

**Annual Report to the Alaska Board of Game on
Intensive Management for Moose
with Wolf, Black Bear and Brown Bear Predation
Control in GMU 16**

**Prepared by the Division of Wildlife Conservation
February 2013**



1) Description of IM Program¹ and Department recommendation for reporting period

A) This report is an annual evaluation for a predation control program authorized by the Alaska Board of Game (Board) under 5 AAC 92.122

B) Month this report was submitted by the Department to the Board:

February X (annual report) August ___ (interim annual update²) Year 2013

C) Program name:

- Unit 16 Predator Control Area
- GMU 16
- Moose

D) Existing program does not have an associated Operational Plan, it does however have a detailed Intensive Management Plan in regulation (5AAC 92.122).

E) Game Management Unit(s) fully or partly included in IM program area: GMU 16A &16B

F) IM objectives for moose population size 6,500–7,500 harvest 310-600

G) Month and year the current predation control program was originally authorized by the Board: March 2004. Indicate date(s) if renewed: May 2006, March 2011

H) Predation control is currently active in this IM area.

I) If active, month and year the current predation control program

- The wolf control program in GMU 16B was originally authorized in March 2004 and implemented during regulatory year (RY) 2004 (RY2004 = 1 July 2004 through 30 June 2005)
- The wolf control program was reauthorized in May 2006 to include part of GMU 16A, and the modifications were implemented during RY2005
- The predator control program was modified to include black bear predation control in March 2007, and the modifications were implemented during RY2008
- The predator control program was reauthorized for 6 years and modified to include brown bear predation control in March 2011, and the modifications were implemented during RY2011.

J) An habitat management program funded by the Department or from other sources is currently active in this IM area (Y/N) N

K) Size of IM program area (square miles) and geographic description:

All non-federal lands in GMU 16B and the western half of GMU 16A (11,105 mi² total)

¹ For purpose and context of this report format, see *Agency Protocol for Intensive Management of Big Game in Alaska*.

² The interim annual update may be limited only to sections that changed substantially since prior annual report

- L) Size and geographic description of area for assessing ungulate abundance:
All available moose habitat in GMU 16B below 3500 ft. elevation including park and preserve land (7,018 mi² total)
- M) Size and geographic description of area for ungulate harvest reporting:
All available moose habitat in GMU 16B below 3500 ft. elevation including park and preserve land (7,018 mi² total)
- N) Size and geographic description of area for assessing predator abundance:
All available moose habitat in GMU 16B below 3500 ft. elevation including park and preserve land (7,018 mi² total)
- O) Size and geographic description of predation control area:
The predation control area includes all non-federal lands in GMU 16B and the western portion of GMU 16A. Area available for control is 7,862 mi² for black bears and 7,777 mi² for wolves. Wolf control areas include buffers around local airstrips. Area available for brown bear predator control is a 946 mi² are in the southern portion of GMU 16B.
- P) Criteria for evaluating progress toward IM objectives:
- Moose population in GMU 16B between 6,500 –7,500 animals
 - Harvest between 310 and 600 moose
- Q) Criteria for success with this program:
The program will be considered successful when the moose population reaches population objectives of 6,500 – 7,500 animals and the harvest reaches 310 to 600 moose.
- R) **Department recommendation for IM program in this reporting period:**
Modify current IM program (details provided in sections 6)

2) Prey data

Date(s) and method of most recent fall abundance assessment for moose (if statistical variation available, describe method here and show result in Table 1):

26 November 2011. Population estimation surveys were conducted using the Geo-Spatial Population Estimator, which is a quadrat-based survey methodology that extrapolates or interpolates numbers of moose detected in quadrats surveyed to quadrats not surveyed to produce a minimum population estimate for the entire GMU.

Compared to IM area, was a similar trend and magnitude of difference in abundance observed in nearby non-treatment area(s) since program inception (Y/N) N/A and in the last year (Y/N)? N/A Describe comparison if necessary:

Not Applicable: No comparison exists for the wolf control portion of the program. No control was available for GMU 16B bear treatments. However, bear harvest

rates varied annually among UCUs within the GMU. Annual harvest rate of black bear has ranged from 2 – 16% of the estimated 2007 population among UCUs, and calf survival was not related to harvest rate of bears ($P > 0.186$) except in 2008, when UCUs with a low black bear harvest had higher calf survival. This is the opposite of what would be predicted if the bear harvest is expected to improve calf survival.

