



The Alaskan Wildlifer

Newsletter of the Alaska Chapter of the Wildlife Society

August 2011



Issue Highlights

- Message from President-Elect Jerry Hupp on TWS's intensive management position statement
- Planning for 2012 TWS Alaska Chapter Conference in Anchorage
- Landscape Conservation Cooperatives: Explaining what they are and how they work

Message from President-Elect Jerry Hupp

Kris Hundertmark was called away unexpectedly due to an illness in his family. In his absence, as President-Elect, I will address progress on the Chapter's position statement on intensive management of wildlife.

First a brief history: In 1994 the Alaska State Legislature enacted a law that required the Board of Game to identify ungulate populations that should be managed for high human harvest. The law did not allow the Board to reduce human harvest to meet population objectives without first attempting to increase the target population through intensive management, such as control of predators or habitat improvement. Exceptions were provided if scientific evidence suggested intensive management would be ineffective, could not be implemented due to land ownership restrictions, or was not in the interest of subsistence users.

In 1995 the Chapter adopted a position statement that addressed intensive management. This was due to concerns that the law limited flexibility of the Board of Game's management decisions and a belief by many Chapter members that wildlife management should be the purview of the Board and professional biologists, not the Legislature. The position statement noted concerns that focused management of ungulate populations might not be in the best interest of long-term productivity of the ecosystems they occupied and discussed uncertainty regarding the effects of predator removal on sustainability of predator populations, especially bears. The position statement recommended changes in the

legislation and planning process to provide more flexibility in management of ungulates, their habitats, and predators. It also recommended if predator reduction occurred, the long-term viability of those populations be sustained.

Several events have occurred since the Chapter adopted the position statement. Perhaps most important is that since 1995, intensive management actions have been implemented in several areas of the state and biologists have had a chance to assess their outcome. Also, there have been important publications regarding management of Alaska's ungulates and their predators. These include the National Research Council's 1997 report, "Wolves, Bears, and Their Prey in Alaska", and peer-reviewed articles by Boertje et al. (1996. *J. Wildl. Manage.* 60:474-489), Young et al. (2006. *Alces* 42:41-48), Boertje et al. (2010. *J. Wildl. Manage.* 74:917-928), and Keech et al. (2011. *J. Wildl. Manage.* 75:1361-1380) that address the outcomes of intensive management. Several reports on intensive management efforts are available on the Department of Fish and Game's web site. Also important to the discussion is an article by Miller et al. (2011. *J. Wildl. Manage.* 75:1243-1252) that raises questions about the long-term sustainability of recent levels of grizzly bear harvest in Alaska.

As a result of new information and several years to see how the intensive management law was working, the Chapter undertook an effort to revise the position statement on intensive management in 2008. A committee of four

Chapter members who volunteered to help with the project and who represented the diversity of the Chapter's membership developed the draft document. The committee's revision was completed in autumn 2010 and incorporated much of the language in the original 1995 statement and included new language pertaining to the consequences of predator removal on ecosystems. It questioned whether ungulate population objectives were realistic and whether human harvest was a suitable ecological replacement for natural predation. It retained recommendations similar to the original position statement and included some new ones such as pre-treatment assessment of ungulate and predator populations, post-treatment monitoring, and use of an adaptive management framework. Also included was a time line and appendix that discussed the history of intensive management.



Photo from USFWS National Digital Library

Earlier this year, the Executive Board approved the draft statement for review and comment by Chapter members, and posted it on the Chapter's web site. Once those comments were considered, the final statement would have been sent to Chapter members for a vote of approval. Passage of a position statement requires approval by at least 2/3 of members.

The member reviews were mixed. Some liked the draft statement and had few comments. Others offered editorial suggestions for clarification. Some strongly disagreed with the statement. Criticisms were that the document was biased and ignored peer-reviewed research regarding intensive management, it did not provide new information beyond the original statement, monitoring recommendations were impractical, the intent of the statement and its audience were not clear, and that the time line contained inaccuracies and seemed biased against intensive management.

