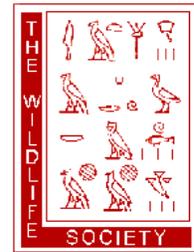




The Alaskan Wildlifer

Newsletter of the Alaska Chapter of
The Wildlife Society

May 2007



Highlights in This Issue

- *Annual Chapter Meeting Successful*
- *News From Around the State*
- *Alaska Legislature and Board Actions*
- *Meetings and Announcements*
- *Wildlife Disease Monitoring*
- *TWS Begins Technical Review of Predator Control in Alaska*
- *GAP Analysis Program comes to Alaska*
- *Member Contributions: Roles of Research Scientists in Decision-Making*

Message from the President

It was a great pleasure to attend the annual Chapter meeting and jointly held Northern Furbearer Conference in Juneau during 16-20 April. We were treated to sunshine, mild temperatures, and nearly calm conditions after the Southeast's "summer that didn't happen" last year that was followed by a winter of record snowfall. Highlights and meeting statistics are provided in the section *News from Southeast*, but I wanted to again highlight the tremendous efforts by the program chairs, Kevin White and Dale Rabe, along with a cast of outstanding volunteers:

Neil Barten, Karen Blejwas, Rod Flynn, Howard Golden, Matt Kirchhoff, Michelle Kissling, Doug Larsen, Steve Lewis, Karin McCoy, Sanjay Pyare, Kristin Romanoff, Helen Slama, Winston Smith, Dave Tallmon, and Jamie Womble—thank you!

We held the business meeting on 19 April with about 25 members in attendance, including five Executive Board members. (It was hard to compete with sunshine in Juneau, even with a free lunch and door prizes!). Minutes of the meeting will be posted on our website soon (www.wildlife.org/chapters/ak). Here are a few highlights:

- The Chapter has a healthy budget because of revenues from the TWS conference in Anchorage last September
- TWS is moving steadily toward transferring website posting privileges to Chapters for more timely updates, and Liz Solomon has

volunteered to serve as our Chapter webmaster

- A member request for a "lifetime member" category was determined to be unfeasible because Chapter bylaws were revised last year to require membership in TWS, which no longer has a lifetime member category

Chapter drafts Tongass letter for TWS signature

In late April, John Schoen and Matt Kirchhoff collaborated to draft a comment letter to the U.S. Forest Service on the Draft EIS for adjustment of the Tongass Land Management Plan. The Executive Board provided comments on the draft, and past-President Eric Taylor worked with Laura Bies (TWS Associate Director for Government Affairs) to route the letter among TWS Council and present the final version for signature by Michael Hutchins (TWS Executive Director) on 30 April. The letter explained why the proposed adjustment of timber harvest objectives on the Tongass National Forest did not adequately address concerns for wildlife conservation. The letter's 12 recommendations drew upon the recently approved TWS position statement on old growth that was drafted last year by the Alaska Chapter.

TWS review of predator control in Alaska

The technical review proposal "Predator Control in Alaska: History, Effectiveness, Current Status, and Future Prospects" was submitted to the Executive Committee of the Alaska Chapter in March by Alaska



Chapter past-President Eric Taylor and TWS Vice President Tom Franklin. The Alaska Chapter Executive Board unanimously approved the draft proposal (one Executive Board member did not vote) and provided comments. The revised draft was approved in March by Wini Kessler, TWS Northwest Section Representative. The final proposal was presented to TWS Council on 23 March 2007 and was unanimously approved.

In April, TWS President John Organ appointed a Council Subcommittee to serve as the point-of-contact for a Technical Review Committee. President Organ is currently selecting a committee of 10-12 members and sent a letter to ADFG Commissioner Denby Lloyd, inviting the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to nominate one or more staff specialists to serve on the committee.

The expected technical review completion date is December 2008. TWS is currently submitting proposals and letters of interest for funding to offset meeting and technical review production costs. We will publish progress updates in future newsletters.

Gap Analysis Program coming to Alaska

Most of you are familiar with the conservation practice of identifying areas of high biological diversity and overlaying boundaries of protected areas to highlight where there may be "gaps" as a means to prioritize new conservation units. The [Gap Analysis Program](#) (GAP, "*Keeping Common Species Common*") is completed or well underway in most of the other 49 states and is beginning to move forward in Alaska, although work on data layers has been underway by various groups for awhile. GAP has three spatial components: a vegetative classification, a protected area classification, and wildlife distribution maps. The major impediment in Alaska has been lack of a statewide vegetation layer at an appropriate resolution.

