



NEWS RELEASE



Forest Service

Alaska Department of Fish and Game

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2017 GMU 2 Wolf Harvest Quota Announced

CRAIG, Alaska – Biologists with the Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G), in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service, announce that the GMU 2 wolf harvest quota for regulatory year (RY) 2017 will be set at 46 wolves.

ADF&G and the U.S. Forest Service currently manage wolves on Prince of Wales and associated islands, collectively known as Game Management GMU 2 (GMU 2), for an annual harvest not to exceed the Guideline Harvest Level (GHL) in ADF&G regulation: 20 percent of the most recent unit-wide population estimate. Our primary goal for managing wolves in GMU 2 is to ensure a population that provides opportunity for a sustainable harvest. While legal harvest is only one of several factors influencing wolf numbers in GMU 2, it is the one under managers' control that can have the most immediate and direct impact.

Because dense forest cover makes estimating wolf numbers from aerial surveys impractical, ADF&G, with support from the Forest Service, estimates wolf abundance in GMU 2 using a DNA mark-recapture technique. In 2016 ADF&G used the same large northcentral Prince of Wales Island study area as in 2014 and 2015. We also collaborated with the Hydrag Cooperative Association (HCA) to establish an additional study area monitored by HCA staff adjacent to the southern boundary of the ADF&G study area. That collaboration effectively expanded the total study area to encompass approximately 80% of Prince of Wales Island and over 60% of the land area of GMU 2.

The increased sampling effort and an apparently growing wolf population resulted in collection and successful DNA extraction from about three times the number of hair samples as were available for the 2015 estimate. Data collected from October through December 2016 resulted in a GMU 2-wide population estimate of 231 wolves, with high confidence that the actual number of wolves in GMU 2 during autumn 2016 was within the range, 192 to 285 wolves. This is the most current population estimate.

The fall 2016 population estimate is significantly higher than the 2015 estimate of 108 wolves and suggests conservative harvest management over the last two years has allowed the population to grow from a low estimated at 89 wolves in 2014. Because of this growth ADF&G and the Forest Service will set the RY2017 GMU 2 harvest

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quota at the full GHL of 46 wolves. However, any substantiated accounts of unreported, human-caused mortality will be counted toward the harvest quota.

Total harvest in RY2016 exceeded both the harvest quota and the legal maximum harvest allowed under the state GHL regulation. This failure to limit harvest to within the quota could diminish public confidence in state and federal managers' ability to sustainably manage the GMU 2 wolf population. In the next few weeks state and federal managers plan to visit Prince of Wales Island to discuss RY2017 harvest management options with GMU 2 hunters and trappers. Through those discussions, ADF&G and the Forest Service will develop a more effective RY2017 in-season harvest management strategy.

The GMU 2 wolf hunting and trapping seasons for federally qualified subsistence users on Federal lands open on Sept. 1 and Nov. 15, respectively. State wolf hunting and trapping seasons in GMU 2 open on Dec. 1. The length of the state seasons will depend on the number of wolves taken during the Federal hunting and trapping seasons prior to Dec. 1. The state and federal seasons will be closed when managers believe harvest is approaching 46 wolves.

Please call the ADF&G Ketchikan area office at 907-225-2475 or Douglas Regional office at 907-465-4265 for more information. For more information from the U.S. Forest Service please call Matt Anderson at 907-826-3271 or Jeff Reeves at 907-826-1649. Maps of Federal lands within GMU 2 are available at Forest Service offices. Maps and additional information on the Federal Subsistence Management Program can be found on the web at <http://www.doi.gov/subsistence/index.cfm>.

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