



## Federal Subsistence Board



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Anchorage, Alaska 99503

FISH and WILDLIFE SERVICE  
BUREAU of LAND MANAGEMENT  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
BUREAU of INDIAN AFFAIRS

FOREST SERVICE

## WOLF HUNTING AND TRAPPING SEASONS SET IN UNIT 2

### TEMPORARY EMERGENCY SPECIAL ACTION: FEDERAL SUBSISTENCE BOARD

Under authority of: 36 CFR §242.10 and .19  
50 CFR §100.10 and .19

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Temporary Emergency Special Action No: WSA-13-WO-08-20  
Issued at: Craig Alaska, November 6, 2020

Effective Date: Immediately

Expiration Date: 11:59 pm Monday March 15, 2021 unless superseded by subsequent special action.

#### **EXPLANATION:**

This Temporary Emergency Special Action sets the 2020-2021 wolf trapping season in Unit 2 from November 15, 2020 through 11:59 pm December 5, 2020 and closes the wolf hunting season in Unit 2 on 11:59 pm December 5, 2020, 2020. It also establishes a requirement to seal any wolf taken in Unit 2 within 30 days of the end of the season.

**REGULATION:** 36 CFR §242.26(n)(2) and 50 CFR §100.26(n)(2) are amended to read:

#### **Unit 2 –Wolf Hunting**

*No limit.*

*Sep. 1-~~Mar. 31~~Dec. 5.*

*Any wolf taken in Unit 2 must be sealed within 30 days of the end of the season.*

## Unit 2–Wolf Trapping

*No limit.*

*Nov. 15–~~Mar. 31~~*

*Dec. 5.*

*Any wolf taken in Unit 2 must be sealed within 30 days of the end of the season.*

Federal Subsistence Board by delegation to /s/Scot Shuler  
Scot Shuler  
District Ranger  
Prince of Wales Ranger Districts  
November 6, 2020

### **JUSTIFICATION:**

Beginning in 2019 the wolf harvest management strategy in Unit 2 changed from a harvest quota calculated as a percentage of the most recent population estimate to one where season length is annually adjusted to achieve a level of harvest that will maintain the wolf population within a sustainable fall population objective range of 150-200 wolves as established by the Alaska Board of Game. ADF&G worked with the USFS, Fish and Game Advisory Committees, the Alaska Board of Game, the Federal Subsistence Regional Advisory Council, and trappers to develop this new strategy that provides trappers with the flexibility and responsibility they desired while sustainably managing harvest of this wolf population.

The current harvest management strategy is based on annual estimates of the abundance of Unit 2 wolves. Dense forest cover makes aerial surveys impractical, so ADF&G, with support from the USFS, estimates wolf abundance in Unit 2 using a DNA-based mark-recapture technique. In fall 2019, ADF&G collected wolf DNA samples within the same large, northern and central Prince of Wales Island study area used in 2014-2018. ADF&G also collaborated with the Hyدابург Cooperative Association (HCA) to establish an additional study area, monitored by HCA, adjacent to the southern boundary of ADF&G's study area. This collaboration effectively expanded the study area to nearly 80% of Prince of Wales Island and over 60% of the land area of Unit 2.

Analysis of wolf DNA samples collected from October through December 2019 resulted in a fall 2019 Unit 2 population point estimate of 316 wolves, with high confidence that the actual number of wolves in Unit 2 prior to the fall 2019 hunting and trapping seasons was within the 95% confidence interval range, 250 to 398 wolves.

On October 26, 2020, a temporary letter of delegation was issued to the Prince of Wales District Ranger to implement new regulations for Unit 2 wolf harvest which were adopted by the Federal Subsistence Board at its April 2020 meeting. Delays in publishing the new regulations in the Federal Register prompted the Board to issue temporary delegations of authority to some in season managers to implement the new regulations.

The temporary delegation for Unit 2 includes:

- To eliminate the harvest quota for both trapping and hunting.
- To establish the sealing requirement as within 30 days of the end of the season for both trapping and hunting.
- To establish a harvest limit for hunting of ‘no limit’.

