

**Interim Report to the Alaska Board of Game on  
Recovery of Muskoxen  
with Brown Bear Predation Control  
in GMU 26B**

**Prepared by the Division of Wildlife Conservation  
August 2012**



**1) Description of Recovery Program and Department recommendation for reporting period**

- A) This report is an interim evaluation for a recovery program authorized by the Alaska Board of Game (Board) under 5 AAC 92.126. This program was implemented in April 2012, and therefore, no annual report has yet been prepared.
- B) Month this report was submitted by the Department to the Board:  
February \_\_\_ (annual report) August x (interim annual update) Year 2012
- C) Program name: Unit 26B Muskoxen Recovery Program
- D) Existing program has an associated Operational Plan: Operational Plan for Intensive management of muskoxen in game management unit 26b, 2012–2018 , version 2, January 13, 2012
- E) Game Management Unit fully or partly included in recovery area: 26B
- F) Objectives for muskoxen: population size 300 muskoxen that are  $\geq 1$  year old in April surveys harvest 3-9 muskoxen annually, once the population reaches 300 muskoxen
- G) Month and year the current recovery program was originally authorized by the Board: January 2012. Indicate date(s) if renewed: \_\_\_\_\_
- H) Predation control is currently active in this recovery area.
- I) If active, month and year the current recovery program began: April 2012
- J) A habitat management program funded by the Department or from other sources is currently active in this recovery area [Y/N] N
- K) Size of recovery program area (square miles) and geographic description: 15,330 mi<sup>2</sup>, including all lands within Unit 26(B); except bear control will not occur on National Park Service or National Wildlife Refuge lands unless approved by these federal agencies (Figure 1)

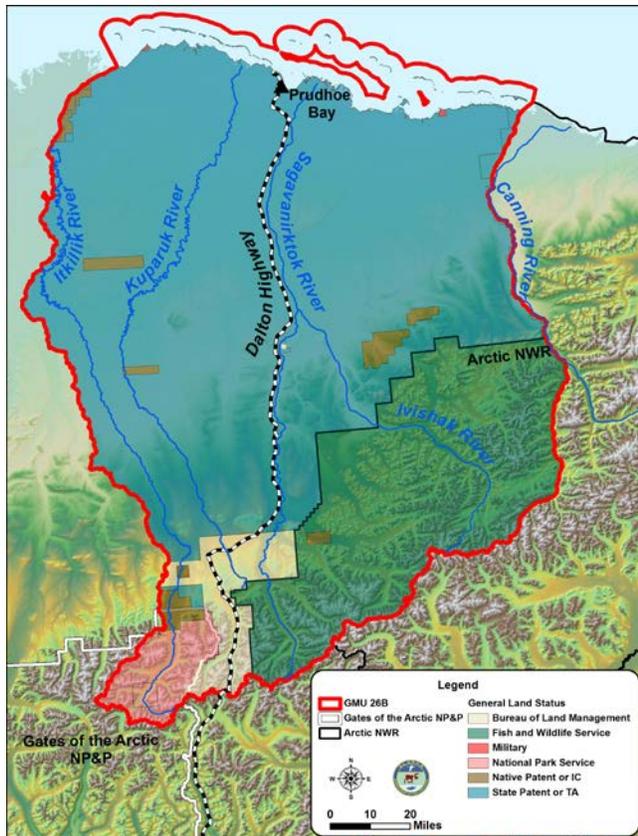


Figure 1. Unit 26B muskoxen recovery area.

- L) Size and geographic description of area for assessing muskoxen abundance: approximately 24,000 mi<sup>2</sup>, including all of Unit 26(B), the portion of Unit 26(A) from the eastern boundary to Ikpikuk River, and the portion of Unit 26(C) from the western boundary to the Hulahula River
- M) Size and geographic description of area for muskoxen harvest reporting: 15,330 mi<sup>2</sup>, including all of Unit 26(B); currently no open season
- N) Size and geographic description of area for assessing predator abundance: 15,330 mi<sup>2</sup>, including all of Unit 26(B)
- O) Size and geographic description of recovery area: See K
- P) Criteria for evaluating progress toward objectives: Number of muskoxen  $\geq$  1 year old in April population estimate; Ratio of yearlings per 100 cows  $>$ 2 years old in April composition survey.
- Q) Criteria for success with this program: The program will be reviewed and modified or suspended if there is no evidence of improved survival or a detectable increase in the Unit 26B muskoxen population following 3 years of bear removal.

R) **Department recommendation for recovery program in this reporting period:**  
Recommend to continue

**2) Prey data**

Date(s) and method of most recent [fall/spring] abundance assessment for muskoxen (if statistical variation available, describe method here and show result in Table 1): April 2, 2012; conducted aerial survey using radiocollared animals to facilitate locating groups of muskoxen.

