

S. Huntington

~game~

HUNTINGTON
Brd Game

RESUME

Sidney Huntington

Birthdate: May 10, 1915

Education: Grades 1 through 4

Family: Raised 14 children, adopted 1 child now 4 years old.

Occupational

Activities: Hunted and trapped over 50 years, full and part time.

Built roads to Hogatza mining and built 40 man permanent camp.

Foreman building mining dredge.

Foreman Morrison Knutson Construction, 3 years.

Foreman carpenter for Air Force, 12 years.

Manage own business for over 20 years, still have it.

Civic

Activities: Member/Chairman of Huslia School Board, 1958-1962.

Member of Galena School Board, 1963 to present.

Member of Alaska Board of Game, 1974 to present.

No jail record.

Non drinker.

Outdoors

Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, Fairbanks, Alaska

Thursday, March 5, 1987—9

Wolf control: a battle with politics and science

Sportsmen urge return to predator control

By CHRISTOPHER BATIN
Correspondent

Predator control must be reestablished in the Interior and an active management program implemented if Interior moose populations are to fully recover, say spokesmen from the area's leading sportsmen's groups.

"Unit 20A has the potential of being the most important moose population in the state," says Sam Harbo, retired professor of biometrics at the University of Alaska-Fairbanks and former game board member. "But it'll never happen unless predator control—as part of a total management plan—is implemented."

Harbo, who also is Interior vice-president of the Alaska Outdoor Council, said the Alaska Department of Fish and Game has the capability of increasing moose harvests in the Tanana Flats—an area currently suffering from low moose populations due to wolf predation—by at least 2,000. The current harvest is 400 animals.

"Local game biologists realize the importance of properly managing wolves and moose in the interior," he said "but their hands are politically tied."

"I think the system was initially structured so the Board of Game could make the determination of what the important uses of game are. Once they decide, it's up to the department to establish the management regime to satisfy those objectives.

"As far as wolf management is concerned, some of that management authority has gradually shifted over to the board. They now make all the determinations regarding wolf control reductions. They've started to impinge on what I think is the authority of the department. It's very clear in many areas of the interior that consumptive use of moose and caribou is the priority use. But the board doesn't allow the department to initiate predator management that would optimize some of those moose and caribou populations."

According to Bruce Campbell with the Tanana Valley Sportsmen's Association, the Game Board's stand on wolf control is well known.

"Board member Joel Bennett was quoted by the Associated Press as saying that 'this is a new era for controlling wolves in their last strong hold in the country.' In the November 26, 1985 story, Bennett acknowledged that the approach will mean greater fluctuations in big game populations," and said "people are just going to have to get used to the idea." Because of this political climate, Harbo said the department has had difficulties in advocating what they considered proper wildlife management.

Campbell believes that when the local game department advocates wolf control, they are viewed as a far right, radical group.

