



# Strategic Plan

Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Division of Wildlife Conservation



## Message from the Director

This plan provides a broad vision for the Alaska Division of Wildlife Conservation that will help guide it over the next decade. Wildlife is a public resource, and the public has a great interest in how the division manages its wildlife. This plan has been developed with input from the public, as well as division staff. We appreciate everyone's contribution.

The division has had a successful program of wildlife management since statehood. Historically, our emphasis has primarily been on managing big game and other wildlife for consumptive uses. This will remain a core function of the division. In recent years, interest in nongame wildlife and in wildlife-related education and viewing has increased throughout our state and nation. This plan recognizes the need for the division to increase programs related to wildlife viewing and education, as well as managing wildlife that is not commonly hunted or trapped (nongame). Congress, too, has recognized the importance of these activities and has begun to provide funding for such programs.

As we expand and create new programs in wildlife education, wildlife viewing, and nongame management, we will simultaneously look for ways to enhance our efforts to manage wildlife for hunting and trapping. These activities are a mainstay of our Alaskan culture, are important public uses, and contribute significantly to financing wildlife management in Alaska. At the same time, with new federal funding, we now have the opportunity to better implement the department's mission, while broadening the scope of the division and making it a full-service wildlife management agency. This plan provides direction for future efforts in both our traditional and newly expanded programs.

As leadership in the department and division changes, new priorities will emerge and new directions will be set. This strategic plan has the flexibility to accommodate such changes, and will remain open to revision and improvement as new issues and ideas arise. This plan is another effort to actively engage and more fully involve the public in managing Alaska's wildlife. The division welcomes and looks forward to continued public involvement and cooperation in managing and conserving Alaska's valued wildlife resources.



Wayne Regelin, Director

December 4, 2002

# Contents

Message from the Director .....2

Forward .....4

## PART I

Alaska Department of Fish & Game .....5

    Mission .....5

    Guiding Principles.....5

    Division of Wildlife Conservation .....5

        Division Budget .....6

Why a Strategic Plan? .....8

    What Guides the Division? .....9

        Guiding Philosophy and Values .....9

        Vision .....9

        Mission .....9

        Goals .....9

Existing Programs .....10

    Wildlife Management and Research .....10

        Big Game .....10

        Small Game .....11

        Furbearers.....11

        Waterfowl .....11

        Marine Mammals .....12

        Wildlife Habitat .....12

Other Programs and Services .....13

    Hunter Information and Training .....13

    State Wildlife Refuges, Critical Habitat

        Areas and Sanctuaries .....13

    Information Management .....14

    Regulatory Process .....14

    Wildlife Planning .....14

    Public Service .....15

    Existing Programs to be Expanded .....15

        School and Community Education .....15

        Nongame Management and Research.....16

        Wildlife Viewing .....16

## PART II

Challenges and Strategies for the Future .....17

    Wildlife Management and Research .....17

    Nongame Management and Research .....20

    Wildlife Uses .....21

        Hunting and Trapping .....21

        Wildlife Viewing .....22

        Education .....24

    Public Service .....24

    Human-Wildlife Conflicts.....25

    Information Management.....26

    Regulatory Process .....26

    Subsistence/Dual Management .....27

    Predator Management .....28

    Public Involvement in Decision-Making .....28

    Staffing and Organizational Development .....29

Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations .....30

Map of Game Management Units .....31

    Contact the Division of Wildlife Conservation ....31



Alaska Department of Fish and Game

*Moose are one of Alaska's largest big game animals. Bulls spar for dominance during the fall mating season, or "rut." Dominant bulls get more opportunities to breed cows.*

# Forward

The Division of Wildlife Conservation is one of six divisions in the Alaska Department of Fish and Game and is responsible for managing all animals in Alaska, except waterfowl and marine mammals. Following its inception in 1957, the division went through two name changes before arriving at its current name in 1989. The division employs about 275 staff, located in a headquarters office in Juneau and in 22 regional and area offices located across the state. In fiscal year 2003, the division's budget totaled nearly \$28 million, with funding coming primarily from the state Fish and Game Fund, the federal Pittman-Robertson program, the federal State Wildlife Grants program, and federal Special Projects funds.

The first part of this plan describes the division's vision, mission, goals, and guiding philosophy, along with its functions, activities, and services. The second part of the plan identifies directions and strategies the division plans to pursue in the coming years to address a number of existing or anticipated issues associated with wildlife management and conservation in Alaska. Issues include challenges associated with obtaining necessary information about the status and trends of wildlife populations; providing the public with a variety of wildlife uses and benefits; regulatory processes, including dual management; human-wildlife conflicts; land use practices; and the recruitment and retention of division staff. The plan also provides direction for providing public involvement in wildlife management decisions.

## **For more information about this plan, contact:**

**Office of the Director  
Alaska Division of Wildlife Conservation  
P.O. Box 25526  
Juneau, Alaska 99802-5526  
Telephone: (907) 465-4190**

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game administers all programs and activities free from discrimination based on race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, marital status, pregnancy, parenthood, or disability. The department administers all programs and activities in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility, or if you desire further information please write to ADF&G, P.O. Box 25526, Juneau, AK 99802-5526; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4040 N. Fairfax Drive, Suite 300 Webb, Arlington, VA 22203 or O.E.O., U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington DC 20240. For information on alternative formats for this and other department publications, please contact the department ADA Coordinator at (voice) 907-465-4120, (TDD) 907-465-3646, or (FAX) 907-465-2440.

# Alaska Department of Fish & Game

The Alaska Department of Fisheries was created in 1949 and was broadened in 1957 to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. Today, the department is comprised of the Office of the Commissioner and six divisions: Administration, Commercial Fisheries, Habitat and Restoration, Sport Fish, Subsistence, and Wildlife Conservation. The department is led by a commissioner and has about 1,300 employees. A director leads each division.

## Mission:

The mission of the department, prescribed by the Constitution and Statutes of the State of Alaska, is to manage, protect, maintain, and improve the fish, game, and aquatic plant resources of Alaska. The primary goals are to ensure that Alaska's renewable fish and wildlife resources and their habitats are conserved and managed on the sustained yield principle, and the use and development of these resources are in the best interest of the economy and well-being of the people of the state.

## Guiding Principles: (adopted in 1996)

Seeking excellence in carrying out its responsibilities under state and federal law, the department will:

1. Provide for the greatest long-term opportunities for people to use and enjoy Alaska's fish, wildlife, and habitat resources.
2. Improve public accessibility to, and encourage active involvement by the public in, the department's decision-making processes.
3. Build a working environment based on mutual trust and respect between the department and the public, and among department staff.

4. Maintain the highest standards of scientific integrity and provide the most accurate and current information possible.
5. Foster professionalism in department staff, promote innovative and creative resource management, and provide ongoing training and education for career development.



Photo courtesy of Peter Thurston

## Division of Wildlife Conservation

The Division of Fur and Game was established in 1957 and was changed a year later to the Game Division; one of three original divisions of the department. The name was changed to the Division of Wildlife Conservation in 1989 to reflect the division's broadening mission.

The Division of Wildlife Conservation consists of the headquarters office in Juneau, and four regional offices located in Douglas, Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Nome. There are also 22 area offices located throughout the state, giving the division a strong presence in rural Alaska. The division has about 275 employees. Of these, 6% are in leadership or managerial positions, 19% are in administrative positions, 49% are biologists, 15% are wildlife technicians, 8% are involved in biometrics, 2% are planners, and 1% serve as publications specialists.

Staff in regional and area offices are responsible for most of the wildlife research and management activities within their respective regions. Additionally, there are four statewide programs: Waterfowl Management, Marine Mammal Research, Information Management, and Hunter Information and Training.

Beginning in the mid 1990s, the division initiated

a participatory model for including staff in problem-solving and decision-making processes. During the past several years, teams and task forces made up of division staff have been created to address specific issues. Among these is the PEER Group, a cross section of division staff (genders, jobs, and duty stations) created to address internal issues and concerns. This group has recommended solutions to problems and provided them to the division's leadership, the Division Management Team (DMT). The DMT, which consists of the director and nine other upper-level managers, was created to provide broader involvement in policy and organizational decision-making efforts. The division intends to continue using the DMT, as well as staff teams and task forces, to address future issues and concerns.