The [LANDFIRE](#) project is expected to produce a statewide Landsat landcover classification (30 m resolution) for Alaska by 2009 as part of a system to map hazardous fuels and fire risk in the United States. This public sector classification of major vegetation types will be of tremendous value to wildlife and land managers who have until now relied on the partial coverage of Ducks Unlimited classifications done in partnership with BLM and NPS about a decade ago.

The [Alaska Natural Heritage Program](#) (ANHP) is leading GAP and held meetings around the state this past February to inform stakeholders about progress on GAP

in Alaska and get comments on how to proceed with expert review of vertebrate species distributions over the next couple years. I encouraged ANHP to put existing maps on the web with the option for interactive comments to avoid the need for experts from around the state to travel to central locations. I also noted that the Alaska Chapter TWS could serve as a conduit for reaching the wide range of specialists in our membership, so stay tuned for updates in future newsletters. Finally, The Nature Conservancy has produced a "*Conservation areas blueprint for Alaska*" that highlights coverage of protected or conservation areas. Copies may be obtained by contacting Tracey Gotthardt of ANHP at 257-2782 or antg@uaa.alaska.edu.

Wanted from pioneer members: historical documents from prior to 1990

The value of historic documents increases with the passage of time. Eric Taylor and I have each put a few hours into organizing the President's files and gathering old copies of newsletters and correspondence. Last year Bob Weeden and Dave Klein donated a few papers from the 1970s, including the list of charter members from 1971. There are several years prior to 1990 with virtually nothing in the folders. **Please contact Tom Paragi if you have old newsletters, correspondence, minutes of a business meeting, or meeting agendas from the Alaska Chapter TWS.** If they fill a void in the files, the Chapter will reimburse photocopy fees and postage.

News from Southeast:

By Steve Lewis, Southeast Representative

People

Karin McCoy was hired to oversee the Division of Wildlife Conservation's Southeast deer work (population trend assessment and harvest survey) and to lead in commenting on regional development activities. She had previously worked with Kevin White on moose and mountain goat studies.

Jeff Jemison was hired as a F&W Technician IV in Region I, and will be involved in a number of management and research efforts.

Mike Goldstein moved to the Past-President slot of the Northwest Section of TWS as **Sanjay Pyare** began his 2-yr term as President.



Wini Kessler's 2nd (3-yr) term as Council position of Representative for the Northwest Section expires this year.

Ellen Campbell, who recently retired from the U.S. Forest Service and will relocate to La Grande, OR, is running for the Council position of Representative for the Northwest Section, during the upcoming general election.

News

Tongass Land Management Plan Adjustment. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADFG) have been actively involved in reviewing, discussing, and commenting on the U.S. Forest Service's (USFS) Tongass Land Management (TLMP) amendment. The USFS's comment deadline was April 30 and the State of Alaska planned to release its comments for public review by April 23. Federal and state biologists have focused on the importance and continued implementation of the Conservation Strategy (CS) that was developed as part of the 1997 TLMP. Among the key components of the CS are the series of small, medium, and large old growth reserves (OGR), beach and riparian buffers, and standards and guidelines (S&G) for certain wildlife species. Among the proposed changes to the plan is a revision to the marten and goshawk S&G (termed "legacy"). FWS and ADFG biologists have expressed concern with the proposed change and have offered to further evaluate the existing marten and goshawk S&G in the context of impediments it may create for economic timber harvesting. The TLMP Record of Decision (ROD) is expected to be signed this August. For more information contact Doug Larsen of ADFG (doug_larsen@fishgame.state.ak.us).

Queen Charlotte Goshawk Status Review, a report recently released by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, summarizes taxonomy, distribution, habitat, food habits, demography, and threats to this goshawk subspecies which is found in Southeast Alaska and coastal British Columbia. This 173-page document will help support a decision that the Fish and Wildlife Service will soon be making on whether the Queen Charlotte goshawk is threatened or endangered on Vancouver Island or in other portions of its range. You can receive a copy by contacting FWS biologist Steve Brockmann (steve_brockmann@fws.gov).

Annual Chapter Meeting Notes. The Alaska Chapter of the Wildlife Society and the Northern Furbearer Association held a joint meeting in Juneau from April 16 to 20. Dr. Lisette Waits (U. of Idaho) conducted a

workshop entitled *Conservation Genetics for Natural Resource Managers* on Monday. Dr. Brian Czech (Virginia Tech U.) gave a humorous but sobering talk about the economics of natural resources and led a session that discussed various perspectives on the subject. In all, 52 talks and 18 posters were presented. Author and banquet speaker, Nick Jans, generated lots of conversation with a talk on his perspective on wolves and current issues with wolf management. The meeting had a good turnout: 85 people (excluding invited speakers) attended the conference, including 59 people who registered for the full conference and 26 daily registrants. Twenty-five attendees were students or retirees (mostly UAS biology students). The workshop attendance was 23 people. It was a good meeting and the organizing committee, especially Kevin White and Dale Rabe, deserve kudos for all their work.