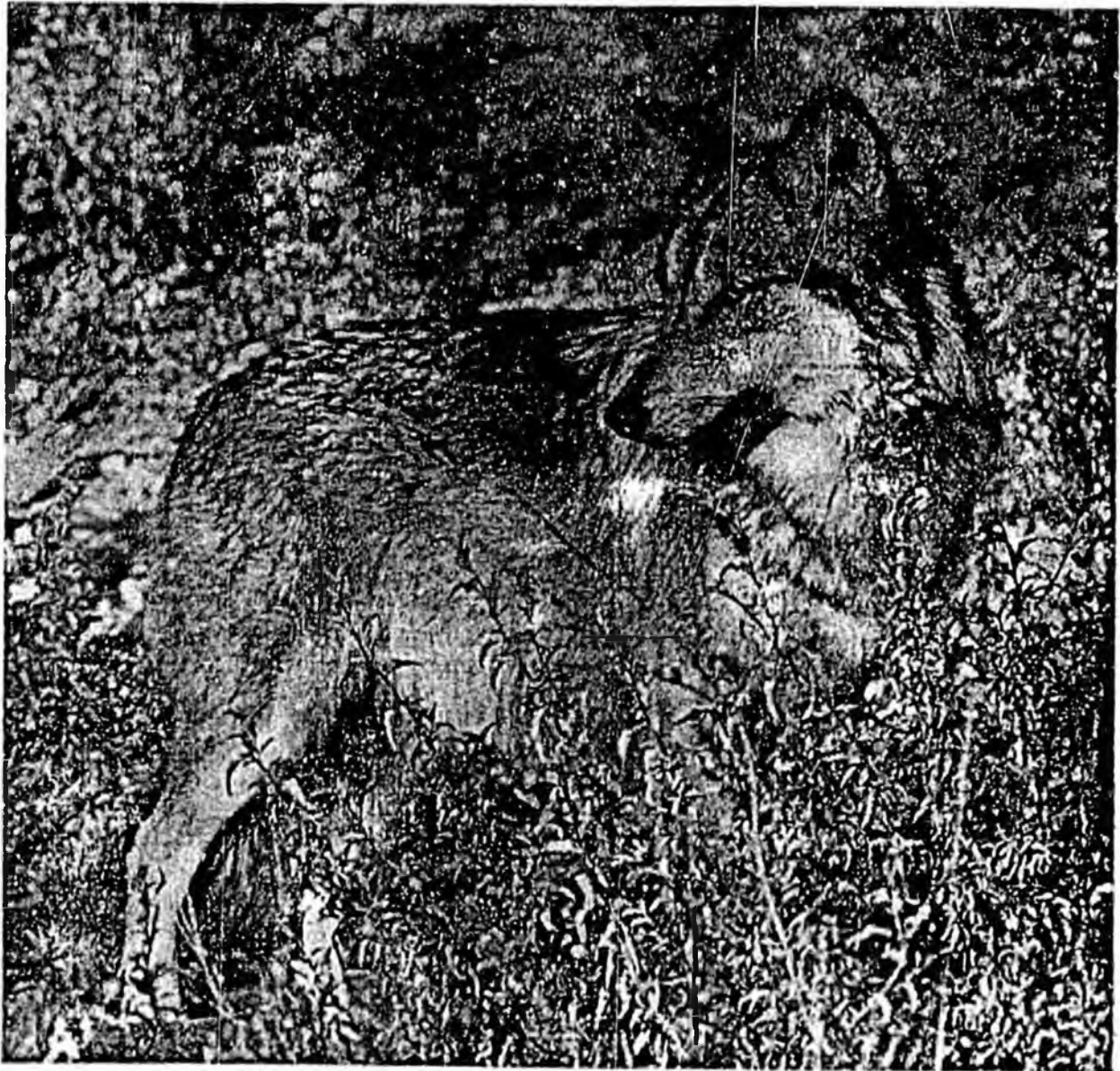
"They become the target for easy budget cutting, especially when tough choices are being made," he said. "It's how the upper ranks of the department get rid of their problems, by cutting budgets."

"This region has been chastized, economically and budgetwise, based on their stand that we need wolf control in order to rehabilitate our depressed moose populations," says former regional game coordinator Bud Burris. "I sat on meetings with Director of Game Lew Pamplin and other regional supervisors. They said we have to get off this (wolf control) because these anti-hunters are killing us budgetwise, and so we're not going to support wolf control. A few days later, they sent word down in memo form that we will not advocate management strategies regarding wolf control to the public or at Game Board meetings."

"In the past, the Board of Game, the Director of Game and the Commissioner of Fish and Game have told the department not to advocate wolf control or any other management technique."

He said that while working for the department, word came down from ADF&G headquarters that biologists would present only circumstances and present options and alternatives, rather than management plans based on their research and expertise.

"This drives the biologists up the wall," said Burris. "They've even been told that they can't respond to direct questions regarding habitat



CONTROVERSIAL CANINE—The wolf in Alaska, long an object of heated debate across the nation, receives a lot of political attention in the state where the wolf is seen by some as the last test of man's ability to effectively manage predators.

News-Miner library

manipulation or any other management technique."

