attendance and participation through financial incentives (travel reimbursement and reduced expenses at the meeting venue) and creating relevant opportunities for experience (workshops, field trips, social mentoring events). Few students in Alaska wildlife programs are student members of TWS through the national organization (\$33/yr), although many are members of the UAF Student Chapter (\$5). We have already set the date for the 2009 meeting (7-9 April at the UAF Wood Center) well before final exams to accommodate students.

Member Contributions—*New web-posting option.*

This section allows Chapter members to discuss topics or ideas pertinent to our organization, following review by the Executive Board. The purpose is to stimulate member involvement and professional discussion. Opinions of the authors do not necessarily reflect those of TWS, the Alaska Chapter TWS, or the contributor's employers.

NEW: You no longer need to wait for the next newsletter to share your essays with other members. Submit your contribution to your regional rep; they'll run it by the Executive Board and, once approved, post it on the Chapter website. It will then typically also be printed in the next newsletter. This will hopefully foster more timely discussion on issues and topics of interest.

Ballot Measure 2: "The devil is in the details"

By Richard H. Bishop

Ballot Measure 2, or 05HUNT on the Division of Elections website, will be on the August 26 Primary Election ballot. It's entitled *An Act Prohibiting the Shooting of Wolves and Grizzly Bears with the Use of Aircraft*.

BM2 would modify state law (AS 16.05.783) by limiting aerial shooting of wolves or grizzly bears to a situation called a "*biological emergency*." Based on what is referred to as "*adequate data*", the following language would become law:

"biological emergency means a condition where a wolf or grizzly bear population in a specific geographic area is depleting a prey population to a point that if not corrected will cause an irreversible decline in the prey population such that it is not likely to recover without wolf or grizzly bear control".

Who decides what is "adequate data"? Probably a judge. Who decides whether the prey population is in an "irreversible decline"? Probably a judge. What is an "irreversible decline"? Is it only a decline which would result in the extirpation of a prey population? Who will decide? Probably a judge.

If factors other than wolves or grizzly bears, such as bad winters, disease, etc., deplete a prey population, can aerial shooting be used to facilitate recovery? It appears not.

Could aerial shooting be used to eliminate a wolf or bear that endangers people or property? It appears not.

Could aerial shooting be used to constrain or prevent disease in wolves or bears? It appears not. Aerial shooting might have been helpful in preventing the lice infestation of wolves from spreading from the Kenai to the Interior.

BM2 would also limit aerial shooting to ADFG personnel. If BM2 passes, any proposed predator management program incorporating aerial shooting is likely to be buried in court. Meanwhile, the USFWS is using aerial shooting to deal with predation by wolves in the Lower 48.

A few years ago, Rollin Sparrowe, former president of TWS, commented that ballot initiatives were a good avenue of establishing public policy only if the public was well informed, thoughtful, and objective. He also noted that those conditions seldom prevailed with respect to initiatives.

If you want to be better informed go to www.wildlife.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=wolf.control and www.elections.alaska.gov/petitions/05hunt.pdf.

(Editor's note: AS 16.05.783 can be found at <http://www.legis.state.ak.us/cgi-bin/folioisa.dll/stattx07/query=16!2E05!2E783/doc/%7B@7548%7D?>)



Politics and "Sound" Science

By Dave Person

Recently, we have been treated to the spectacle of legislators and political pundits commenting on the science concerning polar bears and global warming. One Alaskan state representative suggested that scientists are like lawyers, implying that they tailor their results to the needs of whoever pays the bills. He went on to say that the public deserves "sound science" on the issues and he was determined to buy his version of it with a couple of million dollars from the legislature. Listening to those politicians and pundits talk about "sound science" is like listening to Tony Soprano discussing "ethical" business practices. You know that the phrase is backed up by a very dubious idea of what science is about. Now I am not trying to simply pick on politicians. As George Carlin reminded us, "They come from American parents and American families, American homes, American schools, American churches, American businesses and American universities, and they are elected by American citizens...This is what we have to offer." In short, they are a reflection of the public. If they don't understand much about science, most of the general public probably doesn't either.

It is very difficult for anyone who subscribes to some political ideology to view science through an objective lens. To many politicians, science is "sound" if it agrees with their prejudices or agendas, and "junk" if it does not. Ideologues think they know the "truth" and attempt to shoehorn all evidence into that truth,

while scientists seek evidence about a "truth" they do not know. Unfortunately for political partisans, scientific results often do not fit neatly into the proper boxes that define their world. Politics and science usually do not mesh very well and there is often tension between them. So be it. That tension stimulates creativity, energy, debate, and discovery; harmony would induce sleep.