Field Projects. Karen Blejwas, Karin McCoy, and Rich Lowell collected deer and elk pellets on Etolin Island as part of a follow-up diet study to the one published by Kirchhoff and Larsen in 1998. Interagency efforts involving the FS and ADF&G are underway to assess deer mortality in Southeast following record snowfall, with snow depths of up to 10 feet persisting in some parts of the region. Audrey Magoun, Pat Valkenburg, and Rich Lowell completed the first of at least two field seasons studying wolverines in Thomas Bay near Petersburg. After overcoming trapping challenges, the team outfitted a couple of wolverines with radio collars and will be monitoring movements and habitat use. Michelle Kissling and Steve Lewis continued their forest owl study, coordinating surveys across Southeast Alaska to describe owl abundance and distribution and to model occupancy of western screech-owls and barred owls. In addition, they continue to collect owl carcasses for use in a study of genetic relatedness and endemism in Southeast Alaska.

News from Southcentral:

By Robin West, Southcentral Representative

People

Geoff Beyersdorf, Pilot/Biologist, recently transferred from Koyukuk/Nowitna National Wildlife Refuges to Kenai National Wildlife Refuge to work on growing subsistence management issues there.

Todd Logan, Chief of Refuges for Alaska (Anchorage), and Gregory Siekaniec, Manager of Alaska Maritime National Wildlife Refuge (Homer) were recently selected for training for the Senior Executive Service of the Department of Interior. This training extends



over a year and allows those who successfully complete the program to be non-competitively appointed to senior leadership positions (such as a Regional Director) within the Department. Only a handful of agency officials are accepted into this program each year and it is exciting to see two wildlife management leaders be chosen from the working ranks in Alaska.

News

Chugach National Forest recently completed an Environmental Assessment to allow the use of 27 acres of land in Portage Valley by the Alaska Department of Fish and Game to support wood bison re-introductions elsewhere in the State. For more information on the EA contact Aaron Poe at (907) 754-2345 or apoe@fs.fed.us. (Another public process for wood bison is listed in *News from the North*.)

An Environmental Assessment for Kenai National Wildlife Refuge was also recently completed to permit "heliportable" 2D and 3D seismic activity within the East Swanson River area of the Refuge. For more information contact Claire Caldes at (907) 262-7021 or claire_caldes@fws.gov.

The National Marine Fisheries Service recently proposed listing of Cook Inlet beluga whales for protection under the Endangered Species Act. Public comments on the proposed listing will be accepted through June 19, 2007. Go to www.fakr.noaa.gov to learn more about how to submit comments.

The Alaska Board of Game held an emergency meeting on April 17, 2007 to discuss differences between recent Board actions and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service management plans for the Skilak Wildlife Recreation Area. For more information contact Rob Campellone at (907) 786-3982 or at rob_campellone@fws.gov.

News from the North:

By Carol McIntyre, Northern Representative

People

Patricia Reynolds, Ecologist, Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, received the 2007 Science Excellence Award for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Region 7 (Alaska). The award recognizes Patricia for her numerous contributions to understanding the ecology of muskoxen and grizzly bears in northern Alaska.

Gail Collins, wildlife biologist with the Tetlin National Wildlife Refuge, has accepted the position of Refuge Complex Biologist at Sheldon-Hart National Wildlife Refuge Complex in eastern Oregon.

News

ADF&G Seeks Comments on Wood Bison Restoration. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) has completed an Environmental Review (ER) of wood bison restoration in Alaska. The ER details the history of the Alaska wood bison restoration effort, the record of public involvement and comment that has occurred up to this point, and an analysis of potential environmental effects and regulatory and permitting issues. ADF&G proposes to proceed with site-specific planning to consider wood bison restoration on Yukon Flats and Minto Flats. A third location on the lower Innoko/Yukon River area in western Alaska and a "No Action" alternative also are being considered. The ER incorporates recommendations from a technical peer review of the proposed reintroduction of wood bison on the Yukon Flats completed by the Alaska Chapter of The Wildlife Society in 1998. A summary of the ER will be included in the next issue of the project newsletter "Wood Bison News" and public comments will be accepted through **June 30, 2007**. The newsletter and ER will be posted on the wood bison restoration site www.wildlife.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=game.restoration. Contact Randy Rogers, Wildlife Planner (459-7335) or Bob Stephenson, Project Biologist (459-7236) if you would like to be placed on the mailing list for the Wood Bison News or need any additional information. You also can send an e-mail to woodbison@fishgame.state.ak.us.