"The board is in a great dilemma," says Harbo. "They think the public is so opposed to any reduction in wolf numbers that they are not willing to go along with any program that substantially reduces wolf numbers and allows priority uses of moose and caribou to be satisfied. The board certainly will not agree to any aerial shooting of wolves. Yet at the same time, they are not willing to enhance any of the trapper education programs they've implemented as a substitute means of controlling wolves."

Has the trapper program been a success? "No," says biologist Dave Kellyhouse of Tok. "We managed to teach trappers enough so that they increased their take of wolves in some areas, but so far, it hasn't controlled overall wolf numbers."

Kellyhouse gives several reasons why the trapping program hasn't been effective.

- Wolves are wary and difficult to capture.
- Even when wolves are abundant, they are relatively scarce compared to other furbearers.
- Wolf trapping is a lot of work. It takes lots of time and preparation to make trap sets.
- The cost of wolf traps are expensive. They cost about \$50 and up; out of the reach of most bush trappers.
- Preparing a wolf for market is a lot of hard work. The fur requires a lot of care.
- Wolf pelts aren't worth much money; about \$200 per pelt. That's the equivalent of two or three marten or half of a lynx—animals that take much less effort and expense to trap.

According to Harbo, there are other possible reasons for the dismal success of the wolf trapping program.

"The board determined they wouldn't supply information to the trappers, telling them where wolf populations were densest. They also weren't willing to turn over radio collar information. While there may be some legal restrictions there, the board could also be held legally at fault for not provid-

ing that information. The point is, the board hasn't made any effort to start legislation to change things."

Burriss was concerned that hunters were blamed for the current decline of moose in 20A.

"Since statehood, hunter take in the Tanana Flats area has been minimal, with the exception of three years. Then the population was going down and the harvest was going up. From 1972-74, hunters may have taken as much as 19 percent of the population.

"Game Board member Vic Van Ballenberghe would like to attribute hunting as the cause of the major decline. However, when you look at studies of the population base that we kept since statehood, by 1972, we were already down to 1/4 of what the population was at one time, so the population had already declined by 75 percent or more.

"If the department had known this decline was taking place, they wouldn't have allowed such a large harvest," Burriss said. "Even without those large harvests, the population was still crashing. If the action had been taken to stop it, it would have made the difference with the population bottoming out at 4,000 moose rather than 2,800; not significant to the recovery at all. It's very misleading to say hunter take caused that population to crash."

"We're not advocating that we just have wolf control in Unit 20," says Harbo. "We feel the population needs to be managed in total over there. It's going to include some vegetation manipulation, allowing wildfires to burn and restrictive burning. Some of the biologists feel strongly that predator management is needed also. Black and grizzly bears may be influencing moose calf survival, and of course, we've adequately documented that wolves take their toll on moose, year round."

In one area; studies show that a pack of 10 wolves killed a moose or caribou every 1.2 days during a 45-day period in late winter. In Denali National Park, biologist Gordon Haber estimated wolf packs of 5 to 24 killed an average of one moose or

Dall sheep every 2.9 days throughout the year. Of the 156 wolves trapped or harvested in the Tanana Flats area from 1975-79, 55 percent of the stomachs contained moose, 12 percent caribou, two percent sheep and three percent snowshoe hare.