Because of the criticisms the revision was tabled earlier this summer and not forwarded to the entire Chapter for a vote. Instead, the Executive Board is considering whether to ask the committee to revise the position statement based on the comments received during the review process, and attempt to craft a document that can be supported by the needed 2/3 membership. The Board may also ask that additional members help with the revision to broaden expertise and ensure more diverse viewpoints are considered. There has also been discussion that the Chapter write a more detailed technical review of intensive management, rather than a revised position statement. I expect these details will be resolved in coming months through discussions among the Executive Board, committee, and interested members.

OK – that wasn't such a brief history. But, there's little in this topic that's simple. As a "bird biologist" and one who has not been directly involved in intensive management, there are many details about the subject I do not pretend to know. However, these things I do know: First, that the people that undertook the revision deserve our thanks for stepping forward to accept the challenge. They demonstrated professional commitment in taking on a task that was not part of their day jobs and that they could have easily ducked. Whether you agree with all that was in the draft statement or not, you have to acknowledge the difficulty of crafting a document that succinctly addresses the complexity of the issue and satisfies the diverse viewpoints within the Chapter. Thanks to the hard work by these folks, we now have a draft that can serve as the base for further discussion.

Second, it's important that the Chapter serve as a forum for objective, professional discussion of intensive management, as well as other important, and sometimes controversial topics



in conservation and management of Alaskan wildlife. Although there are strong feelings on this issue it's important that there be an arena where professional opinions can be aired without disagreement becoming personal. Finally, this is not an easy process. It strikes me as similar to publication in a peer-reviewed journal. It's sometimes painful, involves criticism, and takes

time. But the end product is one intended to stand the scrutiny of colleagues and the test of time. I think that's our goal. So, stay tuned. And if you have thoughts on this issue, consider posting them on the opinion page of the Chapter website (<http://joomla.wildlife.org/Alaska/>).

Jerry Hupp, President-elect

Submit your ideas for the next annual TWS meeting

The next annual meeting of the Alaska State Chapter of The Wildlife Society will be held in Anchorage in April, 2012. An organizing committee has formed to plan the meeting and will shortly finalize the dates and select the venue.

As the program develops, information will be posted on the Chapter's website (<http://joomla.wildlife.org/Alaska/>). In the meantime, if you wish to submit a proposal for a special session or workshop, please contact program chairperson **Grant Hilderbrand** (Grant_Hilderbrand@nps.gov) with your ideas. Special sessions and workshops are a great way to share expertise with colleagues, focus on wildlife issues that are relevant in Alaska, and stimulate collaboration among biologists with similar interests. At recent meetings Chapter members have stepped forward to prepare special sessions on conservation of arctic and alpine ungulates, ecology of marine mammals and birds, wildlife management on the Tongass National Forest, alpine ecology, and effects of climate change on Alaskan wildlife.

Given the diversity of Alaska and broad expertise of wildlife professionals in the State, we can look forward to some stimulating special sessions at the annual meeting – but only if you submit your ideas.

New memberships and renewals are available on-line at The Wildlife Society's store (<https://store.wildlife.org/>).

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Regional News

Southcentral

By Dave Battle, Southcentral Representative

People/Careers

Brandt Meixell has joined the USGS Alaska Science Center in Anchorage as a Wildlife Biologist. Brandt is leading research on the potential effects of climate change on important waterfowl habitat near Teshekpuk Lake on the National Petroleum Reserve Alaska. He received his M.S. from the University of Alaska, Fairbanks and is completing a Ph.D. at the University of Minnesota.

News from Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson Conservation:

In the June issue, we reported that Chuck Parsley had joined the Conservation Team at 673 CES/CEAN, which handles natural resources management on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER). We now have the sad duty of reporting that Chuck passed away unexpectedly on July 31 after surgery in Washington state. I didn't know Chuck for very long, having just met him in February, but he impressed me as a very experienced biologist, and someone who was easy to work with and always had a smile on his face. He will be missed. We wish to express our sincerest sympathies to Chuck's family and friends as they mourn this loss.

This spring, **Chris McKee** left JBER Conservation to accept a position as a Wildlife Biologist for the US Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Subsistence Management. He now writes analyses that examine proposed changes to Federal Subsistence wildlife regulations in Alaska and how they may affect wildlife populations and subsistence users.