Estimates of shorebird numbers on coastal plain in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. A recent publication provided for the first time an estimate of breeding shorebird populations within the "1002 Area" on the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (see Brown, S., J. Bart, R.B. Lanctot, J. Johnson, S. Kendall, D. Payer, and J. Johnson. 2007. Shorebird abundance and distribution on the coastal plain of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. *Condor* 109:1-14). The authors estimated that 230,000 shorebirds (95% CI: 104,000 - 363,000) occurred in the "1002 Area". Fourteen species were recorded, including 7 species of special concern. The lower bound of the population estimate exceeds the biological criterion for designation of the area as a Western Hemisphere Shorebird Reserve Network Site and a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance.

Kanuti Comprehensive Conservation Plan. Kanuti NWR invites public and professional review of its revised



Comprehensive Conservation Plan. The refuge conducted public scoping meetings in 2004 and has just completed a public review draft that outlines proposed goals, objectives, and management alternatives for the next 15 years. The draft plan is available for public comment through July. This is the first management plan revision to be released for any of the eight Alaska refuges north of the Alaska Range. To obtain a copy of the plan, a plan summary, or a CD, contact the planning team leader: Peter Wikoff, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 1011 E. Tudor Rd., Anchorage, AK 99503, 907-786-3837, or e-mail: fw7.Kanuti-planning@fws.gov. The full plan will be available on-line by late May at: <http://alaska.fws.gov/nwr/planning/ccp.htm>. If you would like to discuss the plan before commenting, please contact Refuge Manager Mike Spindler at 907-456-0329. Public meetings are planned in May and June.

Supplemental EIS for Northeast NPR-A.

As a result of the September 2006 court decision to vacate the Record of Decision on the Northeast National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska (NE NPR-A) Amended Integrated Activity Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (IAP/EIS), the Bureau of Land Management has been working on a supplement to that plan. The Draft NE NPR-A Supplemental IAP/EIS is expected to be available for public review in June, 2007. Watch for it at <http://www.blm.gov/ak/st/en/prog/planning.2.html>.

UAF Student Chapter News:

By Jan Tomsen

The UAF student chapter of TWS has selected officers for the 2007/2008 academic year. Micah Miller (Junior, Wildlife Biology) will be the new President and other new officers include Kandy Krejci, Melanie Bakker, Candice Flint, Cortney Pylant, Quentin Hecimovich, Rachel Shively, and Charlene Fortner. Faculty Advisor Dr. Falk Huettmann (Assistant Professor of Wildlife Ecology) will again provide guidance.

Several engaging student chapter meetings were held to vote for the representatives, discuss current events and job opportunities, and listen to speakers. Speakers at some of our recent meetings included Dr. Kris Hundertmark and Stacia Backensto.

In early April ten SCTWS students completed the NRA firearms training class, hosted by ADFG.

Trapping for red foxes at the Large Animal Research Station is slated to begin in late April under the guidance of Dr. Perry Barboza. Foxes around the facility have been destroying fences, eating feed, and contaminating drinking and food sources. A representative from the Alaska Trappers Association will also be coming to speak to students.

On April 28th UAF SCTWS sponsored the Annual Game Dinner at Mushers Hall. Several businesses donated prizes and meat, and individuals brought game donations as well. All proceeds were to raise funds for the UAF student chapter. The fare ranged from moose to whale.

Cortney Pylant (Junior, Wildlife Biology) and Theresa Woldstadt (Graduate Student, Wildlife Biology) gave presentations at the AK Chapter Meeting in Juneau. Congratulations!

Be sure to check out <http://www.uaf.edu/wildlife/> for chapter announcements and events, or contact UAF SCTWS by emailing fbscwlwf@uaf.edu with ideas or potential activities. Wildlife and Biology students are often searching for volunteer or internship opportunities with wildlife professionals!

Need to Recharge?
**Think Sun!
Think Tucson!**

Mark your calendar...
September 22-26, 2007

**The Wildlife Society
14th Annual Conference**

Visit sunny
Arizona and the
splendid Sonoran
Desert

Registration will open in May.
Questions? Call 301.897.9770
tw@wildlife.org

Across the Borderline:
Challenges and Opportunities for North American Wildlife Conservation



National TWS News

Report from Wini Kessler, Northwest Section Representative

My plan to deliver these comments in person at the Alaska Chapter meeting fell through, unfortunately, because the flood in the Juneau Federal Building took most of my time and attention that week. Our staff area on the 5th floor was one of the hardest hit, and so we were busy drying out computers and moving to alternate workspaces for the next few weeks.