Date(s) of most recent age and sex composition survey (if statistical variation available, describe method here and show result in Table 1):

Moose survey areas: 16B-South, 13–18 November 2010; 16B-Middle, 20–26 November 2011; 16B-North 29-31 October 2008

Compared to IM area, was a similar composition trend and magnitude of difference in composition observed in nearby non-treatment area(s) since program inception (Y/N) N/A and in the last year (Y/N)? N/A Describe comparison if necessary:

Not Applicable: No comparison exists for the wolf control portion of the program. No control was available for GMU 16B bear treatments. However, bear harvest rates varied annually among UCUs within the GMU. Annual harvest rate of brown bears has ranged from 1– 17% of the estimated 2007 population among UCUs, and calf survival was not related to harvest rate of brown bears ($P > 0.238$) in any year, 2005-2011.

Table 1. Moose abundance, age and sex composition in assessment area (L) since program implementation in year 1 (2005) to reauthorization review in year 2012 in the Unit 16 Predator Control Area. Regulatory year is 1 July to 30 June (e.g, RY 2010 is 1 July 2010 to 30 June 2011). Note: This table is subdivided into areas corresponding with Subunit 16B survey areas.

16B-North		Abundance (variation)	Composition (number per 100 females)			
Period	RY		Young	Yearlings	Males	Sample size
	2003	982 ± 184	16	14	33	326
Year 0	2004	Not surveyed				
Year 1	2005	Not surveyed				
Year 2	2006	Not surveyed				
Year 3	2007	Not surveyed				
Year 4	2008	834 ± 188	11	32	60	340
Year 5	2009	Not surveyed				
Year 6	2010	Not surveyed				
Year 7	2011	Not surveyed				
Year 8	2012	Not surveyed				

16B-Middle		Abundance (variation)	Composition (number per 100 cows)			
Period	RY		Calves	Yearlings	Bulls	Sample size
Year 1	2005	1714 ± 218	14	8	29	628
Year 2	2006					
Year 3	2007	Not surveyed				
Year 4	2008	2446 ± 724	21	22	54	678
Year 5	2009	Composition Survey	19	Na	39	359
Year 6	2010	Not surveyed				
Year 7	2011	3458 ± 541	24	18	46	825
Year 8	2012	Not surveyed				

16B-South		Abundance (variation)	Composition (number per 100 cows)			
Period	RY		Calves	Yearlings	Bulls	Sample size
Year 1	2005					
Year 2	2006					
Year 3	2007					
Year 4	2008		18	25	78	247
Year 5	2009					
Year 6	2010	2372 ± 421	18	30	52	703
Year 7	2011	Not surveyed				
Year 8	2012	Not surveyed				

Describe trend in abundance or composition:

The 2011 population estimate in 16B-Middle was statistically greater ($P = 0.008$) than the 2005 estimate, and suggested an increase of approximately 8% per year. Much of this increase was in the bull segment of the population, as indicated by both bull numbers and bull:cow ratios. The increase in the bull:cow ratio was likely primarily due to restricted harvests that began in RY 2006. The cow segment of the population increased at < 5% per year, but the increase was not attributable to predator treatments because neither calf:cow ratio ($r = 0.40$; $P = 0.370$), calf survival ($r = 0.45$; $P = 0.491$), nor adult cow survival ($r = -0.18$; $P = 0.737$) changed during the RY 2005 through RY 2011 period.

Table 2. Moose harvest in assessment area (M). Methods for estimating unreported harvest are described in Survey and Inventory reports.

Period	RY	Reported			Estimated		Total harvest	Other mortality ^a	Total
		Male	Female	Unknown	Unreported	Illegal			
Year 1	2005	139	0	0	10	25	174	0	174
Year 2	2006	106	0	0	7	25	138	0	138
Year 3	2007	102	1	0	7	25	135	0	135
Year 4	2008	117	0	0	8	25	150	0	150
Year 5	2009	181	0	4	13	25	223	0	223
Year 6	2010	199	1	0	14	25	239	0	239
Year 7	2011	195	1	2	14	25	237	1	238

^aDefense of Life and Property

Describe trend in harvest:

Harvests of bull moose are generally increasing. This is likely due to both a liberalization of the harvest regulations that began in RY 2009 and an increase in the bull segment of the population that primarily resulted from the closure of the Tier 1 resident season from RY 2006 through RY 2008

3) Predator data

Wolves

Date(s) and method of most recent spring abundance assessment for wolves (if statistical variation available, describe method here and list in Table 3):

April 2012. The population assessment is based on reports from control pilots, and trapper sealing records.