### Division Budget

The division operates primarily with state and federal funds and, to a lesser extent, with special projects funds. State funding sources consist primarily of the Fish and Game Fund and a small amount of General Funds. Federal funds are provided through the Federal

Aid in Sport Fish and Wildlife Restoration and the State Wildlife Grants programs. The division's budget, from all sources, totaled just under \$28 million in Fiscal Year (FY) 2003 (July 1, 2002 to June 30, 2003).

**State Fish and Game Fund:** This fund includes revenues from the sale of hunting and trapping licenses; the sale of big game tags and waterfowl conservation stamps; drawing hunt application fees; McNeil River access permit application fees; income from the Rabbit Creek Rifle Range, and special donations. By statute, these funds may only be used for wildlife management activities. Resident users contribute about 25% of the annual revenue to the Fish and Game Fund, while non-resident users contribute about 75%. The division received authority to spend about \$10.6 million during FY03 from the fund. Based on past records and trends, the division expects to receive about the same level of funding from this source in the next five years.

**Federal Pittman-Robertson Fund:** This fund is derived from a 10-11% federal excise tax on the sale of firearms, ammunition, and archery equipment. The

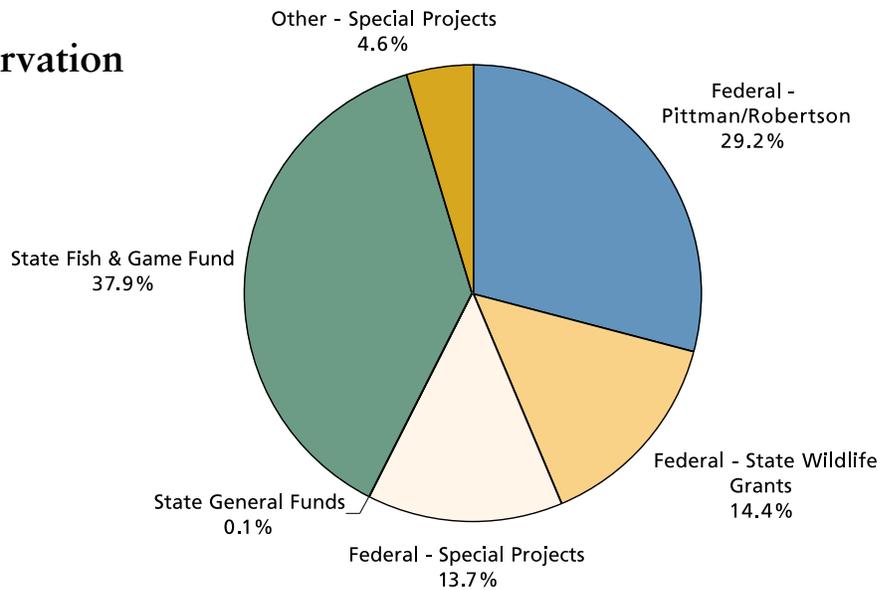


Photo courtesy of Todd Rinaldi

*A tranquilized moose is fitted with a radio collar. Biologists will track the moose's movements and will gain other information about moose population levels and trends.*

## Division of Wildlife Conservation

### Funding Sources Fiscal Year 2003



fund was established by the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act of 1937 and is administered by the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Alaska annually receives the maximum allowed apportionment (5%) of the total national income to this account, and the division must match these federal funds with one dollar for every three federal dollars received. For the most part, the division uses these funds to conduct game management and research activities and to manage and administer activities associated with hunting and trapping. In FY03, the division received \$8.1 million from this source and, based on past records and trends, anticipates receiving slightly more from this source over the next five years.

**State Wildlife Grants:** This federal funding source was originally created by Congress in 2001 as the Wildlife Conservation and Restoration Program, but was changed to the State Wildlife Grants Program in 2002. Funds for this program are appropriated by Congress to states for use in addressing conservation needs and concerns of species for which funding has not generally been available. Funds from this source may also be used for educational efforts associated with wildlife conservation. The division must match these federal funds with one dollar for every three federal dollars received, or, in some cases, with one dollar for every federal dollar received. In FY03, the division received \$4 million from this source. Passage of the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA) legislation could result in more than a tripling of funds

available from this source. Barring this, the projection is for the division to receive about the same level of funding from this source over the next five years.

**Special Projects Funds:** This source of funds comes from other agencies and non-government organizations through cooperative agreements and contracts. These funds are most often used for research or survey-inventory work conducted by division biologists and funded by other agencies, such as marine mammals research funded by the National Marine Fisheries Service. In FY03, the division received about \$5.1 million in special projects funds. This funding source is variable and uncertain, but is projected to increase slightly over the next five years.

**State General Fund:** Among other sources, funds for this account come from taxes and royalties on oil, commercial fisheries, coal, and other natural resources; from the sale of state land, timber, and other state-owned resources; and excise taxes on tobacco, liquor, and other goods. In 1986, the division received over \$3 million of general fund money, most of which went to support wildlife education, conservation, and nongame programs. Since then the legislature has moved to reduce state spending each year. The division's share of the General Fund has fallen to \$32,300 in FY03. The division will work within the administration to increase funding from this revenue source.

# Why a Strategic Plan?

*“We should be leading where we want to go, instead of reacting to where we are.”*

—Dale Haggstrom, Division Biologist

Wildlife is an integral and important part of Alaska’s culture and landscape, and Alaskans and other citizens have long held a deep interest in how the state’s species are managed and conserved. Public interests include a variety of uses of wildlife, including hunting, trapping, viewing, and photography. While these uses are not incompatible, the Division of Wildlife Conservation is increasingly faced with public demands for more or improved wildlife-related opportunities for all of these uses. In response to these interests and demands, we are looking at new and varied opportunities and responsibilities for serving the public and determining practical and responsible approaches for doing so. This includes expanding and enhancing existing programs as well as developing new ones.

A strategic plan is a useful tool that affords us an

opportunity to think more broadly and strategically about issues we are likely to face in the future, and to develop practical and responsible approaches for dealing with them. It also provides us with a means to involve the public in sharing thoughts and perspectives to define and develop the best approaches possible. This plan provides the broad guidance to

move the division forward into the future.

We developed the plan over a period of about 18 months and periodically involved division staff and the public. Staff work teams identified issues and suggested new or continuing directions and strategies in existing management and research, public service, education and information, nongame management and research, and wildlife viewing. We obtained public input through meetings with a broad range of groups and interests, where participants discussed and evaluated staff ideas and added new thoughts

and perspectives of their own. This input was incorporated into a draft plan that was widely distributed to the public for review and further comment. Input received on the draft has been incorporated into this strategic plan.



Photo courtesy of Todd Rinaldi

*“Public interests include a variety of uses of wildlife, including hunting, trapping, viewing, and photography”*

## What Guides the Division?

### Guiding Philosophy and Values:

The Division of Wildlife Conservation recognizes wildlife as a public trust belonging to all Alaskans. We respect the diversity of public values associated with wildlife, and support uses that reflect sound conservation principles and public desires. We are an organization of individuals committed to interacting professionally with one another and the public, and to using scientific data and public input to conserve Alaska's wildlife.

### Vision:

Excellence in wildlife conservation and public service.

### Mission:

Conserve and enhance Alaska's wildlife and habitats and provide for a wide range of public uses and benefits.

### Goals:

- Expand and improve services, opportunities, and outreach to all wildlife users.
- Maintain and enhance our high level of wildlife research and management expertise.
- Improve internal effectiveness and efficiency.
- Promote public participation in decision-making.
- Develop methods to accommodate dual management of our wildlife resources and work for resumption of state management.



Photo courtesy of John Hechtel

# Existing Programs

## Wildlife Management And Research

**W**ildlife management involves a wide variety of biological and administrative activities. Management biologists, primarily working out of area offices, collect information on wildlife population sizes, trends, productivity, and levels of mortality from hunting and natural causes. They also serve as a point of contact with the public on wildlife management issues, assess public interests and needs, sell hunting and trapping licenses, issue harvest tags and permits, make public presentations, deal with nuisance and injured wildlife, provide information and recommendations to supervisors, and perform other essential duties. Management biologists compile and analyze biological information and present it to the Board of Game so it can establish population-based and ecologically sound hunting and trapping regulations.

The division supports a staff of wildlife research biologists in order to collect information related to specific ecological questions or concerns. This information enables us to more effectively and responsibly manage and conserve wildlife populations and their habitats. Research projects cover a wide range of objectives, from collecting site-specific data for management decisions to understanding complex ecological relationships. Research efforts are generally developed and applied with the goal of maintaining or improving our ability to manage Alaska's wildlife resources.