I reported on highlights from the last TWS Council meeting held 23-24 March in Portland, Oregon in my regular column in the [Northwest Section Newsletter](#) [excerpted below]. More importantly, I wanted to say that TWS Council has taken note of the excellent leadership being demonstrated by the Alaska Chapter. For example, Council applauds the Chapter's bylaws change that requires membership in TWS as a requirement for joining the Alaska Chapter. The Chapter's move to online elections, and the significant increase in voter participation that resulted, is recognized as a great success. The Alaska Chapter is well known for its contributions in the policy arena. Many Council members commented on the high quality of the new position statement on coastal old growth, and as well commended the Chapter for working on technical reviews of bear management in Alaska (separate from the national review of Alaska predator control now underway).

Of course, it helps that the former Alaska Chapter President, Eric Taylor, was selected to work in TWS Headquarters through a Memorandum of Understanding between TWS and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. That arrangement has been highly beneficial to both organizations, and has raised awareness and appreciation of the Alaska Chapter to a high level. Well done, Eric!

March TWS Council meeting highlights

By Wini Kessler, (excerpted from *The Northwest Wildlifer*)

I traveled to Portland, Oregon, for The Wildlife Society Council meeting that is held every March in conjunction with the North American Wildlife and Natural Resources Conference. Council members discussed and celebrated the release of TWS' new publication, *The Wildlife Professional*. Most of you should have received it by now, and I hope you are as impressed with the quality as I am. Graphically the publication is topnotch, and I found every article to be

interesting, timely, and highly relevant to our profession. A wide variety of business was conducted by Council, including decisions on the following items:

- Appointed Dr. Michael Chamberlain as the new Editor in Chief for the *Journal of Wildlife Management*.
- Appointed Dr. Eric Hellgren as the new Editor for the *Wildlife Monographs*.
- Approved final position statements on *Baiting and Supplemental Feeding of Wild Game, 2007 Farm Bill*, and *North American Model of Wildlife Conservation*.
- Approved appointment of a Council Subcommittee for the *Biofuels Technical Review*.
- Approved the proposal to commence a *Technical Review on Predator Control in Alaska*.
- Approved a policy for position statements developed by Sections, Chapters, and Working Groups.
- Approved a modified budget for 2007 (once again, TWS is firmly in the black!)

One development I'm especially excited about is the progress on creating a new Canadian Section of TWS. A dedicated team has worked hard to draft bylaws for the new Section, and these will now be reviewed by all TWS members in Canada.

Meetings and Announcements

The 12th Biennial Alaska Bird Conference will be held in Fairbanks, Alaska, 4 - 7 March 2008. The local organizing committee is seeking suggestions for pre-conference workshops, special sessions, and associated meetings. Conference details will be posted on the Alaska Bird Observatory website as they become available (www.alaskabird.org). For further details contact local organizing committee chair Nancy Dewitt (ndewitt@alaskabird.org).

Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

Working Groups II and III have posted their summary reports: "*Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability*" and "*Mitigation of Climate Change*" at www.ipcc.ch.

Edward O. "Oz" Garton was selected to receive the Northwest Section's Arthur S. Einarsen Award in 2007. A professor at the University of Idaho, Dr. Garton authored the chapter on "Research and Experimental Design" in the last 2 TWS techniques manuals. Dr. Garton is perhaps best known for his work on estimating numbers of animals under difficult field conditions.



Alaska Legislature and Board Actions

By Tom Paragi

There was relatively little wildlife-related legislation this session compared with recent years. Thanks to Dave Yokel for keeping the Chapter updated during the session.

In late March the Legislature worked quickly to pass two similar resolutions ([House Resolution 6](#) and [Senate Resolution 6](#)) in opposition to proposed listing of polar bears as a threatened species. The Senate resolution characterized the proposed listing as a *"political and legal tool by environmental extremists to block exploration and development of strategic resources vital to the state and the nation as a whole."* The Senate resolution listed polar bear populations as having *"approximately tripled in the last three decades"* and noted that the listing agency *"fail[ed] to recognize the uncertainty of summer Arctic ice modeling."* Both resolutions were presented to Governor Palin, President Bush, the Alaska Delegation, governors and presiding legislative officials of the other 49 states, and the director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Sen. Gary Wilken, R-Fairbanks, stated *"It is important that we prevent listing the polar bear as threatened, not only because the designation is not clearly supported by science, but because it will be used as leverage to stop development projects across the country, including our own natural gas pipeline,"* in a senate minority press release (<http://www.aksenateminority.com/>) for 30 March 2007. In the same press release, University of Alaska Fairbanks Research Associate Professor Matt Cronin, Ph.D, said *"Recent declines in sea ice and indications that polar bears in some areas may be negatively impacted are cause for concern, but in my opinion do not warrant designation of the species as threatened with extinction. I believe that consideration of multiple hypotheses regarding the future of sea ice and polar bear populations would provide better science than reliance on one extreme case hypothesis of loss of sea ice and associated drastic declines in polar bear populations."* The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service proposed listing polar bears as "threatened" under the Endangered Species Act in the Federal Register on Jan. 9, 2007.