Rich Graham, who has been working for JBER as a seasonal Natural Resources Specialist for several years, recently joined the JBER Conservation Team on a full time basis. Rich

brings a wealth of experience with him, having already completed one career as an Alaska Wildlife Protection Trooper, retiring as a Captain.

News from ADF&G:

Rick Merizon has been hired as the new Small Game Biologist for ADF&G. He received his B.S. in Wildlife Ecology from the University of Maine and his M.S. in Biology from Portland State University. He has worked with the department for the past 10 years as a research biologist in both Cordova and Palmer.

Dominic (Nick) Demma accepted a Wildlife Biologist III position with Region IV, Palmer office, in May 2011. His primary duties are to characterize caribou calf demography and mortality and evaluate the feasibility and effectiveness of intensive management of predators for increasing southwest Alaska caribou herds. Nick has worked as a wildlife biologist conducting research on big game species in Alaska since 1993, first for the National Park Service and USGS. He started with ADF&G in 2007 as a Wildlife Biologist II, evaluating factors limiting bull survival and antler development in the Mulchatna caribou herd, as well as studying moose calf survival in response to intensive management in GMU 16.

Lou Bender has been hired as a Research Biologist in Region IV emphasizing moose, brown bear, and black bear research and management. Lou received his B.S. from Montana, and his M.S. and Ph.D. from Michigan State. He has experience as a Research Scientist (Wildlife) with New Mexico State University CES, as Assistant Unit Leader/Research Wildlife Biologist with the New Mexico Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit, as Elk and Deer Specialist for Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WaDFW), and as an Area Biologist for WaDFW. Throughout his career, Lou's research has emphasized large ungulates (elk,



deer, pronghorn, sheep) and carnivore (puma, jaguar) population & habitat relationships and predator-prey interactions throughout USA and in Mexico.

William 'Frank' Robbins Jr. is the new Assistant Area Biologist for the Glennallen area. Frank comes to ADF&G from Texas with a diverse wildlife background that includes grizzly bear, big horn sheep, and deer research and management experience. Frank received his B.S. from Texas Tech University and his M.S. in Range and Wildlife Management from Texas A&M. He also has experience working with staff and graduate students at the Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute at Texas A&M.

The Department of Fish and Game, Division of Wildlife Conservation, Region IV is recruiting for the Area Wildlife Management Biologist in the Palmer office and surrounding area (Game Management Units 14A, 14B, and 16). Currently, the posting will be open through 9/16/11. Interested applicants can learn more at Workplace Alaska, the state's online recruiting system.

Dave Battle And lastly, I'm very excited to report that I have a new job myself. I left JBER Conservation (where I was a Game Warden for two years and a Wildlife Biologist for six years) at the end of June to accept a position with ADF&G as Assistant Area Biologist for Anchorage and GMU 14C.

Southeast

By Deb Rudis, Southeast Representative

Dave Gregovich, formerly employed with ADF&G's Division of Sport Fish and with the USFWS, was hired to serve ADF&G's Division of Wildlife Conservation in its Southeast Region as a Research Analyst. Dave will be assisting with data analyses on a number of regional research and management projects, including projects on goats, brown and black bears, and moose.

Deborah Rudis, the Contaminants Biologist with the USFWS Juneau Field Office, has been out of the state often working on a variety of projects. She worked on the Deepwater Horizon/Gulf spill on a number of details. She worked in a field capacity last summer as the wildlife scientist for two details in the marshes of Louisiana. There she was stationed on a barge with about 25 other wildlife response staff near the mouth of the Mississippi River. Later in the fall and winter she served as resources-at-risk coordinator in the Florida Operations office. Her latest assignment is in New Orleans, Louisiana working at the command center as Deputy Wildlife Branch Director. That position entails numerous meetings and conference calls to make sure field operations throughout the spill area meet Department of Interior trustee concerns. After all of this experience, Deb reports her preferred position is in the field!