## Big Game

The division expends most of its human and financial resources on big game management and research. Since most of the division's revenue has been derived from the sale of Alaska hunting licenses and tags to big game hunters, this has been an appropriate emphasis. Moose, caribou, deer, and brown bears are the big game species that receive the most public use, and they have received the most management and research attention.

We conduct wildlife surveys annually. For the larger moose and caribou populations, specific population estimates are conducted roughly every three years using the latest scientific techniques. Dall sheep, mountain goats, elk, bison, and muskoxen are periodically surveyed to measure population status, trends, and productivity. Black and brown bear populations are difficult to estimate because they often live in heavily vegetated areas in the summer and den during winter. For bears, we obtain population information from intensive research projects in selected



Photo courtesy of John Trent

areas, and we are developing methods to extrapolate this information to larger areas.

We conduct research to:

- Develop techniques to better understand and estimate the status and trends of wildlife populations,
- Improve our understanding of wildlife-habitat relationships,
- Improve our understanding of predator-prey relationships,
- Improve our understanding of the impacts of human activities on wildlife populations, and
- Assess wildlife user attitudes and preferences.



Alaska Department of Fish and Game

### Small Game

Hunting, observing, and photographing small game, such as ptarmigan, grouse, and snowshoe hares, is a popular activity for many Alaskans, as well as an increasing number of nonresidents. Populations of most species of small game fluctuate between low and high levels. The division monitors general population levels through trend counts in key areas, incidental observations during surveys for other species, and by talking with hunters, trappers, and other outdoors enthusiasts. We have a program to improve ruffed grouse habitat in Interior and Southcentral Alaska by manipulating aspen stands, and have transplanted ruffed grouse from Interior to Southcentral Alaska.

### Furbearers

Nineteen species of furbearers are trapped in Alaska, with trapping effort partly a function of pelt value in the fur trade. We use aerial sampling techniques to estimate population levels of wolverines, wolves, foxes, and lynx in selected areas, which we extrapolate to other areas with similar habitats. Harvest information is collected from fur export and acquisition records, and fur sealing reports for those species for which the law requires “sealing” by department staff or other designated persons. An annual survey is distributed to about 1,500 trappers to provide additional insight about the relative abundance and trends of Alaska’s furbearers. Presently, we have a few research projects focused on furbearers, including one to develop better techniques for estimating population size and trends of wolves, coyotes, foxes, and wolver-

ines, and another to improve our understanding of marten habitat associations and population dynamics associated with forest management.

### Waterfowl

Although primary jurisdiction for the management of migratory game birds lies with the federal government (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service), the division has a strong interest in the management of these important species and participates in management activities as permitted by federal regulations. Alaska’s wetland habitats and the multitude of ducks, geese, cranes, snipe, and other birds produced on them are of critical importance to the state and other parts of the world. Migratory birds provide food, recreation, and economic benefits to Alaskans as well as to people in other states and countries.

Our Waterfowl Program collects information on important waterfowl populations; monitors important migratory game bird issues, including habitat development proposals; and participates in the migratory game bird hunting regulation process through the Pacific Flyway Study Committee/Council and other agencies and organizations involved in setting migratory game bird hunting regulations. The Waterfowl Program provides technical staff to the Alaska Migratory Bird Co-management Council, which is the body responsible for developing spring subsistence regulation proposals under an amendment to the Migratory Bird Treaty.



Photo courtesy of R. H. Day

*A greater white-fronted goose stands quietly by the water.*



ADF&G Steller Sea Lion Project

*Biologists capture a Steller sea lion pup to collect data and mark it before releasing it back into the wild.*

### Marine Mammals

The federal government assumed management of marine mammals in Alaska in 1972 with passage of the Marine Mammal Protection Act, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and National Marine Fisheries Service are now the lead marine mammal management agencies. However, the division maintains a strong presence in marine mammal conservation because of the great importance of these species to Alaska. The majority of funding for the division's marine mammal research efforts comes from federal sources obtained through grants submitted by marine mammal staff.

Our marine mammal program conducts numerous long-term, nationally and internationally recognized research projects that supplement and compliment those undertaken by federal agencies. The results of these projects have substantially increased our knowledge of the biology and ecology of Alaska's marine mammals, which has subsequently:

- improved the understanding of how marine mammals interact with commercial fisheries,
- provided important information to Alaska Natives for their subsistence use of marine mammals,
- been integrated with wildlife viewing programs

that provide the public with opportunities to view and photograph marine mammals, and

- provided a credible, objective source of information for organizations concerned about the impacts of various human activities on marine mammals.

### Wildlife Habitat

Diverse, productive habitat is a prerequisite for healthy wildlife populations. Historically, periodic burning by wildland fires has been the main influence responsible for maintaining quality habitat for wildlife in many parts of the state. However, settlement and development by humans creates an increased need for fire protection, which ultimately reduces the land's ability to sustain diverse, productive wildlife populations, at the same time that human demand for wildlife is increasing. Since the department, for the most part, is not a land manager, the division works with other natural resource managers and agencies to implement appropriate fire ecology programs. We also work with other agencies and private organizations to implement programs designed to restore or enhance habitat conditions for wildlife, and conduct research to evaluate the efficacy of various habitat management techniques.

# Other Programs and Services

This section describes other programs and services provided by the division, and includes Hunter Information and Training; State Wildlife Refuges, Critical Habitat Areas, and Sanctuaries; Information Management; Regulatory Process; Wildlife Planning; and Public Service.

## Hunter Information and Training

Our Hunter Information and Training program is responsible for providing education and information to hunters to increase hunter safety and knowledge, and decrease the wounding loss of game. The program is divided into two main efforts; classes and clinics. A formal system of hunter education classes qualifies successful students to hunt in areas where hunter education certification is required. This certification is generally valid in other states where hunter education is a prerequisite to hunt. Additionally, there are specialized hunter education courses, taught by volunteers, for archery and muzzle-loading firearms that make hunters eligible to participate in hunts restricted to these types of equipment. The second area of emphasis is a system of hunter clinics presented on a variety of subjects. Clinics increase hunter knowledge, effectiveness, and satisfaction while reducing conflicts among user groups. Efforts to extend hunter education and Hunter Information and Training services statewide are ongoing.

The division operates two shooting ranges, the Rabbit Creek Rifle Range in Anchorage and an indoor range in Fairbanks. These shooting ranges provide training for hunter education classes and a place for the public to enjoy shooting.

## State Wildlife Refuges, Critical Habitat Areas and Sanctuaries

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game manages 32 state wildlife refuges, critical habitat areas, and wildlife sanctuaries, known as special areas, for the protection of fish and wildlife, their habitats, and public use of the areas. Although the Department of Natural Resources retains land ownership of refuges along with other state lands, as well as the ultimate land management authority, our department manages these special areas to provide high-quality habitat for fish and wildlife populations. With a few exceptions, hunting, fishing, trapping, and other recreational activities are encouraged, so long as they are in keeping with the statutory intent for establishing each special area.

Notable special areas overseen by the division include:

- Walrus Islands State Game Sanctuary,

- McNeil River State Game Sanctuary and Refuge,
- Anchorage Coastal State Wildlife Refuge,
- Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge,
- Mendenhall Wetlands State Game Refuge,
- Stan Price State Wildlife Sanctuary (Pack Creek), and
- Redoubt Bay Critical Habitat Area (Wolverine Creek).

Several of these areas are world famous, and provide opportunities to view birds, bears, walrus, and other species of wildlife.



Alaska Department of Fish and Game

## Information Management

Our Information Management program provides centralized data processing, and statistical and computer programming support services to the division's wildlife management and research programs. It is the clearinghouse and central repository for big game and furbearer harvest information. This program administers and conducts the lottery for all Drawing Permit Hunts in Alaska, and administers the Tier II Subsistence Permit Hunt scoring and allocation system for the department. The program also supports the regulatory process by serving as a liaison between the activities of the Alaska Board of Game, the division, and the public, and has the central role in supporting and communicating regulatory process activities within the division. Information Management also provides GIS-based data analyses and digital mapping capabilities to the division.

## Regulatory Process

Public participation is an integral part of Alaska's fish and game regulatory process. Any citizen or group may submit proposals for changes to Alaska's hunting and trapping regulations to the Alaska Board of Game. The board considers and votes on each proposal. In addition, more than 80 publicly elected Advisory Committees around the state review and comment to the Board of Game on regulatory

proposals, and generate their own proposals as well. The composition of the Board of Game is further evidence of the public nature of the process. Each of the seven board members is appointed by the governor and must be confirmed by the legislature. Finally, at each of the board's meetings, every member of the public who wishes to testify is given an opportunity to speak.