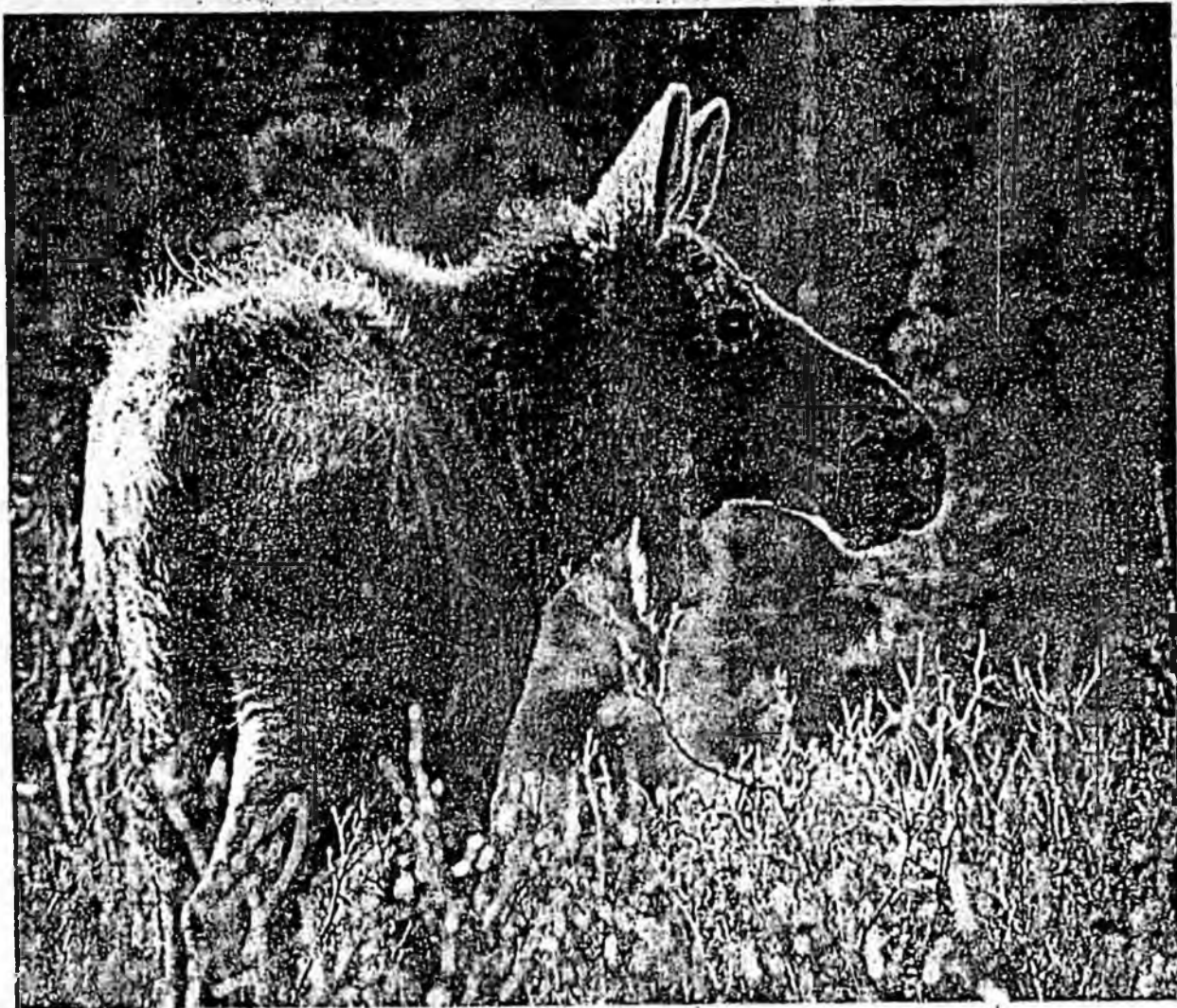
Based on a 1975-76 study, at least 23 wolf packs inhabited the Tanana Flats study area. Biologists calculated that each pack would kill one moose or caribou every 3 or 6 days. This would make an average of 35 to 70 kills, respectively, that would have been made per pack during the 7-month winter period. This

equals a total kill of 800 to 1,600 animals killed by 23 packs. Supporting their findings, biologists found that of those wolves harvested in the study area, 75 percent contained moose in their stomachs.

Weather can also severely limit predator-suppressed moose populations. "We don't know the status of the moose population in Unit 20," said Harbo. "In some areas it seems to be increasing. If it's stationery, we'll be cutting back on human take of moose. The department has already proposed to reduce the 1987 season by five days. Yet, a severe winter could wipe out

half of the remaining moose population. And the wolf population now in the area is as large as it was before we started wolf control in 1975. Cutting back on hunter harvest is delaying slightly the same problems we had in 1975. In other words, the problem doesn't get solved."