Science is a process to obtain reliable knowledge while controlling for human biases and distortions. That, of course, is the ideal but human biases always find ways into the process. Nonetheless, peer-review is an effective measure to reduce those biases and is fundamental to science. No other human institution has a comparably rigorous vetting process. Thus, while a few scientists may behave like lawyers, the scientific process tends to limit most of the damage. With respect to attempts by some legislators to buy "sound" science on polar bears and global warming, let them have their "dog and pony" show. It won't matter much more than a tick on a vole's bottom. As John Adams once said, "facts are stubborn things", and rigorous science and reliable knowledge will ultimately win the day.

Please make note of upcoming events, personnel changes, issues and projects, or anything of interest to other AK-TWS members, and pass them on to your regional representative by the 25th of October, January, April, or July. Thanks. Editor

2008-2010 Alaska Chapter Executive Board

President: Howard Golden, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 333 Raspberry Road, Anchorage, AK 99518-1599, howard.golden@alaska.gov, phone (907) 267-2177, fax (907) 267-2433

President-Elect: Kris Hundertmark, University of Alaska-Fairbanks, PO Box 757000, Fairbanks, AK 99775, fkh@uaf.edu, phone (907) 474-7159, fax (907) 474-6967

Past-President: Tom Paragi, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 1300 College Road, Fairbanks, AK 99701, tom.paragi@alaska.gov; phone (907) 459-7327, fax (907) 459-7332

Secretary-Treasurer: Karyn Rode, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1011 East Tudor Road, Anchorage, AK 99503, karyn_ode@fws.gov, phone (907) 786-3801, fax (907) 786-3816

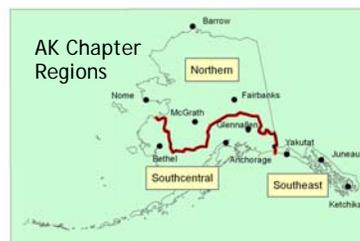
Northern Representative: Kyle Joly, National Park Service, 4175 Geist Road, Fairbanks, AK 99709, kyle_joly@nps.gov, phone (907) 455-0626, fax (907) 455-0602

Southcentral Representative: Todd Rinaldi, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 333 Raspberry Road, Anchorage, AK 99518-1599, todd.rinaldi@alaska.gov, phone (907) 267-2267, fax (907) 267-2433

Southeast Representative: Dave Person, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 2030 Sea Level Drive, Suite 205, Ketchikan, AK 99901, dave.person@alaska.gov, phone (907) 225-2475, fax (907) 225-2771

Newsletter Editor (non-voting): Jim Herriges, U.S. Bureau of Land Management, 1150 University Avenue, Fairbanks, AK 99709-3844, jim_herriges@blm.gov, phone (907) 474-2373, fax (907) 474-2282

UAF Student Chapter TWS Representative (non-voting): Cortney Pylant, 5 Dead End Alley, Fairbanks, AK 99709, fsc1p17@uaf.edu





THE ALASKA CHAPTER OF THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY POSITION STATEMENT ON WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT BY BALLOT INITIATIVE

Issued October 1998

INTRODUCTION

The Wildlife Society is an international professional organization of wildlife researchers, managers, and enforcement personnel dedicated to the sound stewardship of wildlife resources and the environments upon which wildlife and humans depend. The Alaska Chapter is an affiliate organization of over 300 wildlife professionals living and working in Alaska. Most Chapter members are wildlife biologists for state, federal, private, or academic institutions.

The Alaska Chapter adopts position statements on important wildlife management issues in the state. Our purpose in this resolution is to examine the use of ballot initiatives to manage wildlife in Alaska and to recommend an appropriate course of action for Alaskans to take in managing wildlife.

BACKGROUND

Alaska is fortunate in that there is an established democratic process by which the direction for wildlife management in the state is deliberated and decided. That process is the system of local advisory committees and the governor-appointed Board of Game, which has been statutorily delegated the responsibility by the Alaska Legislature. The public is involved at all stages of this regulatory process. In recent years, there has been an increasing tendency for wildlife management decision-making to be taken from the Board of Game and made by the Legislature or by ballot initiatives. Neither of these methods utilizes a deliberative process with both professional biological advice and public input. In 1996 the Alaska Chapter passed a resolution on legislating wildlife management in Alaska. In the following position statement, the Chapter discusses the use of ballot initiatives.

Ballot initiatives addressing wildlife management have become more frequent in Alaska and other states as various interest groups have been unsuccessful using the existing management structures to influence wildlife management decisions according to their own political agenda. The ballot initiative method was used in Alaska in 1996 when an initiative to eliminate same-day airborne hunting of wolves was passed. Now, an initiative to ban snaring of wolves is on the 1998 ballot.

