

Letters to the Tundra Times

Blinkers

August 27, 1979

Mr. David O. David
Kwigillingok, AK 99622

Dear David:

I want to thank you for reminding me about the Kuskokwim blinkers. That is one project that I did not follow up on as I should have.

I will submit another appropriation request for the navigation aids during the 1980 Legislative Session. I appreciate your taking the time to keep me on the ball.

Best Regards,
Nels A. Anderson

Wolf controversy

August 27, 1979

Harold Sparck
Director
Nunam Kitlutsisti
P.O. Box 267
Bethel, Alaska 99559

Dear Mr. Sparck:

In the May 1979 issue of Alaska Magazine, an article appeared concerning the wolf control programs in Units 19 and 21. You subsequently replied in a letter reprinted in several newspapers, criticizing the article. Your letter contained so many inaccuracies and misconceptions that I feel it is necessary to point them out to you and to any members of the public who may have been misled by your letter.

Foremost is your insistence that local Fish and Game advisory committees "were never even consulted prior to the announcement of the hunt." This statement is untrue. The Department announced on February 14, 1979 that it was proposing to reduce wolf numbers in three specific areas. It was also announced that these programs would commence only after public input had been obtained. The Department of Fish and Game had discussed the potential reducing wolf populations in these proposed control areas with advisory committees from these areas, individual advisory committee members, and members of the public for many years. The public told us for years that

the moose population was down and that wolves were a major influence on the moose. The Game Division went to great expense to determine the status of wolves, moose and caribou in areas where the public identified conflicts.

On February 12, 1979 Nunam Kitlutsisti and the Kuskokwim Native Association sponsored a meeting at Aniak to discuss moose hunting in Units 18, 19 and 21 and other related topics. The meeting was attended by representatives of almost all the advisory committees, Nunam Kitlutsisti and several Native organizations. The group, including the Nunam Kitlutsisti representative, passed a resolution to support the Department of Fish and Game's proposal for wolf control. At the meeting held by the Department of Fish and Game in Bethel on February 21, 1979 you indicated that four Fish and Game advisory committees had not been consulted in advance. Of the four only the Central Bering Sea Advisory Committee from an area several hundred miles from the control areas, did not have a representative at the meeting on February 12 at Aniak. If the Department's proposals came as a surprise to you, perhaps you have not been listening to the Department's biologists or to the public who live and hunt in the areas.

Your letter indicates that the Lower Kuskokwim and Lower Yukon advisory committees opposed the wolf control program and stated "that there will never be enough moose for subsistence use as long as sport hunters are allowed to continue to take between 20 and 25 percent of the moose harvest in the areas covered by the wolf hunt." You also said "the Division failed to state that between 20-25 per cent of the moose harvest in the affected areas is taken by sport hunters". We must assume that you have determined or define "sport hunting". However, the legislature has defined subsistence hunting as "...the taking of game animals by a State resident for subsistence uses..." in AS 16.05.257(H)(1). We have estimated the moose harvest by the residents of the hunters. In Units 10A and B hunters living in these units take 70-80 percent of the total moose harvest.

Hunters living adjacent to the Units (including hunters from Bethel and McGrath) kill 10-15 percent. These percentages are about the same for the Innoko area. These figures can change considerably from year to year. From 1974 through 1977 the harvest by hunters from adjacent areas and urban areas was much higher. Seasons have been cut back considerably to discourage urban hunters and to a lesser extent hunters from adjacent areas. Most restrictive seasons have been established for 1979 which will disproportionately restrict non-local hunters.

It appears that attempts are being made to promote conflict between so-called sport hunting and subsistence hunting in order to establish subsistence hunting areas. If all of the urban resident, non-resident, and alien hunting in Units 19A and B and the Innoko is considered sport hunting there still is not a serious conflict since these hunters are only taking 10 to 15 percent of the annual harvest.

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The potential conflict is further reduced because most non-local hunters use different areas than local hunters and are not in direct competition. The Paradise Management Area on the lower Innoko and Yukon River areas in Unit 21 further reduced the conflict between local hunters using boats and other hunters using airplanes.

The Game Board has resisted the establishment of subsistence hunting areas for several reasons. One obvious reason is that the law (AS 16.05.257) provides that these areas may not be established unless a considerable amount of background information has been obtained. This information generally is not available and the mechanisms provided by the law to obtain the information have not been implemented. The Board has also been concerned with other very serious problems in establishing subsistence hunting areas. Subsistence hunting areas exclude non-resident and alien hunters -- but non-resident and alien hunters take a very small percentage of the harvest in most rural areas. Further restriction might exclude resident hunters who do not live within

the subsistence hunting areas. In this case, that would exclude hunters from the areas represented by both the Lower Kuskokwim and the Lower Yukon Advisory Committees, and by Nunam Kitlutsisti.

Your interpretation of the action of the Lower Kuskokwim and the Lower Yukon Advisory Committees is considerably different than the reports I have received. On March 5, 1979 the Lower Kuskokwim Advisory Committee, with several members present, voted unanimously to support wolf control in the Unit 19A and B and Innoko area. Reports received from the meeting of the Lower Yukon Advisory Committee indicated that the advisory committee supported wolf control but opposed the proposed program until the conflict between subsistence hunters and sport hunters had been reconciled.

You implied in your letter that Nunam Kitlutsisti represents the subsistence hunters who live in the area where the wolf programs were conducted. The advisory committees and several organizations that are concerned with subsistence hunting and wolf control in Units 19 and 21 are not represented by Nunam Kitlutsisti. At the Board of Game meeting in March 1979 a representative of the Tanana Chiefs Conference indicated to the Board of Game that neither you nor Nunam Kitlutsisti represented the Natives in Unit 21. The Nowitna control area, for example, is over 200 miles away from the nearest Native residence of the Calista region and few if any members of the

Calista Corporation have ever hunted there. The comments received by the Department of Fish and Game and the Game Board indicate that Nunam Kitlutsisti does not represent the feelings of the hunters living in those areas and may not represent the feelings of the hunters living in those areas and may not represent the feelings of many Native hunters of the Calista region. It is also clear that Nunam Kitlutsisti does not represent the feelings of the Native hunters of the Kuskokwim Native Association.

I personally believe that the author of the article in the Alaska Magazine does not owe you an apology; rather, you owe the Alaska Magazine an apology for your gross misstatements. I believe you owe the Board of Game an apology for your unsuccessful attempts to exploit game management issues, Fish and Game advisory committees and Native subsistence hunters to further your personal goals and to further Nunam Kitlutsisti's efforts to influence Federal and State legislation on subsistence. The wolf control programs were designed to increase moose populations and thereby benefit moose hunters. Hunters living in and adjacent to these areas would receive overwhelmingly greater benefits. Your efforts to force a confrontation between subsistence hunters and other hunters to obtain exclusive subsistence hunting areas has been at the expense of the moose populations in those areas, counterproductive to good game management and not in the best interests of Alaskans.

Sincerely,
Robert A. Hinman
Deputy Director
Division of Game