[Senate Bill 67](#) was introduced to create the Jay Hammond State Game Refuge in the Mulchatna and Nushagak drainages of southwest Alaska. The refuge

was proposed largely to protect commercial, sport, and subsistence fisheries in the area of the proposed Pebble gold mine near Lake Iliamna, but it also has obvious relevance to many wildlife species that depend on anadromous and resident fish or may be disturbed by the surface activities of a large mine. SB 67 was referred to Resources Committee on 26 January but saw no further action this session. With the widespread media coverage over the controversy with the Pebble mine, this proposal is likely to surface in the 2nd session that starts in January 2008. The Alaska Board of Fish addressed a similar proposal (see below).

[House Bill 220](#) to "Ban computer assisted remote hunting" passed both houses unanimously and was sent to the Governor. It would ban in Alaska the practice of using computer access via the internet to remotely shoot an animal, a practice that is allowed only in a handful of states. The bill "does not apply to a person with physical disabilities using equipment or devices designed to assist with the disability while present in the field and meaningfully participating in the act of hunting under regulations adopted by the [Alaska] Board of Game." It has received strong support by groups as diverse as the Humane Society of the United States and the National Rifle Association. Several states have rapidly moved to pass similar legislation.

Late Breaking Legislative News

In the final days of the legislative session, Governor Sarah Palin submitted [Senate Bill 176](#) and [House Bill 256](#) to replace or amend Alaska Statutes that address intensive management of moose, caribou, and deer populations ([AS 16.05.255\(e-g\)](#)) and same day airborne taking of certain predators ([AS 16.05.783](#)). Matt Robus, Director of the Division of Wildlife Conservation in ADF&G, explained the reasoning behind the bills.

The bills are an attempt to simplify and coordinate language in the statutes. Over the last year the Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Alaska Department of Law, the Governor's Office, and legislators discussed ways to reduce confusion over the meaning of awkward language in the current law and requirements in the two statutes that when combined make it difficult for the Board of Game and the Department of Fish & Game to implement the laws. Much of the recent litigation on this issue has been based on procedural technicalities and conflicting interpretations of statutory language rather than the substance of biological criteria considered by the Alaska Board of Game for making decisions on predator control programs.



The Governor's Office issued a press release (first carried by [SitNews in Ketchikan](#)) that described the intent of these bills to put this topic on the docket for the 2008 legislative session, which will be restricted to 90 days. The Administration seeks to elicit public comment over the next several months so that amendments can be considered early in the next session.

The Alaska Chapter issued a [position on intensive management](#) in 1995, prior to the Alaska Board of Game passing regulations that liberalized methods and means of black bear and brown bear harvest or implemented the current bear and wolf control programs. The Alaska Chapter should consider whether to update our position on intensive management over the coming months so that it may become part of the public record on SB176/HB256. Here are three specific examples of changes proposed in the legislation to consider in a revised position statement.

- The bills remove existing language in AS 16.05.255 that requires determination of whether the abundance or productivity of a herd has been depleted and whether a program to increase abundance is feasible based on scientific criteria, land ownership, and its effects on subsistence.
- The proposed changes to AS 16.05.783 remove the statement that decisions on same day airborne hunting or predator control would be "based on information provided by the Department [of Fish and Game]."
- Although foxes and lynx are proposed for removal from AS 16.05.783, wolverines continue to remain a species available for same day airborne shooting in predator control programs intended to increase survival of ungulate calves.

Boards of Fisheries and Game met in March

The Alaska Board of Fisheries addressed Proposal 121 to protect the Upper and Lower Talarik Creeks and Kaktuli River drainages by creating the first State Fish Refuge in the headwaters of the Mulchatna drainage, near the proposed Pebble mine. In December the Board found that the current habitat protections for Bristol Bay fishery resources were not sufficient and acted to continue its Bristol Bay habitat committee. The habitat committee was asked to identify appropriate options, including consideration of state refuge status, and make recommendations to the Board about what additional actions should be taken.