Date(s) and method of most recent fall abundance assessment for wolves (if statistical variation available, describe method here and list in Table 3):

April 2012. The population assessment is based on reports from control pilots, and trapper sealing records..

Other research or evidence of trend or abundance status in wolves: Not Applicable

Table 3. Wolf abundance objectives and removal in wolf assessment area (N) of the Unit 16 Predation Control Area. Removal objective is 73-80 % of pre-control fall abundance in year 1 of wolf predation control program, so estimated or confirmed number remaining by spring 30 April each RY in the wolf assessment area (N) must be at least 30. If non-lethal predation control methods used by Department personnel, clarify with footnote in control removal tally.

GMU 16A

Period	RY	Fall abundance (variation)	Harvest removal		Dept. control removal	Public control removal	Total removal ^a	Spring abundance (variation)
			Trap	Hunt				
Year 0	2003	27 ± 5	11	9	0	0	20	
Year 1 ^b	2004		10	2	0	0	12	
Year 2 ^b	2005		15	4	0	0	19	
Year 3	2006		6	0	0	10	16	
Year 4	2007		6	1	0	1	8	
Year 5	2008		7	1	0	1	9	
Year 6	2009		2	0	0	1	3	
Year 7	2010		0	0	0	0	0	
Year 8	2011		0	2	0	0	2	

GMU 16B

Period	RY	Fall abundance (variation)	Harvest removal		Dept. control removal	Public control removal	Total removal ^a	Spring abundance (variation)
			Trap	Hunt				
Year 0	2003	138 ± 27	35	9	0	0	44	
Year 1 ^b	2004		13	12	0	91	116	
Year 2 ^b	2005		18	2	0	23	43	
Year 3	2006		8	5	0	22	35	
Year 4	2007		1	3	0	20	24	
Year 5	2008		12	3	0	20	35	
Year 6	2009		0	3	0	2	5	
Year 7	2010		7	1	0	9	17	
Year 8	2011		2	0	0	15	17	35-55

^aAdditional removal may be Defense of Life and Property, vehicle kill, etc.

Bears

Date(s) and method of most recent spring abundance assessment for black bears:

May 2007. Black bear densities were estimated for GMU16B unit wide by a line-transect sampling method (E. Becker, AKDFG, unpublished data), and the density estimates obtained (187.3 black bears/1000 km²) were extrapolated to all bear habitat in GMU 16B.

Date(s) and method of most recent spring abundance assessment for brown bears:

May 2007. Brown bear densities were estimated for portions of 16B-Middle and 16B-

North were estimated using the same technique, except the estimate of brown bear density also integrated a density continuum from GMU s 9 and 13. The average brown bear density for these areas was 40.6 brown bears/1000 km².

Other research or evidence of trend or abundance status in black or brown bears: Not Applicable

Table 4. Black bear abundance objectives and removal in black bear assessment area (N) of Unit 16. Removal objective is 60-80 % of pre-control spring abundance in year 1 of bear predation control program, so estimated or confirmed number remaining by 31 October each RY in the bear assessment area defined in (N) must be at least 600. If non-lethal predation control methods used by Department personnel, clarify with footnote in control removal tally.

GMU 16A

Period	RY	Spring abundance (variation) in area N	Harvest removal from area N		Dept. control removal from area O		Public control removal from area O		Total removal ^{a,b} from area N	Fall abundance (variation) in area N
			FA	SP	FA	SP	FA	SP		
Year 3	2006		21	73	0	0	0	0	94	
Year 4 ^c	2007		18	81	0	0	0	10	109	
Year 5	2008		24	77	0	0	0	15	116	
Year 6	2009		20	61	0	0	0	19	100	
Year 7	2010		67	50	0	0	6	0	123	
Year 8	2011		17	48	0	0	0	3	69	
Year 9	2012		10	-	0	-	2	-		

^aFor example, bear harvest needed for 31 October calculation in Year 1 combines spring (SP: 1 January-30 June) of the prior RY (Year 0) with fall (FA: 1 July – 31 Dec) of the current RY.