Compared to recovery area, was a similar trend and magnitude of difference in abundance observed in nearby non-treatment area(s) since program inception No non-treatment area established [Y/N] and in the last year No non-treatment area established [Y/N]?

Date(s) of most recent age and sex composition survey (if statistical variation available, describe method here and show result in Table 1): April 18-22, 2012; located groups of muskoxen by radiotracking from a fixed-wing aircraft or helicopter, then classified animals from the ground as ≥4 years old, 3 years old, 2 years old, yearling, and as male or female.

Compared to recovery area, was a similar composition trend and magnitude of difference in composition observed in nearby non-treatment area(s) since program inception No non-treatment area established (Y/N) and in the last year No non-treatment area established (Y/N)?

**Table 1.** Muskoxen abundance, age and sex composition in assessment area that includes all of Unit 26(B), the portion of Unit 26(A) from the eastern boundary to Ikpikpuk River, and the portion of Unit 26(C) from the western boundary to the Hulahula River since program implementation in year 1 to reauthorization review in year 6. Regulatory year is 1 July to 30 June (e.g, RY 2010 is 1 July 2010 to 30 June 2011).

Period	RY	Abundance (variation)	Composition (number per 100 females)			
			Young	Yearlings :100 >2 yrs	Adult Males	Total <i>n</i>
Year 1	2012	191	--	29:100	31	191
Year 2						
Year 3						
Year 4						
Year 5						
Year 6						

Describe trend in abundance or composition : stable

**Table 2.** Muskoxen harvest in Unit 26(B). Methods for estimating unreported harvest are described in Survey and Inventory reports.

Period	RY	Reported		Estimated		Total harvest	Other mortality <sup>a</sup>	Total
		Male	Female	Unreported	Illegal			
Year 1	2012	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Year 2								
Year 3								
Year 4								
Year 5								
Year 6								

<sup>a</sup>Clarify (vehicle mortality, Defense of Life and Property, Mortuary, etc.).

Describe trend in harvest: Not Applicable

Describe any other harvest related trend if appropriate: Not Applicable

### 3) Predator data

Date and method of most recent spring abundance assessment for grizzly bears: June 2003; double-count line transect population estimate method (BECKER, E. F, AND P. X. QUANG. 2009. A gamma-shaped detection function for line-transect surveys with mark-recapture and covariate data. Journal of Agricultural, Biological and Environmental Statistics 14(2): 207–223).

Date and method of most recent spring abundance assessment for grizzly bears: Spring 2011; used the midpoint of the most recent population estimate from June 2003 (265 bears) and sustainable harvest rate of 8% to model abundance; specifically, determined that the harvest of 7 females in fall 2011 indicated harvest was within sustained yield for females. Harvest rate of males was also within sustained yield (14 bears). Total harvest rate was less than 8% (21 bears); however, a DLP (female) and an illegal bear (male) were also taken in fall 2011 resulting in human caused mortality of 23 bears. We will track known human caused mortality rate on a 3 year mean and adjust the hunting season accordingly so as not to exceed an average of 21 bears per regulatory year, including bears killed by the Department.

Other research or evidence of trend or abundance status in grizzly bears: None

**Table 3.** Grizzly bear abundance objectives and removal in Unit 26B. Objective is to maintain the current estimated population of 200-320 bears, while annually removing up to 20 bears identified as threatening of killing muskoxen. Regulatory year is 1 July to 30 June (e.g, RY 2010 is 1 July 2010 to 30 June 2011).

Period	RY	Spring abundance (variation)	Harvest removal	Dept. control removal	Public control removal	Total removal <sup>b</sup>	Fall abundance (variation)

			FA	SP	FA	SP	FA	SP		
Year 0 <sup>a</sup>	2010	200-320	--	--	--	--	--	NA	--	--
Year 1	2011	200-320	21	0	--	3	NA	NA	26	--
Year 2										
Year 3										
Year 4										
Year 5										
Year 6										

<sup>a</sup>For 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.

<sup>b</sup>Additional removal may be Defense of Life and Property, vehicle kill, etc.

#### 4) Costs specific to implementing Intensive Management

**Table 4.** Cost (\$1000 = 1.0) of agency salary based on estimate of proportional time of field level staff and cost of operations for recovery 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 Unit 26(B). 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	Predation control <sup>a</sup>		Other recovery activities		Total IM cost	Research cost <sup>d</sup>
		Time <sup>b</sup>	Cost <sup>c</sup>	Time <sup>b</sup>	Cost <sup>c</sup>		
Year 1	2012	0.23	\$126.1	1.8	\$13.5	\$139.6	\$10.0
Year 2							
Year 3							
Year 4							
Year 5							
Year 6							

<sup>a</sup>State or private funds only.

<sup>b</sup>Person-months (22 days per month)

<sup>c</sup>Salary plus operations

<sup>d</sup>Separate from implementing IM program but beneficial for understanding of ecological or human response to management treatment (scientific approach that is not unique to IM).