After hearing back from the habitat committee in March, the Board voted to take no action on Proposal 121 because of its redundancy with the then pending legislation of similar nature (SB 67).

In March the Alaska Board of Game expanded the predator control programs for black bears in Game Management Unit 16 in an attempt to increase moose calf recruitment northwest of Anchorage in the Susitna drainage. Starting 1 July, residents holding black bear control permits would have no bag limit and be allowed to shoot any age or sex of bear. Up to four bait stations could be registered in spring or fall, with special setbacks required along rivers and near cabins. Black bears could be killed the same day a permit holder is airborne, provided the person moves at least 300 feet from the aircraft before any control activity occurs. Sale of tanned black bear hides will be allowed. Regular hunting regulations will remain in effect so that nonresidents may continue to hunt black bears. The Board concurred with recommendations by ADFG that no liberalization of the wolf control program or current brown bear hunting seasons are warranted at this time.

In a highly publicized vote, the Board of Game unanimously approved retention of a brown bear hunting closure on state land south and east of the McNeil River State Game Sanctuary and Refuge in southwest Alaska, the site of a bear viewing area of international acclaim. The Board also placed a ten year moratorium on bear hunting proposals for the Cape Douglas and Kamishak Special Use Area.

The Board approved a wolverine trapping season in Chugach State Park against recommendations of ADFG. The action has incurred substantial controversy in the Anchorage area.

Finally, the Board of Game tabled Proposal 204 on Tangle Lakes State Game Refuge, which had been proposed by the Copper Basin Fish and Game Advisory Committee to protect wildlife habitat near a proposed mine in the vicinity of Paxson. The proposed refuge is northwest of the junction of the Richardson and Denali highways and would encompass part of the Delta Wild and Scenic River corridor and a BLM archeological district with special use requirements for off-road vehicles. Mining exploration in this area has long been opposed by some local residents and non-local recreational users, and it is likely that this refuge may be proposed again next year, possibly in legislation.



Wildlife Disease Monitoring

By Kimberlee Beckmen

Arctic and Red Fox Rabies Outbreak. The North Slope and Southwest Alaska are experiencing a wide spread and continuing rabies outbreak in arctic and red foxes. Between December 4th, 2006 and April 13th, 2007, 10 arctic and 11 red foxes on the North Slope and 4 red foxes from Southwest Alaska tested positive for rabies. Most of the cases, especially those involving exposures of people or dogs to bites, were from around Barrow or the Prudhoe Bay oil field. Only 5 foxes submitted because of abnormal behavior or being found dead were rabies-negative and two of those died from canine distemper virus. These viral diseases tend to occur in epizootics when fox populations are high (as they are now) and likely will have a significant population regulating effect.

Update on West Nile Virus. The federal government has declared that West Nile Virus (WNV) is now endemic in the contiguous United States and therefore will no longer fund any surveillance activities including the Alaska WNV Surveillance program. The state has no funding beyond what was previously received from federal agencies for WNV surveillance; as such, the WNV specific-program to monitor dead corvids and raptors has ceased. Testing for WNV virus will no longer be conducted at the Alaska State Virology Laboratory. Hopefully, the public and federal agency concerns over bird mortalities possibly related to avian influenza (AI) will allow for reporting and recognition of a WNV bird die-off in whatever species it occurs in when the virus circulates in Alaska. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Wildlife Conservation, Wildlife Disease Surveillance program will continue, but will not have the resources to ship every dead bird to Fairbanks or Anchorage for necropsy as in the past. Please call first to report fresh dead, intact wildlife before freezing or shipping so ADFG personnel can prioritize which cases should be investigated and which laboratory should receive the carcass. Bird deaths should still be reported to the AI Early Detection Hotline, 1-866-5BRDFLU, and mammals to the ADFG Wildlife Veterinarian's office phone: 459-7257, cell: 322-2384.

Member Contributions

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

Roles of research scientists in natural resource decision-making

Tom Paragi reviews this article by T.J. Mills and R.N. Clark published in 2001 in the journal *Forest Ecology and Management* (153: 189-198).

Forest ecologists Thomas Mills and Roger Clark, of the U.S. Forest Service's Pacific Northwest Research Station used their professional experiences to illustrate the many pitfalls awaiting scientists who become engaged in policy decisions involving natural resources. Mills and Clark contrast the merits of "routine ecological research" taught in college (e.g., good study design, calm environment of inquiry, and emphasis on quality of scientific findings) to the imposed time frames of regulatory structures and legal pressure by interest groups to make decisions on complex ecological and social issues, often within economic constraints. Although science cannot solve conflict over value judgments on controversial practices in natural resource management, it can be a means to enable discussions among competing interests to define the range of social or economic choices and focus evaluation on the consequences of specific choices. It is critical that scientific criteria be properly generated and presented objectively and accurately. For example, there must be consensus on problem definition and data needs among stakeholders before scientists initiate data collection, particularly where a process such as adaptive management needs decision criteria clearly spelled out before a management experiment begins.