The division functions independently of the board and does not oversee nor control the regulatory process. The board is responsible for, among other things, establishing hunting and trapping seasons, setting harvest limits, and allocating wildlife harvests among users. The division's role is to provide the board with biological information, offer suggested regulatory changes based on available information, and provide analyses and recommendations on proposed changes offered by public organizations or individuals. Within the department, the Boards Support Section is responsible for overseeing and supporting the state's regulatory process, including its Fish and Game Advisory Committees.

## Wildlife Planning

We are increasing our efforts to involve the public in wildlife management decision-making in response to growing public interest in becoming involved, and the increasing social complexity of wildlife management issues. Public involvement methods range from simply seeking public input on division proposals, to collaborative processes with a high level of public participation.

Collaborative planning includes a broad range of shared decision-making arrangements authorized by law. Collaborative processes have been increasingly used in wildlife management planning. Some examples of management plans drafted with considerable participation from stakeholder planning teams include those for brown bears in GMU 4, the Kenai Peninsula, and Kodiak Island; for the Fortymile and Western Arctic caribou herds; for moose in the Koyukuk Rivers and Yukon Flats areas; and the Anchorage Bowl Living with Wildlife Plan. These teams, and others around the state, have developed management plans that ensure the conservation of species, while providing for the diversity of public needs, desires, and values.



Photo courtesy of Shane Moore

*A curious young brown bear investigates a can of bear spray. Keep the spray with you, ready to use, if necessary.*



Photo courtesy of Alaska Becoming an Outdoors-Woman Program

*Becoming an Outdoors-Woman clinics teach outdoor skills of all types to participants, focusing on shooting/hunting, fishing, and other outdoor skills, including survival, camping, canoeing and bear safety.*

## Public Service

Public service is an important part of the division's mission and function. Regional and area personnel regularly respond to questions and requests for information on a variety of topics, from wildlife hunting and trapping regulations, to hunting and viewing opportunities, to general wildlife questions and nuisance wildlife complaints. Our staff also "seal" the hides of hunter- and trapper-harvested bears and furbearers, and provide hunting licenses at many offices, along with big game harvest tags and permits.

## Existing Programs to be Expanded

The division has had programs in wildlife education, nongame management, and wildlife viewing for several years, but they have been small due to limited funding sources. New federal funding provided through the state's Wildlife Grants Program, offers the opportunity to expand our emphasis in these three important areas.

## School and Community Education

Educational opportunities are among the most frequently requested services we provide to the public. Education is an integral component of effective wildlife management and people tend to appreciate and value wildlife more when they understand it better. Educating the public about wildlife generally increases their involvement in conservation, and also helps improve compliance with wildlife laws and regulations. Our current programs in community education include outdoors skills clinics, such as Becoming an Outdoors-Woman, public presentations, and education and interpretive programs on state wildlife refuges.

Programs within the school system include Project WILD, a program geared to K-12 teachers and their students, and the Alaska Wildlife Curriculum, consisting of Alaska-based information that complements the national Project WILD curriculum.



Photo courtesy of Dick Shideler

*Viewing and photography is a use of wildlife that is growing in popularity and economic importance in Alaska. McNeil River State Game Sanctuary offers an opportunity to safely view bears at much closer distances than normal, as shown in this photo, because of the strictly controlled viewing environment.*

## Nongame Management and Research

More than 80% of Alaska's 275 regularly occurring species of birds are nongame, as are more than half of Alaska's 90 mammal species.

Nongame can serve as indicators of the health of systems, and they provide natural functions like seed dispersal, nutrient cycling, and pollination. They also serve as prey for many game species. The division has participated in national bird conservation programs such as Partners In Flight and the Alaska Shorebird Conservation Plan. Existing national conservation plans for waterfowl, landbirds, shorebirds, and seabirds will provide us with an excellent framework for developing new division programs. Currently, our nongame projects are limited to a few raptor surveys and cooperative work with other organizations to gain an understanding of the distribution of neotropical migratory birds.

## Wildlife Viewing

Opportunities to view wildlife in their natural habitats are important to both residents and visitors

of Alaska. Many Alaskans and most visitors want to watch wildlife, and many travel specifically to view wildlife in Alaska, resulting in substantial in-state expenditures each year. Wildlife viewing is cited as the second most important reason that tourists come to Alaska.

Currently, the division's limited wildlife viewing resources are concentrated within a few of the department's state refuges and sanctuaries. Refuges adjacent to urban areas, such as Creamer's Field Migratory Waterfowl Refuge in Fairbanks, the Anchorage Coastal Wildlife Refuge, and the Mendenhall Wetlands State Game Refuge in Juneau, are popular birding locations for locals and visitors, and also offer some interpretive programs or displays. World-renowned brown bear viewing opportunities are provided at McNeil River State Game Sanctuary and Stan Price State Wildlife Sanctuary at Pack Creek. The Alaska Wildlife Viewing Guide, written by department staff, is a widely available book, and excerpts are posted on our web site, along with information about visiting the sanctuaries.

# Challenges and Strategies For the Future

**W**ildlife resource users, whether hunters, trappers, birders, photographers, or other outdoor enthusiasts, share a common desire to see wildlife managed to ensure their long-term health and well-being and to provide a variety of opportunities for human use and enjoyment. Our collective challenge, and opportunity, is to identify specific issues that we expect to face in accomplishing this goal. Through staff and public discussions and input, we have identified the following issues, along with possible strategies for addressing them. While these issues are presented separately in an effort to more easily understand and address them, we recognize that many issues and strategies are interrelated, and will undoubtedly change over time as new information and circumstances develop. They will therefore require on-going review and attention, especially as we develop and implement more detailed operational plans that link these strategies to budget allocations.

## Wildlife Management and Research

Historically, the division has maintained strong and highly productive management and research programs for game species, which, for the most part, have been enabled by federal Pittman-Robertson and state Fish and Game funds. Tied to these programs are public opportunities to hunt, trap, view, or otherwise use and enjoy these species. This section includes issues related to big game, small game, furbearers, marine mammals, and land uses.



Alaska Department of Fish and Game

**Issue #1—Wildlife Management and Research:**  
Maintaining information-based big game management and research activities will become increasingly difficult as operating costs continue to rise.

### Direction

Pursue opportunities to obtain additional funds or partnerships for big game management and research efforts.

### Strategies

- Work with interested users and organizations to identify sources of additional funds.
- Develop proposals for partnering with organizations, foundations, and other entities to collect biological information on big game populations.

**Issue #2—Wildlife Management and Research:**

Despite their social, recreational, and biological importance, little information is collected about Alaska's small game populations or their levels of harvest.

### Direction

Retain the division's small game management program, and expand the collection of harvest, population, and other biological information.

### Strategies

- Cooperate with the public and other wildlife agencies and organizations to identify and work with small game species and populations with the greatest management and conservation concerns.
- Expand data collecting methods to obtain additional information about select small game species.

### Issue #3—Wildlife Management and Research:

Despite their economic, subsistence, recreational, and biological value, limited effort is spent monitoring Alaska's furbearer populations.

#### Direction

Expand the division's furbearer management program, including the collection of harvest, population, and other biological information.

#### Strategies

- Cooperate with trappers and other wildlife agencies and organizations to identify and target furbearer species and populations with the greatest management and conservation concerns.
- Expand data collecting methods to obtain additional information about select furbearer species.

### Issue #4—Wildlife Management and Research:

Severe population declines of several species of marine mammals (e.g., Steller sea lions and harbor seals) have occurred, and minimal information exists about the basic life histories and biology of several marine mammals, including ribbon, ringed, spotted, and bearded seals.

#### Direction

Acquire the information needed for effective management strategies that would result in population recovery of depressed populations and increase knowledge about the biology and ecology of marine mammals.



Photo courtesy of Aaron Christ

*Biologists collect data from a captured juvenile Steller sea lion before releasing it back into the wild. These data will assist in determining why Alaska Steller sea lion populations have declined and are now listed as Threatened and Endangered.*

### Strategies

- Conduct scientific research to determine the possible causes of population declines.
- Work with federal agencies and Native organizations and commissions to identify informational gaps and needs, and cooperate on joint research efforts.
- Conduct research to increase understanding of population abundance and trends; survival and reproduction rates; dispersal, diet, and foraging ecology; and habitat use of marine mammals.
- Identify and support management actions that aid in species recovery.

