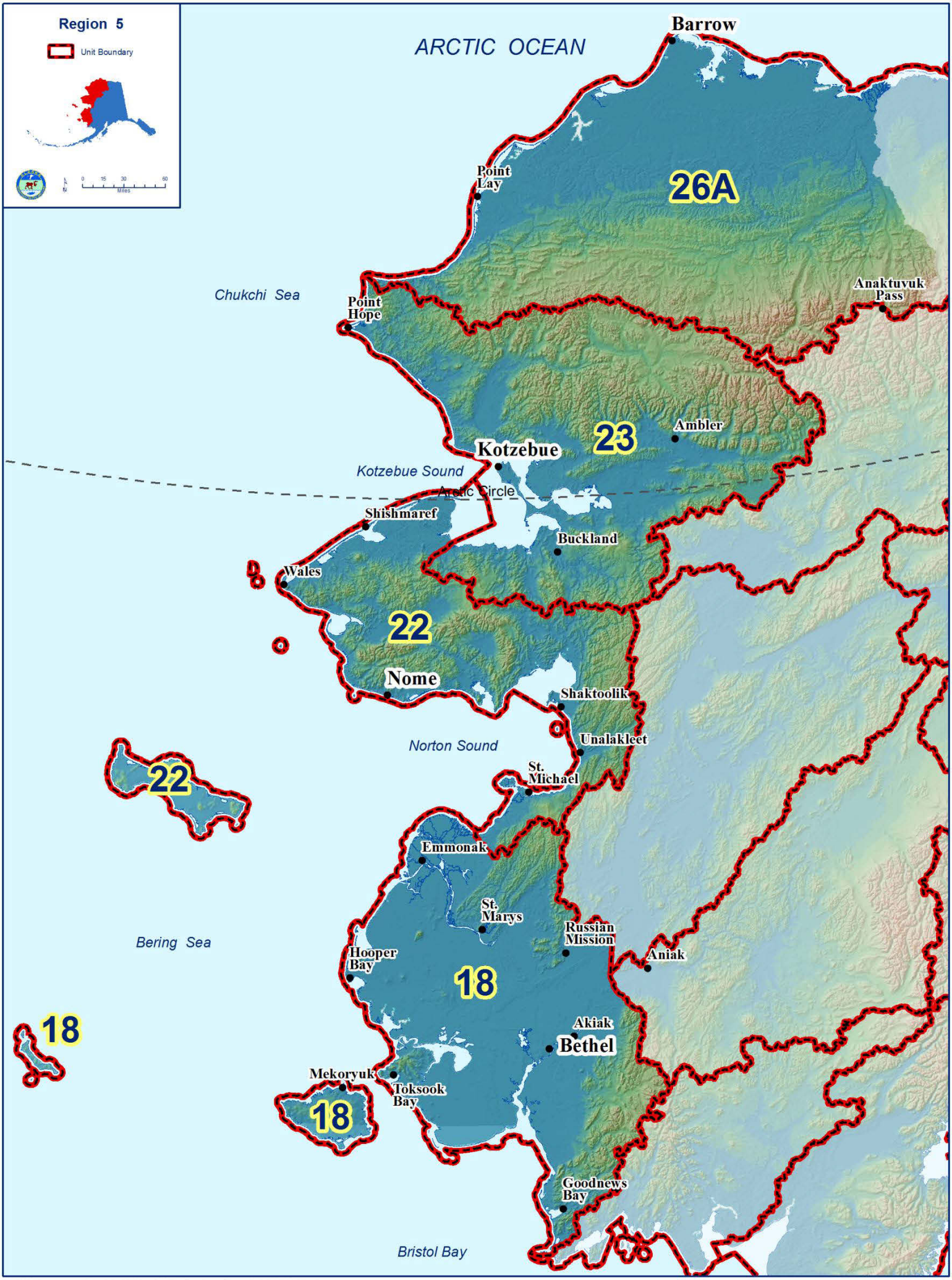

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Region 5 Overview Report to the Board of Game, November 2011

Steven Machida
Regional Supervisor
Region 5

The Division of Wildlife Conservation (DWC) is composed of Headquarters and statewide program staff, and 5 geographic regions.

- Region 5 encompasses the western and northwest portion of Alaska.
- Region 5 comprises about 30% of state in terms of geographic area, and physically is one of the larger regions. In terms of staffing and budget allocation, it is the smallest region.
- The region consists of 4 Game Management Units (18, 22, 23 and 26A).
- DWC biologists and staff are located in Bethel, Nome, Kotzebue, Barrow, Fairbanks and Anchorage

Region 5 staff consists of 8 full time wildlife biologists, 1 wildlife education specialist, 2 fish and wildlife technicians, 2 administrative support positions, a management coordinator and a regional supervisor.

- **Bethel:** Area Biologist (Phillip Perry), Assistant Area Biologist (Patrick Jones)
- **Nome:** Area Biologist (Tony Gorn), Assistant Area Biologist (Letty Hughes), Management Coordinator (Peter Bente), Administrative Manager (Karen Mitchell), Fish and Wildlife Technician (Bill Dunker)
- **Kotzebue:** Area Biologist (Charlotte Westing), Western Arctic Caribou Research Biologist (Jim Dau), Wildlife Education Specialist (Meghan Nedwick), Fish and Wildlife Technician (vacant), Administrative Office Assistant (Sarah Ferguson)
- **Barrow:** Area Biologist (Geoff Carroll)
- **Fairbanks:** Teshekpuk Caribou Research Biologist (Lincoln Parrett)
- **Anchorage:** Steve Machida (Regional Supervisor)
- Most staff have lived and worked in western and northwest Alaska for many years. Region 5 is unique in that most of the staff was locally hired from within the Region; only a few were transfers from the other Regions. We even have some biologists who grew up within Region 5.