Mills and Clark believe that classification of uncertainty in adaptive management is critical to maintain credibility of scientists, especially when educating the public. They caution scientists not to internalize their own risk preference or act as a data filter, but instead to leave the role of judging acceptability of risk to decision makers who are typically elected or appointed officials. Keeping separate organizational structures for scientific review and subsequent policy implementation (which is based on those scientific recommendations deemed acceptable in the context of social and economic



factors) is one means of clarifying the different roles and ensuring that the administrative record reflects what the scientists actually said.

The Alaska Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry used the model presented by Mills and Clark in recent updates of forest practice regulations on fish habitat and water quality. A scientific and technical committee provided recommendations to a separate implementation group composed of representatives from resource agencies, environmental organizations, industry, and the public. (A briefing paper by DNR describing the process in

detail is available on request). The resulting draft statutes were remarkably passed without opposition by both houses of the Alaska Legislature, in separate processes for all three forested regions of the state.

The Mills and Clark paper should be required reading for students or young professionals contemplating a career in natural resource management. It is also a useful reference for scientists evaluating controversial issues for the public process in resource management.

2006-2008 Alaska Chapter Executive Board

President: Tom Paragi, ADF&G, 1300 College Road, Fairbanks, AK 99701, tom_paragi@fishgame.state.ak.us; phone 907-459-7327, fax 452-6410

President-elect: Howard Golden, ADF&G, 333 Raspberry Road, Anchorage, AK 99518, howard_golden@fishgame.state.ak.us, phone 267-2177, fax 267-2433

Past-president: Eric Taylor, The Wildlife Society, 5410 Grosvenor, Suite 200, Bethesda, MD 20814-2144, eric_taylor@fws.gov, phone 301-897-9770, fax 301-530-2471

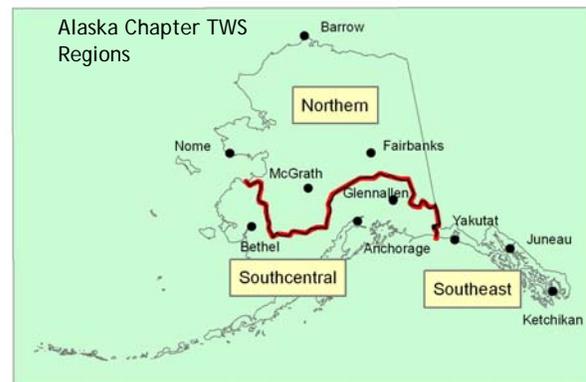
Secretary-Treasurer: Mark Udevitz, USGS Alaska Science Center, 1011 East Tudor Road, Anchorage, AK 99503, mark_udevitz@usgs.gov, phone 786-3365, fax 786-3636

Northern Representative: Carol McIntyre, US National Park Service, 4175 Geist Road, Fairbanks, AK 99709, carol_mcintyre@nps.gov, phone 455-0671, fax 455-0601

Southcentral Representative: Robin West, USFWS, P.O. Box 2139, Soldotna, AK 99669-2139, robin_west@fws.gov, phone 262-7021, fax 262-3599

Southeast Representative: Stephen B. Lewis, ADF&G, P.O. Box 110024, Douglas, AK 99811, steve_lewis@fishgame.state.ak.us, phone 465-4348, fax 465-4272

Newsletter editor (non-voting): Jim Herriges, USBLM, 1150 University Avenue, Fairbanks, AK 99709-3844, jim_herriges@blm.gov, phone 474-2373, fax 474-2282



UAF Student Chapter TWS Representative (non-voting):
Cortney Pylant, 5 Dead End Alley, Fairbanks, AK 99709
fsclp17@uaf.edu

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

2007 Membership Subscription and Renewal--Online

New memberships and renewals for the 2007 calendar year are available on-line at The Wildlife Society's store (<https://store.wildlife.org/>). An individual may renew their TWS membership (\$64 regular, \$32 student or retired) as well as their NW Section (\$5.00) and Alaska Chapter (\$5.00) memberships. In addition, journals can be ordered (delivered on-line or on-line

and print) and TWS members can join one or more of the 18 TWS working groups. A new Family membership is available this year (\$103). Also new this year--all members will receive *The Wildlife Professional* magazine in addition to *The Wildlifer* newsletter.