### Issue #5—Wildlife Management and Research:

Land development, recreational uses, and other human activities can negatively affect wildlife and their habitats, while in other instances, altering habitats can increase their value and utility for wildlife.

#### Direction

Gather and disseminate information about impacts of land use practices on wildlife, including mining, logging, oil development, road and trail construction, land subdivision, and off-road recreational vehicles, while developing and implementing techniques for altering habitats to benefit wildlife.

#### Strategies

- Collect biological information necessary to evaluate land development activities.
- Present biological information to decision makers so they can make informed decisions.
- Provide options for development activities that will minimize or mitigate negative impacts on wildlife populations.
- Cooperate with enforcement agencies and the department's Habitat and Restoration Division to enforce land use regulations and manage public use on state wildlife refuges, critical habitat areas and sanctuaries, and other public lands.
- Actively manage refuges, critical habitat areas, and sanctuaries to allow for continued public use and protection of fish and wildlife and their habitats.
- Expand efforts to restore and enhance wildlife habitats to increase abundance and diversity of wildlife populations.



Photo courtesy of Ward Testa

*Small aircraft are used to locate individual radiocollared animals, to census whole populations to determine their status and trend, and to transport biologists and supplies into remote field camp locations.*

#### **Issue #6—Wildlife Management and Research:**

Some of Alaska's lands in private ownership are important for wildlife. These lands may be less productive for wildlife than they could be, and may be closed to recreational uses, including hunting, unless cooperative agreements are developed with land owners that make it financially attractive and culturally appropriate to establish partnerships and agreements.

#### **Direction**

Identify opportunities to partner with private landowners.

#### **Strategies**

- Work with Native and other private landowners to help develop wildlife and land-use management plans that increase the value of those lands for wildlife, and that enable recreational uses on those lands.
- Pursue federal grant opportunities with private landowners to help fund habitat enhancement activities on private lands.

#### **Issue #7—Wildlife Management and Research:**

Wildlife regularly crosses jurisdictional boundaries, and the majority of land in Alaska is in federal ownership. Lack of coordination and cooperation among managing resource agencies can be counter-productive to wildlife populations, as well as to users who desire to enjoy those lands.

#### **Direction**

Cooperate with federal agencies on wildlife and other land-use activities on federal lands.

#### **Strategies**

- As appropriate, partner with federal agencies on wildlife, habitat, and other land-use management and research projects and activities.
- Continue to provide input on management plans and strategies affecting federal lands.
- Work with federal agencies to ensure continued public access.

## Nongame Management and Research

Recognizing the overlapping nature of many wildlife-related recreational pursuits, and the value of healthy ecosystems to a diversity of species and to the users who enjoy them, the division intends to broaden its management and research efforts to more directly include nongame species. This effort, made possible through new State Wildlife Grants funding, will include collecting biological information to help identify critical needs of species and their habitats. To ensure the well-being of species and to minimize the possibility of having species listed as threatened or endangered, our goals are to:

- 1) increase public ownership and support of nongame efforts through broad public involvement;
- 2) establish a stable source of funding;
- 3) provide for a wide range of public uses of nongame wildlife, as long as those uses are not detrimental to wildlife populations or their habitats;
- 4) collaborate with other agencies and organizations to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of nongame research and management activities;
- 5) gather basic inventory, monitoring and life history data needed for early detection of declines; and
- 6) protect wildlife populations and their habitats from significant losses in abundance and distribution due to development and other human activities.

### Issue #1—Nongame Management and Research:

**Baseline information is inadequate for the majority of Alaska's nongame species and their habitats.**

#### Direction

Gather basic inventory, monitoring, and life history data needed for the management of nongame populations and their ecological communities, and participate in coordinated regional and national conservation programs.

#### Strategies

- Develop inventory and monitoring programs for nongame species.
- Use existing National and Regional conservation plans to help identify key species and habitats for initial study, and those that need further investigation.



Photo courtesy of Jim Davis

*The olive-sided flycatcher nests in Alaska in summer, and migrates to South America for the winter.*

### Issue #2—Nongame Management and Research:

**Many agencies, organizations, and individuals are involved in various projects relating to nongame management and research. Without coordination and active public participation, there is the potential for overlooking critical needs or duplicating efforts.**

#### Direction

Coordinate and collaborate with other divisions, agencies, organizations, and interested individuals to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of nongame research and management on a variety of species and issues.

#### Strategies

- Participate in existing conservation efforts, such as Partners in Flight (neotropical migrants), the North American Bat Conservation Partnership, and waterfowl, shorebird, and waterbird programs.
- Identify processes for sharing nongame data and other information between partners.
- Coordinate expertise by partnering and collaborating on grants, and graduate student involvement.
- Encourage and promote volunteer participation in programs such as Breeding Bird Surveys, Christmas Bird Counts, atlases, feeder counts, urban migration banding stations, and “citizen science” programs.

### Issue #3—Nongame Management and Research:

Federal funds for nongame programs must be matched by state or private funds and the division currently has limited funds with which to match available federal funds.

#### Direction

Establish diverse and reliable sources of matching funding.

#### Strategies

- Work with the public, other agencies, and organizations to identify and secure matching funds.
- Pursue funding partnerships and user fees wherever possible.
- Develop agency expertise to pursue and acquire existing available grants and other funding opportunities.



Photo courtesy of Herman Griese

*Hunting in Alaska is enjoyed by young and old alike.*

## Wildlife Uses

The division recognizes the need for and value in providing a variety of cultural and other wildlife uses for Alaskans and visitors to the state. Hunting, trapping, viewing, and wildlife-related education are among the pursuits recognized by the division and the public, with further recognition that these pursuits can be compatible. This section of the plan addresses specific issues related to each of these pursuits, along with directions and strategies for ensuring their continued viability.

### Hunting and Trapping

Hunting and trapping are long-standing pursuits enjoyed by many Alaskans and nonresidents alike, and providing these opportunities is part of the division's mission. Sales of hunting and trapping licenses, along with big game harvest tags, provide the bulk of the money for the state's Fish and Game Fund. The division will continue to promote and support hunting and trapping activities, within sustained yield guidelines.

#### Issue # 1—Hunting and Trapping:

An increase in the numbers of hunters in locally popular locations has created hunter crowding, along with ill will among local residents, and can compromise hunter success and hunt quality for local and visiting hunters alike.

#### Direction

Look for ways to reduce and minimize hunter crowding and intrusion into areas where conflicts with local users are most likely to occur, and pursue ways to accommodate quality hunting opportunities.

#### Strategies

- Work with hunters, transporters, guides, and other affected or interested parties to identify areas where overcrowding and user conflicts may occur.
- Work with hunters and other interested and affected parties to identify and develop additional hunting opportunities.

## Issue # 2—Hunting and Trapping:

Availability of and access to public information about hunting and trapping in Alaska can be improved.

### Direction

Increase the availability of and access to information about hunting and trapping in Alaska.

### Strategies

- Work with hunters and trappers to further identify specific informational needs and desires.
- Enhance the division's web site with hunting and trapping information and materials.
- Improve access to electronic licensing and other electronic hunter and trapper services.
- Work with the tourism industry to develop web links between their sites and the division's web site.



Photo courtesy of Patrick Valkenburg

## Wildlife Viewing

Most of the 1.2 million visitors who come to Alaska each year say that one of their primary interests is enjoying Alaska's natural beauty and abundant wildlife. Many Alaska residents live in Alaska because of its wildlife resources, and most Alaskans enjoy observing all types of wildlife, either solely or in conjunction with other outdoor pursuits. Our goals are to develop a wildlife watching program that:

- 1) assists the public in viewing wildlife throughout the state,
- 2) provides safe opportunities for people to view wildlife,
- 3) promotes ethical standards for viewing wildlife, and
- 4) seeks to avoid or minimize impacts on other users.

## Issue #3—Hunting and Trapping:

Trapping is coming under increased public scrutiny, and controversy about trapping as an appropriate use of wildlife has increased.

### Direction

Provide educational information to the public regarding furbearer biology and management, and human harvest of furbearers.

### Strategies

- Collect and use biological data on furbearer population status, trends, and harvests to ensure that trapping does not exceed sustainable levels.
- Make information available to the public regarding the legitimacy and biological sustainability of harvesting furbearers.
- Work with Alaska's trappers and other wildlife interests to establish most appropriate and humane guidelines for trapping.
- Identify potential conflicts that may arise between trappers and the general public, and develop methods for addressing and resolving them.