"Wolf control doesn't imply the wholesale elimination of wolves," he said. "It's simply one way of managing wolves to produce long-term, vigorous moose and caribou populations. Only after ungulates have reached larger population numbers can they better withstand occasional predator reduction."



PREY OF MANY—Bolstering moose and caribou populations is the goal of those in favor of wolf control programs. The Alaska Department of Fish and Game estimates the average moose yields 700 pounds of meat at \$2.74 per pound. *News-Miner library*

Moose and caribou peaked in 1960s

By **CHRISTOPHER BATIN**
Correspondent

Moose and caribou populations increased following a wolf reduction program in the 1950s and reached peak abundance in the 1960s. Deep snow and heavy browsing caused an initial crash of moose in 1965-66. Moose continued to decline until 1976, primarily due to deep snow, harvest by man, and predation by wolves. The latter removed an estimated 13 to 34 percent of the moose during winters 1973-74 and 1974-75.

Sport hunting was stopped in 1973, yet predation continued to limit the population. Following a 61 percent reduction of wolves in 1976, survival of calf and yearling moose increased two-to-fourfold. The moose population grew from 3,500 animals in 1978 to about 6,000 in 1982. Caribou populations also increased.

The level of harvest that wolf populations can sustain varies considerably, depending on food supplies and productivity. However, it appears

that harvest rates greater than 30 to 40 percent are usually required for wildlife managers to reduce wolf numbers.

Intensive surveys of moose and wolves in 1976 persuaded Division of Game biologists that reduction in wolf numbers was essential if moose numbers were to recover to meet moose harvest demands. Hunting had already been almost eliminated.

Aerial shooting and conventional trapping methods were used by department personnel and members of the public to reduce the wolf population. In the first year, approximately 143 of 239 wolves in 23 packs were killed in the Tanana Flats management area. Continued wolf removal from 1977 through 1979 maintained wolves at about this same level.

After 1979, however, wolves began to increase in numbers because fewer were killed. In May, 1982, ADF&G suspended its wolf removal program in the study area.

Cost of management must be evaluated

By CHRISTOPHER BATIN
Correspondent

When Gov. Steve Cowper said recently that wolf control was "too expensive" for the benefit received, he drew fire from sportsmen's groups across the state.

"The many members of the Alaska Outdoor Council feel strongly about the recent statements released regarding the cost of wolf control," said Interior vice president Sam Harbo. "We feel that the proper approach to look at the cost of any management strategy is to evaluate the cost of that strategy in terms of how well you achieve your goals. This is what the cost of wolf control is evaluated against, whether or not it's worthwhile to spend \$30,000, \$50,000 or \$100,000 to get \$4 million back."

"The Alaska Department of Fish and Game estimates the average moose yields 700 pounds of meat at \$2.74 per pound," said Tom Scarborough, chairman of the Interior Alaska Fish and Game Advisory Committee. "If 500 additional moose could be harvested, this would inject more than \$1 million into the economy. And this doesn't take into consideration economic benefit from expenditures for hunting and camping equipment, transportation, and gasoline."

"It's unfortunate that Gov. Cowper made the public announcements that he did, saying wolf control was too expensive," said Harbo. "He completely misses the point. The aerial take of wolves may be the most cost-effective way to replenish some of our moose and caribou populations. With proper management, we can probably increase the harvest from several hundred to 2,000 animals, creating an economic benefit in excess of \$4 million."

According to former game biologist Bud Burris, the department has to needlessly spend money allocated for wolf control to recover the carcasses. "It cost two to three times as much to retrieve the wolf as it does to shoot it," he said. "We can justify some expense of retrieving the animals, because of their research value. However, those costs have been struck from the program and are now called control, but they're basically research."

Scarborough says that the necessary predator control can be accomplished within the current ADF&G regulations, and at no cost to the State of Alaska.