On Monday, October 26, 2020 ADF&G and the USFS issued a joint news release announcing a proposed fall 2020 wolf hunting and trapping season closure date. Considering the high degree of public interest and diversity of attitudes about GMU 2 wolf management, that news release also announced an October 29, 2020 public meeting and hearing. The public meeting opened with statements from ADF&G Commissioner, Doug Vincent-Lang and Tongass Forest Supervisor, Earl Stewart. Those statements were followed by a summary from ADF&G staff of the current GMU 2 wolf management setting including the fall 2019 population estimate, new findings on genetic structuring among wolf populations in Southeast Alaska, an update on the recent Endangered Species Act (ESA) petition, and implications for hunters and trappers throughout the region of a decision to list wolves under the ESA. The remainder of the one-hour public meeting was devoted to questions from the public answered by agency staff. Nearly 100 people participated in this call-in meeting. The two-hour public hearing that followed the meeting allowed members of the public and representatives of conservation organizations to make statements on GMU 2 wolf and deer management that were documented for the public record. Over 30 people gave testimony.

Since the public meeting, ADF&G and USFS biologists and leadership have again reviewed population and harvest data related to GMU 2 wolves and deer, anecdotal information about wolf recruitment and likely current wolf abundance, probable wolf trapper interest and effort, and determined that a season closure date of Saturday, December 5, 2020 will maintain the fall population within the objective range (150-200 wolves) established to ensure sustainability of the population. Because the federal wolf hunting season was closed on September 1 and re-opened on October 31, the December 5 season closure date will allow federally qualified subsistence users 36 days of wolf hunting opportunity on federally managed lands in GMU 2. The state wolf hunting season, which opens on December 1, will be open for five days. Wolf trappers operating under State or Federal Subsistence regulations will have 21 days of trapping opportunity throughout GMU 2.

State and Federal managers expect the December 5 season closure date will result in sustainable level of harvest. This harvest management decision is consistent with ADF&G’s GMU 2 Wolf Harvest Management Plan.

Although current regulations require wolves harvested in GMU 2 to be sealed within 30 days of the close of the season, State and Federal managers ask hunters and trappers to promptly seal all wolves. Doing so will allow managers to track harvest and ensure it remains sustainable. State and Federal managers also ask trappers to record the exact date (mm/dd/year) and reasonably precise location (drainage, bay, small island name) where individual wolves were harvested and to report that information for each wolf at sealing. Providing more precise harvest data will enable ADF&G to produce more precise population estimates.

The fall 2020 GMU 2 wolf hunting and trapping seasons for Federally qualified subsistence users on Federal lands will open on October 31 and November 15, respectively. State wolf trapping season in GMU 2 opens on November 15 and the state wolf hunting season opens on December 1. All State and Federal wolf harvest seasons in GMU 2 will close on December 5, 2020.

**DISTRIBUTION:**

**RADIO**

KBRD Radio; KCAW Radio; KRSA Radio

**NEWSPAPERS**

Ketchikan Daily News; Island News; Sitka Sentinel; Juneau Empire

**GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS**

Don Hernandez, Chair, Southeast Alaska Regional Advisory Council; ADF&G Wildlife Divisions-Ketchikan; William Elsner, Patrol Captain, USFS-Ketchikan; Andrew Sanford, LEO, USFS-Thorne Bay; Paul Robbins Jr., Public Affairs, USFS-Ketchikan; Terry Suminski, Tongass Subsistence Program Leader, USFS-Sitka; Deanna Perry, Council Coordinator, USFS – Petersburg; Michael Ielmini, Regional Subsistence Program Leader, USFS – Anchorage; Lisa Maas, Acting Policy Coordinator, USFWS/OSM—Anchorage; Theo Matuskowitz, Regulations Specialist, USFWS/OSM—Anchorage; Caron McKee, Public Affairs, USFWS/OSM—Anchorage; Alaska Public Safety Department-Fish & Wildlife Protection Division, Ketchikan & Craig; Craig Tribal Association; Klawock Cooperative Association; Hydaburg Cooperative Association; Organized Village of Kasaan.