## Issue #1—Wildlife Viewing:

Visitors to Alaska and residents of the state want to know more about how and where to view wildlife.

### Direction

Provide high-quality information about wildlife viewing in a variety of formats.

### Strategies

- Host wildlife viewing clinics to teach people wildlife viewing skills, including responsible viewing behavior.
- Publish a series of regional or local viewing guides.
- Enhance division web pages with new information about viewing opportunities and tips.
- Work with media outlets in Alaska to disseminate information about viewing opportunities.
- Work with the visitor industry to ensure that accurate information is provided to the public.
- Develop interpretative panels and signs along Alaska's highways, in concert with the Alaska Department of Transportation.

**Issue #2—Wildlife Viewing:**

Many established wildlife viewing areas are at capacity during the peak summer season.

**Direction**

Develop new and enhance existing viewing sites.

**Strategies**

- Work with local communities, private landowners, and other public agencies to identify potential new sites.
- Seek to avoid or minimize impacts on other users, including hunters, trappers, anglers, and adjacent landowners.
- Ensure that viewing programs do not adversely affect wildlife populations or habitats.
- Incorporate educational components in viewing programs wherever possible.

**Issue #3—Wildlife Viewing:**

Wildlife viewing can cause disturbances and stress for wildlife populations and their habitats if not properly conducted or managed.

**Direction**

Develop and distribute information on safe and responsible wildlife viewing behavior.

**Strategies**

- Work with the tourism industry to establish and publish wildlife viewing guidelines.
- Provide tips regarding responsible viewing behavior to the public through written and electronic media.
- As funding permits, monitor new “informal” viewing sites to minimize impacts on wildlife, habitat, and other wildlife users.

**Issue #4—Wildlife Viewing**

Federal funds for wildlife viewing programs must be matched by state or private funds and the division currently has limited funds with which to match available federal funds.

**Direction**

Establish diverse and reliable sources of matching funding.

**Strategies**

- Work with the public, other agencies, organizations, and foundations to identify and secure matching funds.
- Pursue funding partnerships and user fees wherever possible.
- Develop agency expertise to take advantage of existing grants and other funding opportunities.



Alaska Department of Fish and Game

Visitors to Walrus Islands State Game Sanctuary in the summer are rewarded with excellent views of walrus resting on beaches. These areas, known as walrus "haulouts," are important terrestrial habitat for walrus.

## Education

Surveys show that Alaskans care about wildlife, and they want science-based information to formulate reasonable conclusions and opinions on conservation issues. The public is also interested in activities of the division, and how those relate to the conservation of Alaska's wildlife. To address these interests, the division will strive to develop and deliver a variety of educational programs to promote public use and enjoyment of wildlife and participation in wildlife conservation. Our goal is to have an Alaskan public that:

- 1) values wildlife;
- 2) interacts with wildlife safely and ethically;
- 3) understands the activities and functions of the Division of Wildlife Conservation;
- 4) has the best possible wildlife information available for addressing public policy; and
- 5) understands and respects the interests and needs of a broad diversity of wildlife users.

### Issue—Education:

Many Alaskans wish to know and understand more about wildlife species and how they are managed.

### Direction

Increase opportunities for people to gain knowledge and understanding of the relationship between wildlife, their habitats, and people.

### Strategies

- Develop and provide community-based education programs and activities, including, but not limited to, publications, media, interpretive and informational presentations, and special events.
- Develop and provide educational programs to students through the integration of wildlife-related information, materials, and training, including Project WILD, the Alaska Wildlife Curriculum, and other programs, into school curricula.
- Cooperate with other agencies and organizations to offer educational information and materials.
- Provide educational opportunities for the public to gain an understanding of complex ecological relationships and wildlife management issues.
- Develop and offer outdoor skill development clinics, training, and activities, including hunter and trapper education, bear safety, and other topics.
- Provide the public with timely, unbiased information regarding ballot initiatives related to wildlife management issues.



Photo courtesy of Roger Seavoy

*A division biologist shows an orphaned muskox calf to Bethel school children before sending it to a new home at a zoo.*

## Public Service

Providing service to the public is one of the fundamental functions of the division. Service varies from providing information to hunters and wildlife watchers to dealing with human-wildlife conflicts. The foundation of public service is effective communication and a commitment to excellence. Communication between the division and the public is essential to fostering mutual understanding of issues; from remote, rural areas to urban centers.

The division is committed to achieving the highest level of public satisfaction across regions by demonstrating consistent professional and courteous behavior toward the public and providing people with professional and knowledgeable services.

### Issue #1—Public Service:

**There is increasing demand for fast and easy access to information from the division on a wide variety of wildlife-related subjects.**

### Direction

Improve our ability to provide accurate, timely, comprehensive, and concise information to the public in a manner that achieves a high level of customer satisfaction.

### Strategies

- Enhance our Internet capabilities to provide a wide variety of information in a user-friendly format.
- Work with the tourism industry to develop web links between their sites and the division's sites.
- Evaluate the public's interest in publication of a Division of Wildlife Conservation newsletter or other ongoing communication vehicles describing division activities.
- Establish a method for the public to communicate with the division via the Internet, to augment existing methods of receiving feedback.
- Establish television and radio programs that provide information to a broad audience about division activities.
- Work closely with newspapers to provide them with useful and timely information.

### Issue #2—Public Service:

In some parts of the state, it is difficult for the public to access licenses, tags, harvest tickets, permits, or bear and furbearer sealers, thereby making it difficult to comply with state regulatory requirements.

### Direction

Continue to improve availability of licenses, tags, permits, harvest tickets, and sealing services throughout the state to facilitate regulatory compliance.

### Strategies

- Provide the public with the most simple, clear, and user-friendly summary of hunting and trapping regulations possible.
- Provide information on regulations via our web site.
- Provide reliable and user-friendly access to electronic licensing and permitting transactions via the Internet.
- Provide adequate incentives and encourage business owners and other organizations in rural communities to become fur sealers and license vendors.

## Human-Wildlife Conflicts

Alaska's human population continues to increase, resulting in the expansion of urban areas and changes in public attitudes towards wildlife. As a result, human-wildlife contacts and conflicts have increased. Many species have adapted and thrive in areas of high human population because of the abundance of food, cover, and the near-absence of predators. These changes create a multitude of economic, social, and safety issues.

### Issue—Human-Wildlife Conflicts:

The division has too few staff to respond to the large and increasing numbers of nuisance animal calls. Relocating nuisance animals often serves to move problems to other areas or is generally ineffective because animals return to their original locations.

### Direction

Increase the public's awareness and understanding of human-wildlife interactions and ways to avoid or minimize conflicts.

### Strategies

- Provide technical assistance, educational opportunities, and practical options to the public to address wildlife conflicts.
- Foster cooperative efforts with local, state, and federal agencies, along with selected private entities, to help resolve and prevent human-wildlife conflicts.
- Work with local communities and municipalities to develop ordinances and long-range plans to address wildlife conflicts.
- Identify specific conflicts where additional staffing may be needed.
- Propose new legislation to allow private companies to be licensed to deal with some nuisance wildlife species.
- Encourage individuals and communities to dispose of garbage in a manner that avoids or minimizes wildlife attraction and conflicts.
- Use lethal removal where appropriate and necessary.



Photo courtesy of Steve DuBois

*The Delta Junction bison herd provides wildlife watching and highly sought after hunting opportunities. Human-wildlife conflicts increased with the advent of large-scale grain farming. These were addressed by involving the public in developing the Delta Bison Management Plan.*

## Information Management

An important component of the division's Information Management program is to provide data and information to the public and division staff, and to administer permit hunts. Information Management also provides GIS-based data analyses and digital mapping capabilities to the division.

### Issue—Information Management:

Advances in computer technology are occurring at a rapid pace, and the division must utilize these new advances to improve its public service and data management, and communicate these to staff and the public.

### Direction

Incorporate new technology to enable data and information to be compiled, stored, and retrieved by staff and the public in an easy and timely manner.



Alaska Department of Fish and Game

*Biologists fit Canada geese with leg and neck bands, and a few also get radio transmitters. These markers will aid in assessing population numbers.*

## Strategies

- Expand the division's capabilities to collect, compile, store, and retrieve harvest data and other information.
- Enhance the division's ability to provide timely data and information to staff and the public, using automation technology.
- Cooperate with staff and the public to identify specific informational needs, and communicate changes and technological advances to staff.