^bAdditional removal may be Defense of Life and Property, vehicle kill, etc.

^cYear 4 (RY 2007) was the first year of the black bear control program

GMU 16B

Period	RY	Spring abundance (variation) in area N	Harvest removal from area N		Dept. control removal from area O		Public control removal from area O		Total removal from area N ^a	Fall abundance (variation) in area N
			FA	SP	FA	SP	FA	SP		
Year 3	2006		75	251	0	0	0	0	326	
Year 4 ^b	2007	3500±300	73	210	0	0	1	106	390	
Year 5	2008		69	188	0	0	32	108	397	
Year 6	2009		43	106	0	0	58	131	338	
Year 7	2010		83	104	1	0	136	107	431	
Year 8	2011		26	93	0	0	40	74	233	
Year 9	2012		25	-	0	-	15	-	41	

^a Additional removal may be Defense of Life and Property, vehicle kill, etc.

^b Year 4 (RY 2007) was the first year of the black bear control program

While no surveys to estimate black bear abundance have been conducted in recent year, the population is above the minimum population objective based an analysis of harvests and incidental observations by biologists. Black bear harvests in GMU 16B show a strong increasing trend from an average of 130 during RY 2000 – RY 2004 to 340 during RY 2005 – RY 2010. Based on extrapolated densities from the 2007 population estimate, proportion of the black bear population harvested has ranged from 2–16% in relevant UCUs, well below levels necessary to achieve an 80% population reduction.

Table 5. Brown bear abundance objectives and removal in brown bear assessment area (N) of Unit 16 Predation Control Area. Removal objective is 60 % of pre-control spring abundance in year 1 of bear predation control program, so estimated or confirmed number remaining by 31 October each RY in the bear assessment area defined in (N) must be at least 250. If non-lethal predation control methods used by Department personnel, clarify with footnote in control removal tally.

GMU 16B

Period	RY	Spring abundance (variation) in area N	Harvest removal from area N		Dept. control removal from area O		Public control removal from area O		Total removal ^b from area N ^{a,b}	Fall abundance (variation) in area N
			FA	SP	FA	SP	FA	SP		
Year 4	2007	937 ± 313	64	36	---	---	---	---	100	
Year 5	2008		84	28	3	---	---	---	115	
Year 6	2009		34	35	---	---	---	---	69	
Year 7	2010		93	26	---	2	---	27	150	
Year 8 ^c	2011		63	36	0	2	3	5	111	
Year 9	2012		36	-	0	-	0	-	38	

^aFor example, bear harvest needed for 31 October calculation in Year 1 combines spring (SP: 1 January-30 June) of the prior RY (Year 0) with fall (FA: 1 July – 31 Dec) of the current RY.

^bAdditional removal may be Defense of Life and Property, vehicle kill, etc.

^cYear 8 (RY 2011) was the first year of the brown bear control program

4) Habitat data and nutritional condition of prey species

Where active habitat enhancement is occurring or was recommended in the Operational Plan, describe progress toward objectives:

Objective(s): Not Applicable

Area treated and method: Not Applicable

Observation on treatment response: Not Applicable

Evidence of progress toward objective(s) (choose one: Apparent Statistical):
Not Applicable

Similar trend in nearby non-treatment areas? Not Applicable

Describe any substantial change in habitat not caused by active program: Not Applicable

Table 6. Nutritional indicators for moose in assessment area (L) of the Unit 16 Predation Control Area.

Period	RY	Pregnancy Rate of radio collared cows ^a	Twinning Rate of radio collared cows ^b	Average Rump Fat on Lactating Females in the Fall (cm) ^c
Year 1	2005	71.4	51%	--
Year 2	2006	83.3	45%	3.7
Year 3	2007	79.8	50%	2.4
Year 4	2008	70.8	48%	1.8
Year 5	2009	79.0	59%	--
Year 6	2010	83.7	47%	--
Year 7	2011	72.2	54%	--
Year 8	2012	80.6	48%	--

^a Apparent pregnancy rate based on field observations of calves born to radio collared cows. The reported values likely underestimate calf production in cases where calves were born, but lost before they could be observed by biologists.