FINDINGS

Wildlife in Alaska and the other 49 states enjoys a unique legal status with distinctive legal principles grounded in the common law of public trust doctrine. Under this concept, wildlife is not legal property and therefore cannot be owned by anyone so long as it remains in its natural condition. The state has a legal duty to manage wildlife for the benefit of its citizens. No state is permitted to abrogate this duty. The state must ensure that no single use interferes with the equality of opportunity for access to wildlife for public trust uses. Hunting, fishing, and trapping are recognized public trust uses of the wildlife resource. The state has primary responsibility for determining the means by which wildlife may be reduced to possession.

Under recent Alaska Supreme Court rulings (Pullen vs. Ulmer 1996, McDowell vs. Alaska 1989, Owsichek vs. Alaska 1988, and CWC Fisheries vs. Bunker 1988), the concept of public trust duty has come to be understood to lie with the Alaska Legislature. The Board of Game, with technical assistance from the Department of Fish and Game, has been delegated the duty, by the Legislature, to manage and allocate the wildlife resource under the strictures of public trust. There is reason to believe that, because the Legislature cannot divest itself of its trust responsibility, allocation and management decisions cannot be delegated to a decision-making process where the Legislature retains no finality on approval; this is the case with ballot initiatives. The argument that wildlife management is exempted from ballot initiatives has yet to be determined by a higher court, but its potential should cause citizens to want clarification before casting their votes.



While we recognize that ballot initiatives are part of a participatory democratic process, it is clear they do not meet the needs of Alaskans to fully deliberate the complexities of harvest methods and means or allocations. Managing wildlife and its use in Alaska is a very complex process that must simultaneously consider biology, culture, and economics. Ballot initiatives bypass the checks and balances of deliberation and possible changes to regulations present in the existing public processes. In ballot initiatives, open debate is usually reduced to sound bites in the media by opposing sides and results in a good deal of misinformation. It is not possible to adequately prepare the voting public to make an informed decision in such a polarized atmosphere.

The current and usual process for dealing with wildlife management issues in Alaska consists of local advisory committees and the governor-appointed Board of Game. These organizations carry out knowledgeable deliberation of proposals submitted by the public, the Department of Fish and Game, and other organizations on a wide variety of issues. Their deliberations and decisions are based on their education from extensive public testimony, presentation from technical experts, and their own specific knowledge of wildlife issues. Although it may occasionally have been affected by politics or was sometimes less responsive to minority views than desirable, the Board of Game system has served Alaskans well and is regarded as a model of democratic wildlife management in the country.

Finally, the role federal subsistence management currently plays with regards to the initiative process must be considered. State statutes, whether passed by legislative action or ballot initiative, cannot countermand federal directives for subsistence management of wildlife on federal lands as provided in the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) of 1980. While state statutes apply to all lands in Alaska, they can be preempted by federal subsistence regulations on federal lands (approximately 60% of the land area in the state). The Federal Subsistence Board regulates subsistence harvest of fish and game on federal lands pursuant to ANILCA. Overtly restrictive measures, such as a proposed ban on the use of snares for wolves, would almost certainly have strong opposition from qualified subsistence users in rural Alaska, and the Federal Subsistence Board would likely reflect their wishes.

RECOMMENDATION

Therefore, The Alaska Chapter of The Wildlife Society recommends that:

1. Wildlife management in Alaska should continue to be guided by the Board of Game system as the most appropriate mechanism to meet the needs of Alaskans and fulfill the requirements of public trust doctrine.
2. The Attorney General of Alaska, under direction by the Governor and Legislature, should investigate the legality of ballot initiatives as applied to wildlife management in Alaska.
3. The Board of Game, under direction by the Governor and Legislature and with assistance from an ad hoc citizen advisory panel, should explore ways of ensuring that the advisory committee and board processes continue to be open and responsive to minority opinion or alternative views of wildlife management and, if necessary, should suggest improvements to these processes.

2008 Membership Subscription and Renewal--Online

New memberships and renewals for the 2008 calendar year are available on-line at The Wildlife Society's store (<https://store.wildlife.org/>). An individual may renew their TWS membership (\$66 regular, \$33 student/retired; \$107 family) as well as their NW Section (\$5.00) and Alaska Chapter (\$5.00) memberships (rising to \$10 for 2009).

Membership in TWS is required in order to be a member of the Alaska Chapter. In addition, journals can be ordered (delivered on-line or on-line and print) and TWS members can join one or more of the 18 TWS working groups. All members will receive *The Wildlife Professional* magazine in addition to *The Wildlifer* newsletter.