## Regulatory Process

Alaska's fish and game regulatory process provides for public access and participation. This system is administered by the Department of Fish and Game's Boards Support Section, which supports the Boards of Fish and Game, along with numerous local Fish and Game Advisory Committees across the state. The division's role is to provide complete and timely biological information to Advisory Committees and the Board of Game, which is critical to their decision-making processes. Because division staff live in many communities throughout the state, they are often able to attend Advisory Committee meetings that Boards Support staff cannot.

### Issue —Regulatory Process:

Advisory Committees sometimes encounter issues or problems associated with their functions and administration that are not effectively communicated to the Boards Support Section for resolution.

### Direction

Offer support and assistance to the department's Boards Support Section.

## Strategies

- When division staff become aware of issues or concerns associated with the function or administration of Advisory Committees, relay these to the Boards Support Section, and work cooperatively to help address and resolve them.
- Continue to provide complete and timely biological information to Advisory Committees and the Board of Game.

## Subsistence/Dual Management

Both state and federal statutes provide a priority for subsistence use of wildlife in Alaska. Under federal law only rural residents are eligible for the priority. The Constitution of the State of Alaska provides that all Alaskan residents are eligible subsistence users under state law. This difference resulted in a federal takeover of subsistence management on all federal lands within Alaska in 1990. The federal government therefore regulates subsistence harvests on federal lands for rural residents while the Division of Wildlife Conservation continues to have the responsibility to manage wildlife for all users on all lands within Alaska. The result is a system of dual wildlife management on federal lands, with different state and federal regulations often applying to the same areas. Typically in the United States, states are responsible for wildlife management and it is the goal of the Department of Fish and Game to regain wildlife management authority. Numerous past efforts to resolve this issue by amending the state constitution and/or amending the federal statutes have been unsuccessful.

### Issue —Subsistence/Dual Management:

Federal intervention into wildlife management has created a divisive and controversial issue. It has made the regulatory process much more costly and time consuming for the division, and continues to create confusion for hunters and trappers.

### Direction

Work with all parties to return fish and wildlife management responsibility to the state. Until this occurs, work with the federal agencies and Federal Subsistence Board to insure the harvest of wildlife on federal lands does not exceed sustained yield, and work to minimize the confusion over regulations faced by hunters and other wildlife users.

### Strategies

- Attend federal regional advisory council meetings, when it is in the state's best interest, to provide biological input and strengthen cooperative working relationships with the public, councils, and federal agency staff.
- Work with federal agencies to develop management protocols that will improve coordination of management efforts, reduce duplication of efforts by staff biologists, and minimize differences between state and federal regulations.



Photo courtesy of Randy Rogers

*Elders discuss moose management at a Yukon Flats Moose Planning Committee meeting in Beaver.*

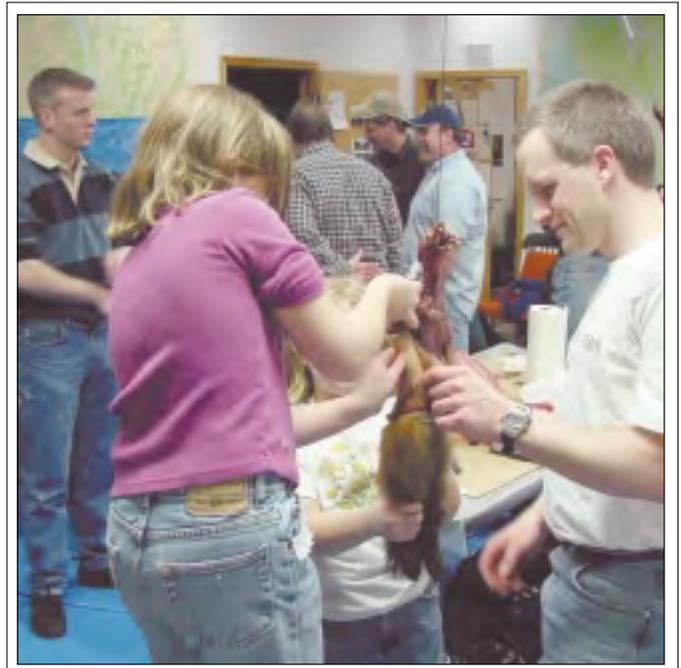


Photo courtesy of Mike Wood

*Fur skinning skills are taught to people of all ages at clinics sponsored by the division. Fur harvesting is often important to the subsistence way of life, as well as to other wildlife users. Careful handling of pelts preserves their usefulness and value.*



Photo courtesy of Craig Flatten

*Biologists fit a radio collar to a sedated wolf, and collect biological information. This tracking technology assists biologists in collecting information on wolf movements and populations.*

## Predator Management

Predator management has been one of the most controversial wildlife issues in Alaska for decades. Highly divergent public opinions are rooted in deeply held values, especially regarding population control of wolves.

Humans have the ability to influence natural systems by reducing predator populations and allowing ungulate (hoofed animal) populations to increase from depressed levels. Whether, when, or how it is appropriate for humans to decrease the number of predators—especially wolves—as a way to increase ungulate numbers for human harvest and use is controversial. This controversy is likely to persist, regardless of how much biological information is available. The division is professionally committed to continuing to move this controversy toward resolution for the benefit of all Alaskans.

### Issue —Predator Management:

The public is deeply divided over how predators should be managed in Alaska and this has made it extremely difficult, expensive, and time consuming for the division to recommend or implement effective wildlife management programs that involve predator management.

### Direction

Explore ways to increase ungulate populations within ecological constraints, and involve the public in developing effective wildlife management strategies that address predator management issues.

## Strategies

- Identify and implement innovative methods for increasing ungulate productivity and survival rates, including active habitat management.
- Continue to conduct research on predator-prey relationships and identify new methods to reduce predation on ungulate populations.
- Work within Intensive Management guidelines established by state statutes and regulations to address the abundance of designated predator and prey populations.
- Apply rigorous standards of adaptive management, as defined and articulated in scientific literature, to advance our knowledge of the consequences and efficacy of specific management actions.
- Provide the public with accurate biological information about predator-prey relationships.
- Initiate collaborative public involvement processes to develop recommended actions for addressing specific predator-prey situations.
- Provide information to the public about wildlife relationships and interactions.

## Public Involvement in Decision-Making

The division has increased its efforts to involve the public in wildlife management decision-making in response to growing public interest and the increasing social complexity of wildlife management issues. Public involvement can range from seeking public input on division proposals, to collaborative processes with high levels of public participation. The more complex or controversial the wildlife issues, the



Photo courtesy of Randy Rogers

*A Yukon Flats Moose Planning Committee meeting in Chalkyitsik. The division sometimes convenes citizen's groups to help find solutions for difficult wildlife management issues.*

greater the need for public participation. Decisions in which all stakeholders have a voice are more socially and politically durable than are those made unilaterally by the department.

## **Issue —Public Involvement:**

**Collaborative public involvement processes are necessary to address wildlife management issues in some cases, but are complex and expensive to administer.**

### **Direction**

Identify and prioritize management issues for which collaborative public involvement processes would be desirable.

### **Strategies**

- Ensure that division staff receive adequate training to identify the need and processes for collaborative public involvement.
- Include Advisory Committee members in collaborative public involvement processes.
- Create a non-threatening environment for stakeholders that encourages involvement and a stronger sense of ownership and stewardship.
- Integrate both traditional and scientific knowledge into management decisions.
- Foster reciprocal education and improved information sharing between the division and the public.

## **Staffing and Organizational Development**

Since its inception, the division has employed a highly trained and professional staff to manage and conserve Alaska's wildlife. Division programs and activities are generally developed and implemented at the area and regional levels, better enabling us to address local wildlife conservation issues. Staff presence in communities throughout Alaska allows us to establish close working relationships with the public and local governments and to give immediate attention to local issues.

The division is experiencing difficulty in retaining long-term biologists and recruiting qualified new ones. Compensation for biologists working for the state is no longer competitive with federal natural resource management agencies. Concurrently, the division requires a more diverse work force to meet the needs of broadened programs in wildlife education and wildlife viewing, along with the desires of the public to be more involved in wildlife management decisions.

## **Issue #1—Staffing and Organizational Development:**

**Difficulty in retaining biological staff and recruiting for qualified candidates for biologist positions is compromising the division's ability to develop and implement effective wildlife management programs.**

### **Direction**

Improve our ability to retain and recruit highly qualified professional staff.