"The last state administration said that only state employees could be trusted to perform predator control," he said. "This control by ADF&G personnel proved to be very costly, because it incorporated not just control, but also research. The public has shown they can control wolves very effectively, if allowed to do so by state government."

He said that Subunit 20A is critical to the success of moose and caribou populations in all of Alaska, and worthy of whatever expense necessary to maintain their welfare."

"The oral report given to my committee by ADF&G staff was not very bright," he said. "The wolf population is back to somewhere over 200 animals (approximately 26 packs). This is close to the level prior to any wolf control in the middle seventies. Moose and caribou can't cope with this increased predation."

"The area is important to consumptive and nonconsumptive users also because it can be reached by air, ground and water. It's utilized by many hunters. As time passes, the area will get more important as the population of Fairbanks increases. And Fort Wainwright will have a big impact as the new troops arrive."

Trends indicate that hunters are dissatisfied with extremely low moose numbers in the interior, and have been traveling farther afield during hunting season in order to bag a moose.

"Hunters are traveling to the Nowitna and the Koyukuk and the Yukon," said registered guide Pete Shepherd. "These additional hunters are creating conflicts with residents in these areas, who also depend on moose for food, and who have wolf control problems of their own. The department and the Board of Game need to act on the matter, now!"

Cowper says control 'legit' but expensive

By CHRISTOPHER BATIN
Correspondent

In a recent interview, Ron Clarke of KUAC-FM asked Gov. Steve Cowper his stand on wolf control. Sources say Cowper doesn't understand the complexity of the wolf control issue, and lost credibility by commenting on it.

Clarke—How do you decide when to get real specific with different aspects of these agencies' budgets? I mean, you went right into ADF&G and dealt with wolf control, which is a real small part. What prompts you to do something like that?

Cowper—Well, you know wolf control is an emotional issue that's existed since I came to Alaska. About every two years, the state says, okay, we're gonna go out and reduce the wolf population, do predator control, and we do. We go out and shoot a few wolves, and there's a great howl from all over the place and there are 49 lawsuits filed and it turns out that we always back away. We say okay, we won't do it anymore and I just don't want to repeat that anymore. I think that predator control is something that's uh, that is legit, but I don't want to go through all that stuff. I mean, I've got enough things to attend to without having to become a party to 12 or 15 lawsuits that people file because we're controlling the wolf population. Now as it turns out, it probably is not gonna be something that is absolutely necessary in any event this year.

Clarke—Too controversial to deal with the public or . . .

Cowper interrupts—S'not worth fooling with. When you compare the results with the cost, the overall cost to the state of wolf control programs, you find out that it just isn't cost effective. We just thought we had enough on the plate this year for us to do without having to wrestle with wolf control.

Clarke—Seems like more and more though, all the easy questions are gone and the . . .

Cowper interrupts—Oh yeah, lawsuits and complaining and people claiming they are gonna get ya in the next election and all that stuff. Basically, we've just taken the position that we got four years here to do a job and we're just gonna do it the best way we know how and make the best decisions that we know how to make. Sometime I suppose, three years from now, we'll look up and maybe run a poll to see if anybody wants us around anymore and if they, you know, (laugh) if they do, maybe we'll give it another shot. If they don't we'll just pass into history. But I can tell ya, we're gonna do the job that's required. I think that's why I was elected.

Clarke—Back to wolves, though. Why not leave that up to Fish and Game and let them mess with it?

Cowper—Cause Fish and Game isn't the only party that has to deal with it. The Attorney General's office has to deal. The Governor has to deal with it. Um, everybody has to deal with it, and it wasn't apparently so critical that in this particular year that, you know, we regarded it as being absolutely necessary.

According to inside sources, Cowper's comments on wolf control may have been sparked to life by a letter from Wayne Hall, Director of the Alaska Wildlife Alliance. Excerpts from that letter are as follows:

"We would like to follow up on a few wildlife related issues discussed between you and the Alaska Environmental Political Action Committee.