North

By Steve Arthur, Northern Representative

People/Careers

In February, **Dr. Brad Griffith** was appointed as the new leader of the Alaska Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit in Fairbanks. Brad has been associated with the Unit since 1989 and served as an Assistant Leader since 1996. Brad's research focuses on the potential effects of climate and industrial development on habitats and populations of circumpolar ungulates, particularly caribou; the potential effects of climate on wetland biodiversity, and the strategic implications of changing habitats for natural resource management agencies.

Past AK Chapter member **Randy Rogers** retired from his position as wildlife planner for ADF&G in July. During his 13 years with the department, Randy played a key role in several major programs, including Koyukuk moose planning, Delta bison management, and the planned reintroduction of Wood Bison. Randy was a leader in ADF&G's efforts to work more closely with the public to manage Alaska's wildlife.



Regional News-Continued

North-continued

Dr. Laura Prugh will be joining the Biology and Wildlife Department of the University of Alaska Fairbanks as an Assistant Professor, specializing in mesopredator ecology. Laura's interests include multi-species conservation and management, population and community dynamics, ecological restoration, conservation of fragmented populations, and noninvasive genetics. Laura obtained her Ph.D. from the University of British Columbia, studying coyote foraging ecology in response to cyclic changes in snowshoe hare abundance in the Alaska Range near Fairbanks, and followed that with postdoctoral research appointments at the University of British Columbia and the University of California, Berkeley. Laura is recruiting an M.S. student to study human dimensions of furbearer harvesting in Alaska, to begin January 2012. For additional information, contact Laura at Prugh@berkeley.edu.

Merben Cebrian with the Bureau of Land Management has left the Wildlife Biologist position at the Glennallen Field Office to occupy the equivalent position at the Central Yukon Field Office in Fairbanks. In Fairbanks, he will be working on subsistence and wildlife issues for the entire field office. The BLM will recruit for a replacement in Glennallen, so stay tuned for a forthcoming job announcement, or send a notice of interest to Cara Staab (cstaab@blm.gov).



Announcements

Upcoming Conferences

The Outdoor Writers Association of America will hold its next annual conference at the Chena Hot Springs Resort near Fairbanks on September 4-6, 2012. Additional information can be found at: <http://owaa.org/2012-annual-conference/>

7th International Moose Symposium: In 2012, there will be no North American Moose Conference. Instead, the 7th International Moose Symposium will take place in Bialoweiza, Eastern Poland. A theme of the symposium will be "Moose in the Changing Environment", addressing such issues as habitat fragmentation, loss of biodiversity, and climate change. In addition to presentations on research and management covering a range of topics, the symposium will include trips to Bialoweiza National Park, Bialoweiza Forest, and an optional post-conference trip to Beibrza National Park. For more information, go to <http://www.zbs.bialowieza.pl/moosesymposium>.

Save the Date: International Wildlife Management Symposium: Managing Wildlife in the Next Century. Dec. 8 and 9, 2011
Richmond, BC, Canada. For information, www.goabc.org/images/pdf/agenda-2011.pdf

Help keep our members informed!
Please send notices of upcoming conferences, professional development opportunities, job postings or other news and announcements to your regional AK-TWS representative or the AK-TWS newsletter editor, elizabeth.manning@alaska.gov. Thank you!



Explaining Landscape Conservation Cooperatives

By Nicole Gustine, USFWS

What is a Landscape Conservation Cooperative? We are asked that question often and in a nutshell, Landscape Conservation Cooperatives (LCCs) are self-directed partnerships that link science with conservation actions to address climate change and other stressors within and across landscapes.

Although a Department of the Interior initiative, LCCs are cross-agency and cross-disciplinary partnerships that work to provide knowledge and science-based solutions to landscape-scale conservation. By functioning as a network, LCCs have the ability to address scientific processes that are difficult or impossible at a single management unit level.

Nationwide there are 22 LCCs in varying stages of development. Alaska overlaps five LCCs: Aleutian and Bering Sea Islands, Arctic, North Pacific, Northwestern Interior Forest, and Western Alaska. Four of the five are coordinated in Alaska while the North Pacific LCC, which extends to northern California, is led out of Oregon.

