

Opponents of State Wolf Control are Alaskans

As the August 26 primary election nears, opponents of Ballot Measure 2 are up to their usual tricks: a poorly aimed barrage of misinformation, distortion and fear-mongering. As a representative of Alaskans For Wildlife, the sponsors of Measure 2, which seeks to restrict private pilots from hunting and shooting wolves and grizzlies, I feel obliged to set the record straight. (By the way, if you're one of those who don't believe tracking down and killing wolves with aircraft isn't hunting, try explaining that to a dictionary.)

Folks like Dick Bishop, president of the Alaska Outdoor Council, (News-Miner Community Perspective, August 3) find themselves grasping at straws, huffing and puffing about everything from the danger posed by wolves to the potential La Brea tar pit of litigation that our measure supposedly poses.

Never mind that there has never been one documented fatality caused by a wild wolf in the entire history of the state. And never mind that we actually support science-driven wildlife management, including predator control (even in helicopters) when necessary.

I hate to disappoint some of you, but my two co-sponsors and I aren't a pack of Outside greenie-weenies. We're longtime Alaskans, with over a century of hunting, guiding and subsistence living between us. Not only are we Alaskans, but so are the folks who've twice voted by large margins to limit aerial predator control - people from across the state, including thousands of rural residents who don't pay lip service to subsistence; they live it. I know, you've been told it was all wolf-hugging city-dwellers to blame, but check the voting record from the 1996 and 2000 elections. In 1996, 36 of Alaska's 40 districts, many of them rural, voted to curtail aerial wolf control. In 2000, a long list of Native bush communities again voted the same way. If you examine the nearly 57,000 signatures we gathered for this current ballot measure, you will once more see thousands of Native signatures from across the state. To say that these people don't understand the nature of subsistence or wolves is insulting. Likewise, tens of thousands of non-Native Alaskans, including longtime hunters like myself, feel insulted when we're told by the Board of Game or the Alaska Outdoor Council that we just don't grasp the issue because we don't agree with their archaic, out-of-touch policies. Never mind that many of us have far more direct experience and knowledge regarding wolves than those who claim we know so little.

Ah, but sure - we were all hoodwinked en masse by a pack of slick, lying, environmentalist ads paid for by blue-haired ladies in Connecticut, not once, but twice!

And never mind that the AOC viewpoint is supported by hundreds of thousands of Outside dollars from upscale hunter/guide organizations like Safari Club International (a name that practically shouts "Alaska" - the word 'safari' is actually Swahili) and funneled to Outside dirty-tricks spin doctors like Oregon-based Pac West.

Speaking of knowledge, the Board of Game and the AOC would have you believe that Alaska's predator control program is a model of scientific wildlife management. That comes as news to the National Academy of Sciences, the National Research Council, the American Society of Mammalogists, plus an independent group of more than 120 scientists who have all formally critiqued the state's program over the past dozen years, and found it lacking. But of course, the board and their cronies didn't mean those scientists-just the ones that agreed with them. I know for fact there are biologists currently with Fish and Game that loathe the current program; they say so quietly, afraid for their careers. They, like we, are for sound, science-based predator control done by professionals, exercised when necessary, not in support of ungulate farming driven by the ideology of intensive management.

What has motivated the majority of Alaskans to rebel three times against a serial program of wolves being run to exhaustion and shot by good ol' boys in Super Cubs, backed by questionable science? Simple. They know it's just plain wrong, and they don't like it. Fish and Game and the Alaska Outdoor Council can insist all they want that the rules of fair chase don't apply, and that predator control is not an ethical matter. Sorry, guys, but it's not your place to tell others how to feel or what to believe. And if ethics don't count, why has killing wolf pups in their den been specifically illegal for 40 years, and why has the recent killing of 14 young pups raised such a furor?

Of course there's a line, and a majority of Alaskans feel it has been crossed by this out-of-control program. That's why they're going to join me in voting "yes" on Ballot Measure 2.

Writer/photographer Nick Jans of Juneau is a longtime hunter and co-sponsor of Ballot Measure 2.