"According to the notes and recollections of the participants at the AEPA meeting and Cindy Lowry of Greenpeace USA, you stated that you were opposed to aerial wolf control. In a time of declining General Fund revenues (wolf control must come out of the General Fund) and when all Departments and programs are being cut, including more than a million dollars from other programs in ADF&G, we feel that the aerial wolf control program, considered an 'increment' in the ADF&G budget request, should not be funded.

"Other notes from the meeting also indicate that you favor balance on

the Board of Game. There is not now, nor has there ever been, a balance on the board with respect to . . . the consumptive and non-consumptive users. We urge you to consider the appointment of a non-consumptive user . . .

"It seems there is a possibility that you may be appointing Mr. Sam Harbo. We do not believe this is consistent with your opinions on wolf control and a balanced Board of Game. At a time when the wolf control controversy has subsided somewhat, it would seem the best way to plunge the state and the administration right back into the wolf control fire would be to appoint Mr. Harbo. We hope you will not take this initiative."

As a consequence, Cowper publicly denounced the wolf control program as "too expensive." The wolf predation control plans were suspended, and the funds reallocated for other projects.

According to a memo from Director of Game Lew Pamplin, \$30,000 earmarked for the project were redistributed as follows:

- Intensive wolf surveys in 20B \$11,000
- Wolf Surveys in 20A \$3,000
- Caribou calving surveys east of Sagavanirktok River \$9,000
- Revise trapper questionnaire/data analysis \$3,000

Pamplin also noted that he was "placing \$4,000 back into Headquarters' operating budget to help pay for report publication costs in this fiscal year."

F/IRBANKS FISH AND GAME ADVISORY COMMITTEE
1676 Taroka Drive,
Fairbanks, Alaska 99709
March 12, 1987

Honorable Senator Jack Coghill
Chairman Senate Resources Committee
P.O. Box V,
Juneau, Alaska 99811

Dear Senator;

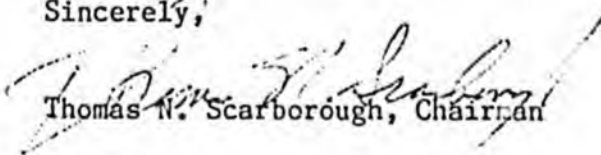
You are already aware of the dissatisfaction over the reappointment of the same members to the Game Board. Govenor Cowper stated prior to his election, he would correct the situation the Sheffield administration had created. It is now appparent this promise has been reneged on.

Consequently, the only way we see now to place members on the Game Board which will make regulations based on sound biological advice rather than the present method of political bias, is to have the legislature reject the unacceptable Cowper appointments.

I would therefore like to request that hearings be held in Fairbanks and other areas of the state as soon as possible so we Sportsman and other interested public will have an opportunity to have input into the confirmation process.

It appears Fairbanks will be without a Game Board member as Vic Van Ballenberghe is being transferred to Anchorage by his employer. This should taken in to account on the appointment of new Game Board members.

Sincerely,


Thomas W. Scarborough, Chairman

*cc File
Erin Haley*

FAIRBANKS FISH AND GAME ADVISORY COMMITTEE
1676 Taroka Drive,
Fairbanks, Alaska 99709
March 12, 1987

Honorable Governor Steve Cowper
P.O. Box A,
Juneau, Alaska 99811

Dear Governor;

I recieved a response to my letter to you dated February 9, 1987 from Commissioner Collinsworth (ADF&G). I would rather have heard from you. The attitude of the leadership of ADF&G is already well known. It has been known for several years because it was established by the Sheffield Administration. We Sportsmen had hoped that a new Administration would at least attempt to correct the political manipulation we are so sick of. At least that is what you led us to believe during your campaign.

Unit 20A is critical to the Interior of Alaska. Most of our wildlife resources depend on sound biological management of this area. The leadership of ADF&G and your (do as they are politically instructed) Board of Game has determined these resources be managed for priority use by four legged predators. This practice violates sound wildlife management practices and quite possibly the State Constitution. Of course your Attorney Generals staff assigned to ADF&G believes it is legal until a Court of law declares it otherwise. This is a very sorry situation to be in. Now you perpetuate it by reappointing the same members back on the Board of Game. We Sportsmen certainly have no quarrel with Sidney Huntington but Nick Jackson and Joel Bennett are something else. They have a proven record of putting politics above biological management. I recomend you withdraw these nominations as soon as possible as they are only going to bring more embarressment to your administration.