### **Strategies**

- Maintain a decentralized area and regional office organization.
- Develop methods to recognize and reward outstanding work performance.
- Provide opportunities for professional development and training.
- Create new job classifications in the areas of wildlife education, Internet web specialists, and project management, and insure existing job classifications provide opportunities for growth and advancement.
- Work with local high schools and universities to encourage student pursuits of degrees in resources management.
- Promote a competitive monetary compensation package comparable to other government resource management agencies.

## **Issue #2—Staffing and Organizational Development:**

**Staff involvement in division problem-solving and decision-making processes results in improved decisions, heightened morale, wide spread ownership, and better implementation.**

### **Direction**

Retain the division's participatory model for problem solving and decision-making.

### **Strategies**

- Create and utilize staff work groups and task forces to address specific issues or problems affecting the division, its operations and deliverables, or Alaska's wildlife.
- Retain the Division Management Team (DMT) to work with the director on policy and operational decisions.

**ADF&G (or department)** – Alaska Department of Fish and Game.

**Direction (Program Goal)** – A directional statement of intent describing what needs to be done to address an issue or opportunity. Tends to suggest solutions (strategies).

**Division** – ADF&G’s Division of Wildlife Conservation.

**Division Goal** – A broad, directional statement of intent. A division goal supports the vision and mission statements; is realistic enough to inspire and challenge; and is suggestive of action and direction without specifying how.

**DMT** – Division Management Team: The upper-level leadership of the Division of Wildlife Conservation.

**DNR** – The Alaska Department of Natural Resources.

**Furbearers** – A group of animals noted for their quality fur, including beaver, mink, marten, river otters, foxes, wolverines, and other similar species.

**GIS** – Geographic Information System: A computer-based system of processing data and depicting it geographically.

**GMU** – Game Management Unit (see page 31).

**Issue** – A significant opportunity, problem, factor, or trend, or an internal or external challenge to the agency’s mission, direction, policies, way of doing business, or culture. Issues should be clearly stated and understandable; serve as the foundation for future actions; and be specific enough to elicit ideas for solutions.

**Nongame** – Wildlife species that are not commonly hunted or trapped.

**Sealing** – The division’s process of collecting biological information about harvested bears and furbearers, and placing a numbered plastic or metal locking tag on skulls and/or hides.

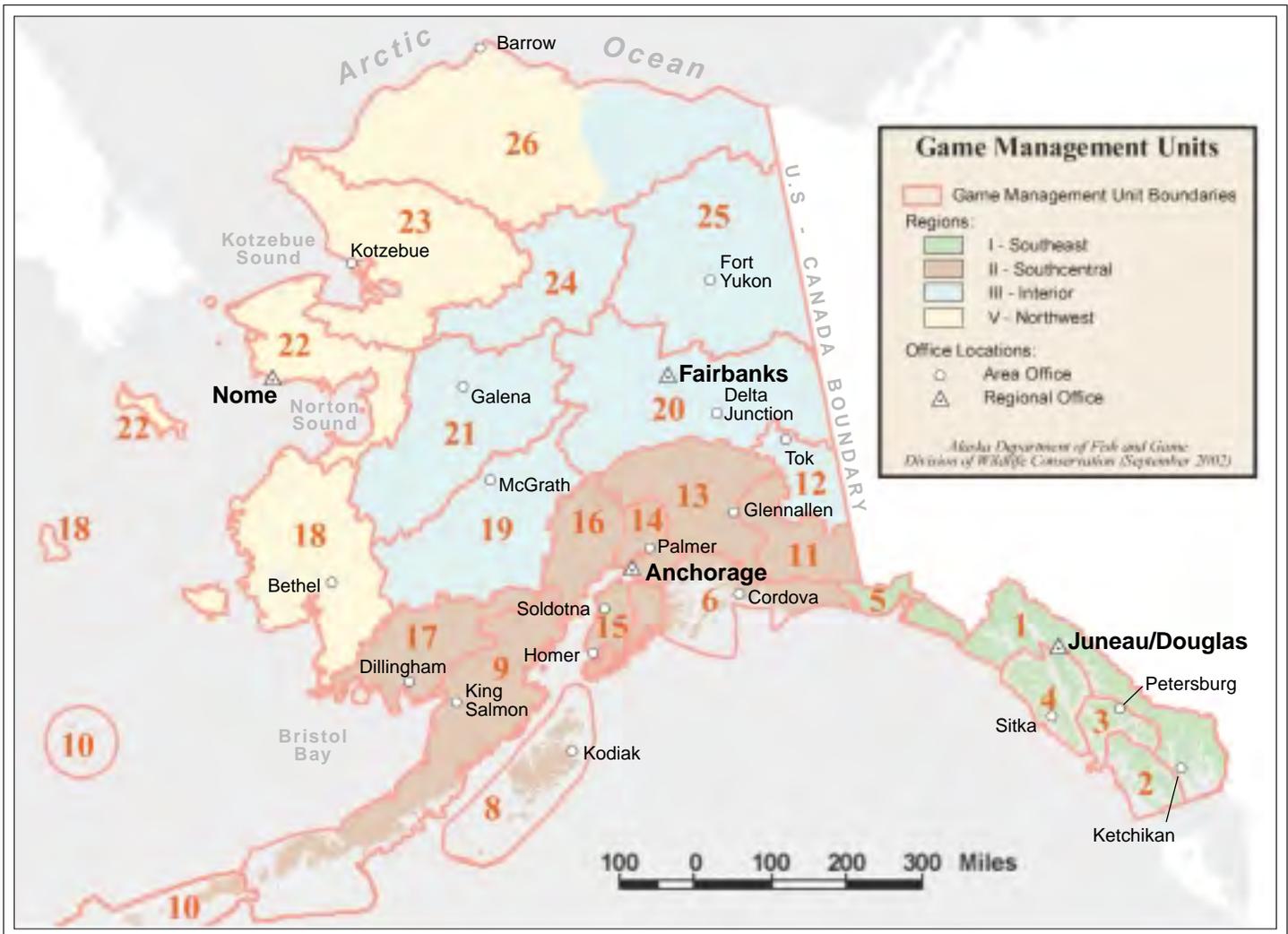
**Strategy** – Defines the methods or courses of action used to achieve a direction (program goal).



Photo courtesy of Steve Arthur

*North Slope of the Brooks Range in summer.*

# Game Management Units



*The Game Management Units, regions, and offices of the Division of Wildlife Conservation.*

The Division of Wildlife Conservation has four regions: Southeast, Southcentral, Interior, and Northwest, with regional offices located in Douglas (Juneau), Anchorage, Fairbanks, and Nome. Area offices are located in 22 communities and the headquarters office is located in Juneau.

The State of Alaska is divided into 26 Game Management Units (GMUs) for regulatory purposes. Some GMUs are divided into subunits. GMU boundaries were established soon after statehood and were developed based on geographic and biological considerations. Many hunting and trapping regulations vary from one GMU to the next due to differences in the status and trends of wildlife populations.

**Division of Wildlife Conservation Offices are located in the following communities, and can be reached at area code 907:**

Anchorage.....267-2137	Galena .....656-1345	Kotzebue.....442-3420
Barrow.....852-3464	Glennallen.....822-3461	McGrath .....524-3323
Bethel.....543-2979	Homer .....235-8191	Nome.....443-2271
Cordova.....424-3215	Juneau.....465-4190	Palmer.....746-6300
Delta Junction.....895-4484	(Headquarters)	Petersburg.....772-3801
Dillingham.....842-2334	Ketchikan.....225-2475	Sitka.....747-5449
Douglas.....465-4265	King Salmon .....246-3340	Soldotna.....262-9368
Fairbanks.....459-7206	Kodiak .....486-1880	Tok .....883-2971



## Our Vision:

*Excellence in wildlife conservation and public service.*

## Our Mission:

*To conserve and enhance Alaska's wildlife and habitats and provide for a wide range of public uses and benefits.*

## Cover Photos

*Top-left: A mountain goat in its natural, alpine habitat.*  
Photo courtesy of Peter Thurston

*Top-right: A bowhunter scans the tundra in search of game.*  
Alaska Department of Fish and Game

*Bottom-left: Local high school students assist wildlife biologists with capturing and radiocollaring caribou from the Western Arctic herd.*  
Photo courtesy of Joanna Fox

*Bottom-right: Sandhill cranes can be found in many parts of Alaska, where they come for summer nesting. They are among the oldest species still living on earth.*  
Photo courtesy of Craig Flatten