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East Prince of Wales Advisory Committee

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### **Change Wolf Trapping Season Start Date**

50 CFR 100.26 (n) 2

Harvest Limits: Trapping:

Wolf: No limit. All wolves taken will be sequentially numbered, marked with the date and location recorded by the trapper for each wolf, and all hides must be sealed within 15 days of take

**Dec. 15- Mar. 31.**

Move the start Date of trapping season to December 15th.

The East POW AC would like to move the start date for wolf trapping in GMU 2 from November 15th to December 15th.

Since the wolf trapping season start date was moved from December 1st to a November 15th start date six years ago, there has been an overwhelming increase in conflicts with other user groups and bears. These user groups include deer hunters, waterfowl hunters, and biologists conducting the population study on the GMU 2 wolf. Having a later start date this would reduce these conflicts.

Game Unit 2 is made up of Prince of Wales (POW) Island and lots of smaller islands. Prince of Wales Island is the easiest accessed area to hunting and trapping grounds in the state with approximately 2,000 miles of roads. The shoreline and the surrounding islands are easily accessed by boat. The November 15th start date overlaps with the deer rut on POW. The island becomes inundated with deer hunters from all over Alaska and hunters from the lower 48 states. Several wolf trappers are setting their traps and having deer hunters come across them while doing so. Waterfowl hunters also are out during the November 15th start date of wolf trapping season. It's very common for wolf trappers to set in tide flats or in the heads of bays. These areas are commonly used by waterfowl hunters and puts added stress onto them if their dog wanders into a wolf set. Opening the trapping season on December 15th would reduce trapper conflict with deer and waterfowl hunters.

Southeast Alaska is a temperate rain forest generally with warmer falls and mild winters. Most trappers would prefer to wait to trap later into December because that is when their pelts

become prime. With a short 30 day wolf trapping season in GMU 2, wolf trappers are forced to start trapping on November 15<sup>th</sup>, when their pelts don't have the thickest undercoating and longest guard hairs.

Another issue which GMU 2 wolf trappers are facing with a November 15<sup>th</sup> trapping start date is with black bears. While a majority of black bears have gone into hibernation around mid November, there are still a significant number of black bears preparing to hibernate. These bears have destroyed high dollar wolf leg-hold traps which is the preferred method of take by the GMU 2 trappers. Some trappers use snares and have reported they have caught black bears in their sets. These accidental catches of black bears are mostly in November. Moving the wolf trapping start date to December 15<sup>th</sup> will allow almost all of the black bears in GMU 2 to be in hibernation before wolf traps are set.

The most important reason the GMU 2 wolf season needs to be moved to December 15<sup>th</sup> is because of the wolf population study. It has been voiced at many wolf meetings with ADF&G and USFS that the study is in direct competition with the wolf trappers. Over the years, ADF&G has either agreed or remained neutral that a change in the start date would be beneficial for them. Study staff members have had run-ins with wolf traps when they are conducting an essential study to manage the GMU 2 wolf population. The wolf population study is conducted into early December each year. The wolf population study is essential, so GMU 2 has a sustainable wolf harvest. By moving the start date to December 15<sup>th</sup>, this would allow the study to be completed by the start of the trapping season.

The East POW AC has also submitted a parallel proposal to change the state wolf trapping season start date to December 15<sup>th</sup>.

Submitted By: East Prince Of Wales Advisory Committee.