Region 5 annual operating budget including salaries is approximately $2.42 million for the current fiscal year, which includes approximately 74% from the Fish and Game Fund and federal Pittman-Robertson funding sources. The remainder of our budget comes from general fund legislative appropriations, and federal and oil industry contract funds.

- 30% spent on the Western Arctic and Teshekpuk Lake caribou herd research and management (activities include photo censuses, spring and fall composition surveys, fall capture/radio-collaring work, calving ground surveys, disease and body condition assessments, telemetry distribution surveys and harvest assessment)
- 18% spent on moose management (activities include fall surveys, spring censuses, radio-collaring projects, browse and habitat evaluation, harvest assessment which includes management of the harvest ticket and village harvest assessment programs)
- 18% spent on other wildlife species (activities include muskoxen radio telemetry-based research, censuses and harvest assessment, wolf population surveys, sheep surveys, raptor surveys, brown bear censuses and management, and furbearer management)
- 4% spent on initiatives to involve the public in management (activities include the Western Arctic Caribou Herd working group, the Seward Peninsula Cooperative Management Group, and most recently, the Unit 23 user conflict stakeholder planning group) Funding for these public involvement initiatives come from legislative general fund and CIP appropriations, and federal contract funds.
- 30% spent on public services, regulatory process and administrative costs (public services would include wildlife and hunter education programs, dissemination of regulatory and other information, support of fur sealers and license vendors)

Species status reports addressed later at this meeting:

- Western Arctic Caribou Herd: This caribou herd is the largest in Alaska, and seasonally has been found within all 4 of the GMUs in Region 5, and in the western and northern portions of Region 3. A detailed report on the biological status of this herd will be provided after the regional overview report.
- Teshekpuk Lake Caribou Herd: This herd is found in the vicinity of Teshekpuk Lake in Unit 26A, and represents one of the most important wildlife resources on the North Slope for caribou hunters. It represents one of our most intensively managed caribou herd with an estimated harvest rate of 10% occurring during some years. Some of the area that this herd uses is under national scrutiny because of the proposed change in the habitat protection status of the critical habitat area around Teshekpuk Lake. This is occurring to provide additional area available for oil/gas leasing in the NPR-A area. We have received a significant amount of contract funds from BLM and Connoco-Phillips over the years to fund our Teshekpuk caribou research program. This status report will be given after the regional overview report.

Wildlife Management Challenges in Region 5

- Dual management with the state and federal management systems represents the most significant challenge in Region 5. Subsistence forms the cornerstone of hunting/fishing/gathering activities in the region, and in the minds of residents of Region 5 is an important cultural concern. To varying degrees, federal public lands are found in all four GMUs, and coordination and cooperation with federal agency staff is an important part of our work.
- Low or declining moose populations require increasingly complex management regimes in all 4 GMUs within Region 5.
- Large caribou populations (Western Arctic and Teshekpuk Lake herds) create expanded opportunities for harvest and some management problems (i.e. area user conflicts and impacts on reindeer herds). Although the Western Arctic Herd is slowly declining in number, it still is very large and forms one of the largest components of our research/management program in Region 5.
- Declining muskoxen populations in all Units within Region 5 present significant management challenges. Declining muskoxen populations on the North Slope in portions of Unit 26 represents a critical concern for both Regions 3 and 5, and you will be given an update of muskoxen population status in all 4 area overviews.
- Increasing wolf and brown bear populations are a source of concern to rural residents in regards to nuisance complaints and impacts on ungulate populations.
- User conflicts issues have been a problem in some areas, particularly in Unit 23. A user conflict stakeholder group was established to address this problem, and is in the process of completion. A report on the status of this group will be given during the Unit 23 overview.
- Collaborative management initiatives have been established for some populations.
    - The Western Arctic Caribou Herd Management Plan representing an exhaustive effort by a large, diverse stakeholder group was endorsed by the Board of Game at their Fall 2003 meeting. This stakeholder group known as the Western Arctic Herd Working Group has continued to meet annually to review caribou management issues, and has taken on an increasingly active role in the NPR-A debate in Unit 26A. This group is becoming financially independent of the Department, and functions primarily with federal funding. They are currently seeking stable funding through our congressional delegation.
    - Cooperative efforts with federal subsistence managers and local land managers has allowed us to harvest Seward Peninsula muskoxen under both a federal and state permit system. When hunting first began in the mid-1990s, all the hunting was done within the confines of the Federal Subsistence program. Currently, most of the harvest now occurs under state-managed permit hunts established by the Board of Game. Although this population is declining in number, it still represents the largest muskoxen population in Alaska.
    - In Unit 18, cooperative efforts with the local advisory committees and federal managers allowed us to develop broad public support for a moose hunting

moratorium in the lower Kuskokwim region. We now have a registration hunt in this area. A similar moratorium was implemented during the 1980s in the lower Yukon area, where the moose population has since increased dramatically. Areas that formerly had few or no moose now have hundreds of them. The history of moose management in Unit 18 presents itself as an interesting and compelling wildlife management success story, and will be the subject of future media articles prepared by our wildlife education specialist. You will hear more about this moose management program during the Unit 18 overview.