Currently, the Arctic LCC's core staff includes a coordinator, science coordinator, GIS specialist, and a database manager. In 2011, Arctic LCC funded 22 new projects totaling nearly \$1.5 million, leveraging an additional \$3.6 million in partner contributions. Information about past and currently funded projects is available at www.arcticlcc.org.

Western Alaska LCC has a coordinator and science coordinator on board. In 2011, the first year of funding, the LCC funded 12 collaborative projects totaling \$1.3 million, leveraging an additional \$1.8 million in partner contributions. More information on the funded projects is

available on the LCC's website at www.arcus.org/western-alaska-lcc.

The first steering committee meeting of the North Pacific LCC (NPLCC) was held in May 2011 and provided \$733,000 to fund 10 new projects in 2011.

The Aleutian and Bering Sea Islands LCC and Northwestern Interior Forest LCC are in the early stages of initiation. The coordinator position for the Aleutian and Bering Sea Islands LCC has been filled and the Northwestern Interior Forest LCC Coordinator position is currently open for applications.

Each LCC in Alaska is governed by a steering committee currently composed of federal and state agencies that work directly with the core staff. Collectively, the steering committee defines the LCC's charter, conservation goals, and provides guidance for science plan development. The overall partnerships are much more extensive with universities, boroughs, native associations, tribal groups, corporations, and non-governmental organizations participating on work groups and on LCC sponsored projects.

To learn how you can participate please contact the LCC coordinators in your area. Visit <http://alaska.fws.gov/lcc/index.htm> for more information and links to the websites mentioned above.



Alaska Chapter Leadership

Your 2010-2012 Executive Board

President: Kris Hundertmark, Department of Biology and Wildlife, 412 Irving 1, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Fairbanks, AK 99775, khundert@alaska.edu, phone (907) 474-7159, fax (907) 474-6967.

President-Elect: Jerry Hupp, USGS-Alaska Science Center, 4210 University Drive, Anchorage, AK 99508, jerry_hupp@usgs.gov, phone (907) 474-7159, fax (907) 474-6967.

Past-President: Howard Golden, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 333 Raspberry Road, Anchorage, AK 99518, howard.golden@alaska.gov, phone (907) 267-2177, fax (907) 267-2433.

Secretary-Treasurer: Todd Rinaldi, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 333 Raspberry Road, Anchorage, AK 99518, todd.rinaldi@alaska.gov, phone (907) 267-2267, fax (907) 267-2433.

Northern Representative: Steve Arthur, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 1300 College Road, Fairbanks, AK 99701, steve.arthur@alaska.gov, phone (907) 459-7213, fax (907) 452-6410.

Southcentral Representative: David Battle, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 333 Raspberry Road, Anchorage, AK 99518, david.battle@alaska.gov, phone (907) 267-2185.

Southeast Representative: Deb Rudis, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, 3000 Vintage Blvd., Suite 201, Juneau, AK 99801, deborah_rudis@fws.gov, phone (907) 780-1183.

Newsletter Editor (non-voting): Elizabeth Manning, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 333 Raspberry Road, Anchorage, AK 99518, elizabeth.manning@alaska.gov, phone (907) 267-2168, fax (907) 267-2433.

UAF Student Chapter TWS Representative (non-voting): Jessica Bodle, UAF Student Chapter of TWS, c/o Christine Hunter, Department of Biology and Wildlife, 412 Irving 1, University of Alaska Fairbanks, Fairbanks, AK 99775, uafwildlife@gmail.com.

Webmaster: Elizabeth Solomon, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, 43961 Kalifornsky Beach Rd, Ste. B Soldotna, AK 99669-8367, elizabeth.solomon@alaska.gov, phone (907) 260-2927.

***You can contribute! We need your story ideas!
Help keep AK-TWS members informed and connected.***

Are you working on an interesting project you'd like to share with other AK-TWS members? Do you have news to share with colleagues? Please make note of upcoming events, projects, personnel changes, issues, or anything else of interest to other AK-TWS members, and pass them on to your regional representative by Oct. 25, 2011 for the November issue. If you know of something that would make an interesting newsletter article and can't write it up yourself, please contact newsletter editor Elizabeth Manning at elizabeth.manning@alaska.gov or 907-267-2168. Help us make this an interesting and informative newsletter!

