

Wolverine trapping banned in Alaska's Chugach State Park

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ANCHORAGE, Alaska - Wolverine trapping will no longer be allowed in Chugach State Park.

The state Board of Game made that unanimous decision after the first trapping season of the program saw two dogs caught. That was the same number of wolverines caught.

The board opened the park to wolverine trapping in 2007 despite objections from Department of Fish and Game biologists who said it could deplete wolverine numbers in the region.

Soldotna board member Ted Spraker voted Tuesday for the ban, but he was still not convinced the wolverine population was at risk.

"We're doing this because there was a lot of sentiment, we're reversing our decision, but I want to make it clear that the data would allow this board to continue with an open wolverine trapping season," he said.

Wolverine traps killed a pit bull-Lab mix early last year and a Labrador retriever was injured three days later, fueling criticism of the program.

Defenders of Wildlife called for reinstating the ban as the Game Board meets in Anchorage this week to decide hunting rules for the region.

"The Board of Game based its decision to allow wolverine trapping on a nonscientific agenda that supports the expansion of trapping at the expense of all other user groups and the long term health of the park's wolverine population," wrote Wade Willis, a spokesman for the organization.

Board member Bob Bell of Anchorage said the board "acts on behalf of the resource and not on behalf of any group, whether it's trappers or the Chugach Park Advisory Board or anybody else."

Bell added an amendment to the ban that prohibits the use of Conibear-style traps larger than 7 inches on other types of game.

Aaron Bloomquest, Anchorage Fish and Game advisory chairman, said those larger traps "basically caused most of the problems with dogs getting hurt or killed in traps in the park."

The board turned down proposals to further restrict trapping in the park, including calls to push trapping activity at least one mile from all trails and a blanket ban on trapping lynx.

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