It dismays me to have to write this letter but I have no choice. The wildlife of the Interior (they are renewable resources) are too important to simply ignore. Wildlife is a resource enjoyed by all and vital to the health of the Interior and many other parts of the State. To continue the mismanagement of the past four years is simply intolerable.

Please do not expect us to believe that decisions on predator control are to be made by the Board of Game when you personally killed the only program we had in the Interior. As clearly stated in your interview printed in the Fairbanks Daily News-Miner, Thursday, March 5, 1987 you made a purely political decision on wolf control. Yet you attempt to tell us you are interested in developing Alaska's renewable resources. Are we the public supposed to believe you on other issues?

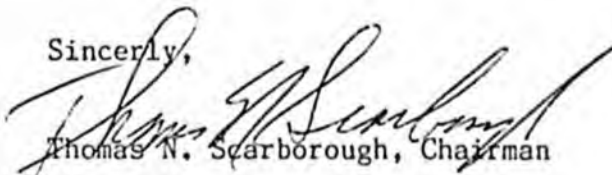
If this is how you intend to manage, your professional wildlife biologists should be told so they can go find work where they might be more useful. If their advice is to be continued to be ignored there is no need to have them on the payroll.

(2)

I and my committee will continue to work closely with the Interior Regional Staff of ADF&G. However, it is clear that the Headquarters Staff are not concerned with the welfare of Interior wildlife resources or the welfare of the Interior hunters. Our top priority is the wildlife resource and not special political interests. If the Game Board and the Commissioner were truly concerned with the welfare of our Interior moose and caribou populations, they would not have advised you to drop our remaining program to rehabilitate moose populations. In addition, they would have scheduled the matter for Board action and arranged to conduct the Board meeting in Fairbanks,

I look forward to your future actions. I had sincerely hoped that we would be marching forward together but unless you change directions that will clearly not be the case.

Sincerely,



Thomas N. Scarborough, Chairman

cc: file
Bryon Haley
TVSA
✓ Sen. Coghill

FAIRBANKS FISH AND GAME ADVISORY COMMITTEE
1676 Taroka Drive,
Fairbanks, Alaska 99709
March 12, 1987

MAR 16 1987

Honorable Senator Jack Coghill
Chairman Senate Resources Committee
P.O. Box V,
Juneau, Alaska 99811

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Sincerely,


Thomas N. Scarborough, Chairman

*cc file
from Haley*

Tok Cutoff-Nabesna Road
Advisory Committee
S. R. Box 380
Gakona, Alaska 99586
February 1, 1987

MAR 1.6 1987

Senator Coghill &
Representative Shultz
Pouch U
Juneau, Alaska 99802

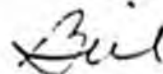
Dear Jack and Dick:

The Tok Cutoff-Nabesna Road Advisory Committee met on January 24, 1987 in a general meeting. We have a couple of items we would like you as our legislators to address.

1. We would like to see the requirement for a trophy tag on wolves only after the hunter has been successful. We believe the hunter would not mind paying the trophy fee after the animal had been killed. Most hunters only see wolves occasionally, but would welcome the opportunity to go ahead if the tag was or could be purchased when the animal was killed.
2. We would like to make sure the legislature does not raise the cost of resident/non-resident hunting licenses and trophy tags. We would like them to remain the same even though the revenues of the state are declining.
3. We would like to see both of you draft legislation requiring qualifications for Board of Game and Fisheries members. We believe these people should have first hand and/or other experience when dealing with our resources.

Hope you can assist our committee with some of this or at least make sure it doesn't get slipped in somewhere else.

Sincerely,



Bill Ellis, Chairman
822-3426

P. S.

If you have any questions, please call Thelma at 822-3426.