^b Apparent twinning rate is based on field observations of the number of calves born to individual radio collared cows. The reported values likely underestimate twinning in cases where twins were born, but one or both were lost before they could be observed by biologists.

^c Rump Fat measurements are collected using an ultrasonograph during the fall capture of adult cow moose.

Where objectives on nutritional condition were listed in the Operational Plan, describe trend in condition indices since inception of (a) habitat enhancement or (b) enhanced harvest:

Not Applicable

Evidence of trend: Not Applicable

Similar trend in nearby non-treatment areas? Not Applicable

5) Costs specific to implementing Intensive Management

Table 7. Cost (\$1000 = 1.0) of agency salary based on estimate of proportional time of field level staff and cost of operations for intensive management activities (e.g., predator control or habitat enhancement beyond normal Survey and Inventory work) performed by personnel in the Department or work by other state agencies (e.g., Division of Forestry) or contractors in the Unit 16 Predation Control Area. Fiscal year (FY) is also 1 July to 30 June but the year is one greater than the comparable RY (e.g, FY 2010 is 1 July 2009 to 30 June 2010).

Period	FY	Salary ^a	Operations and contracting			Total cost
			Federal Aid ^b	Public Funds ^c	Other ^d	
Year 1	2006	15.0				15.0
Year 2	2007	15.0				15.0
Year 3	2008	15.0				15.0
Year 4	2009	30.0		31.6		61.6
Year 5	2010	40.0		48.6		88.6
Year 6	2011	30.0		27.6		57.6
Year 7	2012	49.9	21.0	112.3		183.2

^a State Fish & Game fund matched 1:3 with Federal Aid (see footnote b) except for activities directly involving predator control (state funding only)

^b Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration (excise tax on firearms and ammunition)

^c Capital Improvement Project or General Fund revenue from Alaska Legislature

^d Grants, donations from private organizations, etc..

6) Department recommendations³ for annual evaluation (1 February) following Year 8 for Unit 16 Predation Control Area—skip in final year and go to section 7

Has progress toward defined criteria been achieved (describe)?

There has been an increase in moose (primarily bull) abundance since 2005. However, moose calf survival during the first 6 months of life and calf recruitment have not been significantly improved, nor has cow survival

Has achievement of success criteria occurred (describe)?

The moose population is above the lower objective for population size, but harvest objectives have not been met. An analysis of the moose population indicates that the harvest objective can be achieved if moose hunting regulation are liberalized in GMU 16B.

Recommendation for IM program (choose one): Continue **Modify** Suspend Terminate

The department recommends the wolf control program continue in GMU 16 until objectives are reached, however the department recommends suspending the bear control program in GMU 16B.

³ Prior sections include primarily objective information from field surveys; Sections 6 and 7 involve professional judgment by area biologists to interpret the context of prior information for the species in the management area.

To date, the bear removal has not approached levels necessary to reach the reduction goals (remove 60% of the brown bear population and 80% of the black bear population) and has had no effect on calf survival. The department recommends suspending the bear control program in GMU 16.

Moose in 16B-South are 140% of the midpoint of the objective, 16B-Middle is at 103% of the midpoint of the objective, and 16B-North is at only 43% of the midpoint of the objective. The department recommends the wolf control program continue in GMU 16B until objectives are reached. The department does however recommend suspending the wolf control program in 16B-South. The department will evaluate and consider suspending wolf control in 16B-Middle when the objectives for the area are met. The wolf control program in 16B-North should continue until objectives are reached.

Further investigation into the lack of response to predator control on 16B-North is warranted. The department will continue to evaluate the predator control program during the next year and request additional guidance from the Board during the 2013 Region IV meeting in Wasilla.

7) Evaluation (1 February) for program renewal (following final Year 12 [RY 2016]) and Department recommendations for Unit 16 Predator Control Area

Has progress toward defined criteria been achieved (describe)? _____

Has achievement of success criteria occurred (describe)? _____

Recommendation for IM program: Continue Modify Suspend Terminate

Rationale for recommendation on overall program: _____

Other recommendations (if continuation is recommended, specific actions on individual practices): _____